

379  
N81d  
No. 4501

FACTORS INFLUENCING FRESHMEN STUDENTS' COLLEGE  
CHOICE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS:  
A FOCUS GROUP STUDY

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
University of North Texas in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Jami J. Armstrong, B.A., M.J.

Denton, Texas

August, 1997

379  
N81d  
No. 4501

FACTORS INFLUENCING FRESHMEN STUDENTS' COLLEGE  
CHOICE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS:  
A FOCUS GROUP STUDY

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
University of North Texas in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Jami J. Armstrong, B.A., M.J.

Denton, Texas

August, 1997

(LW)

Armstrong, Jami J., Factors influencing freshmen students' college choice at the University of North Texas: A Focus group study. Doctor of Philosophy (Higher Education), August 1997, 161 pp., 3 appendixes, references.

This study focused on factors that may influence freshmen students when choosing their colleges, specifically those who attend metropolitan universities such as the University of North Texas. In addition to identifying major characteristics of the institution that attract students, it also explored the sources of information that students considered important when making their choice about where to attend college.

The primary instrument for gathering the data was focus groups. These informal, small groups provided a format for in-depth discussion and probing questioning about the needs, wants and influential factors driving freshmen college choice. Ten focus groups were held with between six and ten students in a specially designed room on the campus of the University of North Texas. A professional moderator was employed and sessions were observed via a two-way mirror and tape recorded for later transcription.

The major questions addressed in the focus groups included: What factors influenced students the most to attend the University of North Texas? What did they consider the level of friendliness on campus? And how did the marketing materials that the university distributed impact their decision to attend? The study found that the factors that most influenced freshmen to attend the University of North Texas were low cost, convenient location and the good academic reputation of their field of study. Students believed North Texas to have a very friendly campus and were pleased with the overall academic environment. They were not, however, impressed or greatly influenced by the marketing materials currently being used by the University and suggested ways to improve the design and distribution of these materials to make them more effective. Additional observations were made concerning these and related questions. A partial transcription of the focus group sessions is included.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Purposes of the Study .....	3
Research Questions .....	3
Significance of the Study .....	5
Definition of Terms .....	9
Limitations .....	9
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
The Marketing Concept .....	11
Review of the Higher Education Marketing Literature .....	14
Review of the College Choice Literature .....	16
Sources of Information Influencing College Choice .....	19
College Characteristics Influencing College Choice .....	23
Factors Influencing College Choice at Metropolitan Universities .....	28
Focus Group Research .....	31
Conclusion .....	33
3. METHODOLOGY	
Instrument .....	35
Procedures for Collection of Data .....	36
The Population .....	39
Selection of the Sample .....	40
Research Design .....	43
Procedure for Reporting the Data .....	43
4. PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS .....	45
Factors Influencing Freshmen's College Choice .....	46
Level of Friendliness on Campus .....	51

Chapter	Page
Image and Academic Reputation .....	54
Marketing Materials .....	58
Summary .....	61
5. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	
Summary .....	64
Discussion .....	67
Conclusions .....	71
Implications .....	76
APPENDIXES	
Moderator's Outline .....	79
Observer's Checklist .....	82
Partial Transcription of Focus Groups .....	87
REFERENCES .....	158

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

All U.S. colleges are financially dependent upon enrollments. The number of students enrolled not only brings in tuition revenue but dictates state funding at public institutions. The decline in birthrates in the 1960s and 1970s has resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of traditional college-age students since 1978, and the decline is projected to continue at least until the end of this century (Johnstone, 1986). In addition to a smaller pool of students, declines in government funding to colleges and universities and increases in educational and cultural alternatives make competition for students even greater (Goldgehn, 1989). These factors result in a shrinking student market with less resources and more educational options from which to choose. This means enrollment difficulty for all types of colleges and universities across the country.

Enrollment declines can have a negative impact across the campus by threatening jobs, academic programs, facilities upkeep and overall funding. According to Johnstone, a nearly universal response by higher education to the threat of reduced funding has been a focus on marketing. Marketing has become an acceptable practice on many campuses since the mid-1980s as colleges strive to compete for a shrinking pool of student prospects. The goal of this marketing is "to distinguish the particular institution from the 3,000 or so other competing schools" (Anderson, 1994) and help students make sense out of the difficult decision of choosing a college.

Kotler (1991) stated that every good marketing plan begins with solid research about the target audience. Understanding student preferences, needs and wants is essential in developing effective, cost efficient, higher education marketing strategies. Therefore, studies which enable higher education administrators to understand the student population and the factors influencing their decisions to attend a specific school are of great benefit as the administrators attempt to enhance their recruiting efforts in an environment of declining enrollments.



### Problem Statement

This dissertation examined factors that influence freshmen students to choose their school - specifically freshmen at the University of North Texas, a large metropolitan, research university.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide more in-depth information, through the use of focus groups, about factors influencing freshmen students' decisions to come to the University of North Texas than is currently being provided from their Entering Student Survey. The focus group study provided the University with more understanding about and possible solutions to potential problems that have surfaced as a result of the Entering Student Survey including: (1) the level of friendliness of the University as perceived by freshmen students during enrollment; (2) the importance of academic reputation in freshmen's decision making process; and, (3) the effectiveness of marketing materials currently being used by the University.

### Research Questions

The primary research question was: What factors influence freshmen students to choose to attend large metropolitan universities such as the University of North

Texas? Probing questions were asked in a focus group format covering, but not limited to, the following three areas: (1) What aspects of the University are helpful to freshmen during the enrollment process, and in what areas do they experience difficulty? How can improvements be made to the enrollment process from the student's perspective? How friendly and helpful are the faculty and staff? Based on the student's initial experience at the University of North Texas, would they recommend the University of North Texas to their friends and relatives who are choosing a college?; (2) How important is academic reputation as an influence for entering freshmen? What is student's perception of the academic reputation of the University of North Texas, and how is this perception developed? What other image factors influence students' decisions to attend the University of North Texas? Have students' perceptions of academic reputation changed since they decided to attend the University of North Texas? Is this change for the better or for the worse?; and, (3) How can marketing materials be more useful and effective in the recruiting process? Did students remember seeing the current marketing materials? Did students' parents look at the marketing materials? What were students' recall of the

materials? Which aspects of the materials were most helpful in influencing students' decision to attend the University of North Texas? Where and when in the decision making process did students receive the materials? What changes should be made to the presentation, distribution and format of the materials to improve their usefulness?

Other questions that arose out of the focus group discussions included: Why did these students decide to pursue higher learning anyway? What other schools did they seriously consider and why? What did students like most about the University of North Texas? What did students like least about the University of North Texas? From the students' perspectives, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the University of North Texas?

#### Significance of the Study

The study was significant in that it provided in-depth information and insight into the factors influencing freshmen to attend the University of North Texas and other similar metropolitan universities. The Entering Student Survey, that was currently being conducted each year at the University of North Texas helps the University reach recruiting and enrollment management goals. University personnel who use the study, however, believe that more

probing information, beyond the information that is currently being gathered, would be helpful in achieving their recruiting objectives.

Other metropolitan universities conduct similar survey research with their entering freshmen classes, but according to telephone interviews conducted with admissions personnel at some of these institutions, this research is not thorough enough to provide an in-depth understanding of what is influencing freshmen students' choices. There was a need for more probing research to better identify specific needs and wants of freshmen students.

Findings obtained from the Entering Student Survey at the University of North Texas, and other similar surveys at other metropolitan universities, raised questions about the image, perception and attitudes the freshmen class has towards the University. These questions, however, cannot be answered with the depth and detail necessary with the current survey alone. To uncover more specific needs, wants and influencers of the entering freshmen, further probing research was necessary.

The first research question dealt with the friendliness and helpfulness of the University. The 1995 Entering Student Survey (ESS) summary report by John D.

Jones suggested that this was one area that needs more in-depth exploration. The initial perception that freshmen students have of the friendliness and helpfulness at the University of North Texas is critical to successful enrollment management. The ESS data showed that 84 percent of the freshmen surveyed came to UNT because it had a friendly reputation. Therefore, the level of friendliness (or customer service/satisfaction) is critical to the University of North Texas. Focus group research can identify the strengths and weaknesses of this area and more importantly suggest ways to improve the level of friendliness and freshmen satisfaction. The ESS showed that students learn about the University of North Texas primarily from friends and relatives; therefore, the initial experience that freshmen have with the University may have significant impact on the future recruiting efforts.

The second research question related to why students chose to attend the University of North Texas. Only 48 percent of beginning freshmen listed academic reputation as an influence in their decision to attend UNT. The academic reputation of the University of North Texas is very important to future growth of the University. Recent

research indicated that image and academic reputation are the primary reasons freshmen students choose their college (Sevier, 1994). Focus group research can uncover why more freshmen do not consider academic reputation an important factor. Is it because they do not think UNT has a fine academic reputation, or is it because academic reputation is not important to the current freshmen class? The answer to this question can have tremendous impact in future marketing and recruiting efforts.

The third question explored related to the marketing material that is currently being used by the University to attract students. An analysis of the current marketing tools being used at UNT revealed that a cohesive communication campaign, A Partner in Your Success, is currently being used. A brochure, videotape and catalogue have been produced and are being distributed through the mail, through on-campus visits, through high school guidance counselors, and through UNT speakers and representatives to prospective UNT students. The materials are of high quality, offering full color print and video production. The primary theme of the materials profiles successful students and teachers at the University of North

Texas. The materials also provide basic useful information such as dates, costs and programs offered at UNT.

The ESS study revealed that the use of these materials has been declining in recent years. The focus group discussion about these materials provided insight on improving the materials and increasing their usefulness and effectiveness.

The findings of this study will be very helpful and further assist the University of North Texas in its efforts to increase enrollment. By understanding more thoroughly and specifically what influences the freshmen market's decision to select a school, what the school's strengths and weaknesses are, and how to adjust materials to better communicate with students, administrators can develop and execute an even more effective marketing plan for UNT.

#### Definition of Terms

The following term had restricted meaning and are thus defined for this study.

Entering Student Survey (ESS) is a survey questionnaire administered to freshmen and entering transfer students at the University of North Texas during summer orientation each year.

### Limitations

One limitation to focus group research is that because it is a qualitative technique, the information found as a result of the groups cannot be statistically projected to a larger population. The input from any single participant in the group is relatively unimportant. According to Greenbaum (1993), the key to effective use of focus groups, by contrast, is "to identify the overall sense of the group relative to the idea being discussed, not to focus on the input of any individual." Another limitation to focus group research is that preconceived personal biases may exist among the observers of the groups. These personal biases may cause them to listen for inputs that confirm their own opinions and affect the interpretation of the group's output.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### The Marketing Concept

Marketing as a discipline has its basis in business. It is, according to Kotler and Levy (1969), the task of finding and stimulating buyers for a firm's output. The American Marketing Association more recently and broadly defined marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives (cited in Skinner, 1994). This broader definition allows the principles of marketing to be applied in all exchange situations where organizations are attempting to satisfy the needs and wants of individuals and organizational buyers. This includes higher education and its efforts to attract students to individual campuses across the country.

More recent business marketing literature develops the idea of the marketing concept by explaining that the marketing concept is a management philosophy and that "an organization should strive to satisfy the needs of consumers through a coordinated set of activities that also allows the organization to achieve its own objectives" (Skinner, 1994, p. 14). It is widely believed that organizations who follow this concept of customer focus are more successful than those that do not, and in the 1990s, many think that being customer-oriented is mandatory for survival.

The idea of the marketing concept is widely embraced in business and, according to the literature, is also considered as an appropriate philosophy for higher education. As early as 1973, Eugene Fram presented an important paper entitled, "Positive Steps for Marketing Higher Education" to the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Higher Education. Fram's paper introduced the potential value of business marketing principles to help solve problems in higher education. Fram discussed the idea, taken from the business world, of the marketing concept which demands that policies be built on a base of customer needs. Fram argued that the marketing concept also

applies to the educational world and requires serious research of the market. He stated that institutions of higher education must offer something of value to students, donors and others. His paper also suggested that it was the responsibility of college administrators to conduct research to determine what influenced a student's college choice (Fram, 1973).

Later studies continue to support the usefulness of the marketing concept in higher education and the important role it plays in enrollment management (Grossman, 1987; Huddleston, 1980). However, while the concept appears to be a good theory for higher education, implementing the idea of a student-focused system supported by thorough research of student needs and wants is much more difficult. Studies dealing with the marketing concept in the university setting have shown that colleges and universities are falling short in true acceptance and implementation of this concept. While college administrators claim that their institutions embrace the marketing concept philosophy, students are not always in agreement that colleges are student-focused (Stewart, 1988).

According to the marketing concept, an organization's major focus should be satisfying customers. In order to satisfy customers it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of customer needs and wants (cited in Skinner, 1994). To gain this understanding, it is necessary for organizations to conduct marketing research with their customers. This equally applies to higher education. If an institution adopts the marketing concept as the key to increasing student enrollments and to its ultimate success, then, as Fram suggested, it is necessary to conduct marketing research that helps the institution understand the needs and wants of the students.

#### Review of Higher Education

##### Marketing Literature

Higher education marketing, in general, is a relatively new concept that does not appear in the literature until the 1970s. Early studies were primarily focused on the acceptance and appropriateness of higher education marketing on campuses (Sussman, 1979; Taylor, 1981). Taylor (1981) at Southern Illinois University wrote a dissertation with the purpose of determining the perception of selected academic deans toward various aspects of marketing higher education. The result of this

and other studies showed that there was mixed acceptance of the practice of higher education marketing at the time, but that deans and administrators believed that it would continue to be a part of higher education in the future. Taylor's prediction was correct, a follow-up study in 1985 (Milo, 1985) revealed that admissions directors, once only the "processors of applications had become marketing consultants." Administrators at all levels were now in broad support of higher education marketing and were involved in the role of recruiting.

By the 1990s, primarily due to declining enrollment and funding, research in higher education marketing exploded. Journals solely addressing issues in higher education marketing were published. Countless studies dealing with higher education marketing filled the pages of these and more established academic journals. A 1992 article published in Marketing in Higher Education provided an overview of this exploding field by borrowing from previously published ideas and sources. The article describes the evolution of marketing in colleges and universities and elaborates on the concepts of strategic marketing management and other business marketing

techniques that will likely become "more prevalent in higher education" (Simmons & Laczniak, 1992).

The higher education marketing literature can be divided into multiple subject areas. These categories include: faculty and administrator attitudes toward marketing and recruiting; methods for developing marketing plans; applying marketing strategies and theories such as the marketing concept, strategic planning and market segmentation to university settings; targeting older and non-traditional students; promoting and recruiting at the graduate school level; the role of the admissions officer in higher education marketing; ways to organize the marketing function within an institution; the role marketing plays in the survival of small private institutions; marketing as a function of corporate philanthropy and fundraising at the university; and, factors influencing college choice. Some of the most recent literature published in the area of higher education marketing focuses on marketing to minorities (Buresch, 1994; Horvat, 1996; Peeler, 1995) and the economic impact of colleges upon the community (Stout, 1995). As proven by the number of subject areas alone, the quantity of published research on higher education marketing is

immense. From all indications in the literature, this idea of marketing, that was once considered as "inappropriate" for higher education, is a growing and widely studied field that will continue into the future.

#### Review of College Choice Literature

The general field of higher education marketing can be subdivided into a much smaller area of research known as college choice. These studies in higher education marketing deal specifically with factors influencing a student's choice of college. This is the type of work that Fram referred to when he said that it is "important for college administrators to conduct research to determine what influenced a student's college choice so that they can undertake realistic institutional planning and reform."

Studies that focus on students - the consumers of education - are related to the idea of college choice. It is necessary to use students as a source for information and to understand their needs, wants and attitudes in order to identify factors that will influence them to choose a certain college (Absher & Crawford, 1996).

Studies about students are relatively limited but extremely valuable. One of the earliest and broadest student-based marketing studies is Alexander Astin's

Freshmen Student Survey at the University of Southern California; this longitudinal study, which began in the early 1970s, profiles freshmen students at UCLA both demographically and psychographically. In the annual freshmen survey, students answer questions about their own background, their interests and expectations, their educational and career goals, and other attitudes, opinions and facts (cited in Pace, 1976). Descriptive research about student populations is extremely helpful in targeting students and influencing their decision making; but, based on a review of the literature in higher education marketing, outside of Astin's ongoing study at UCLA, student based marketing studies are limited.

Even more limited are the studies which attempt to understand what influences freshmen students, as consumers of education, to choose one college over another. Researchers have recently begun to analyze how college choice decisions differ among ethnic groups (Coccari & Javalgi, 1995; Hurtado, 1996) and how differing race and ethnicity impact perceptions about college experiences (McDonough & Antonio, 1996). Others studies are investigating the college selection decision-making process of high school students (Galotti & Kozberg, 1996). These



studies reveal that the college choice decision is perceived as a "life framing one" for most students.

It is important to make a distinction, when analyzing the college choice literature, between college characteristics and sources of information about colleges. There are essentially two questions in the area of college choice: (1) What *sources of information* are most influential for a student making his or her college choice, such as parents, admissions counselors, campus visits or marketing materials; and (2) What *characteristics or qualities of a college* make it more or less attractive to students (e.g., size, cost, reputation or location). Many researchers address both areas within the same study but don't always distinguish between their differences. A thorough analysis of the literature reveals that when determining the factors that influence a freshmen student's college choice, there are two primary aspects to consider: What does the student want from a college? How does the student find out about it? Both of these factors are critical in developing a freshmen recruitment strategy.

## Sources of Information Influencing College Choice

The sources from which students collect information about colleges is very important in higher education marketing. These sources vary from high school counselors to magazine ads to what friends say. It is critical for the higher education marketer to identify which sources are the most influential with students and how they impact their decision making process (Hamrick & Hossler, 1996).

There are a group of studies that focus on the sources of information considered the most effective for high school students in choosing their college. These studies almost all point to individual campus visits as the most influencing factor. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching asked 1,000 high school seniors what source of information was most important in selecting a college to attend. Campus visits ranked first by the majority of these freshmen. This was followed by college publications and videotapes, meetings with college representatives, and personal letters (Carnegie Foundation, 1984).

Firsthand information obtained from a personal visit to campus proved to most influence a student's decision

making process. This primary source of information was followed by mailings and admissions counselor visits to high schools as most important (Kellaris & Kellaris, 1988). The importance of campus visits was again shown by Jonas (1992) in a freshmen survey conducted at Cardinal Stritch College in Wisconsin. King (1986) showed that at Mount Union College in Northeastern Ohio, students again indicated that their visit to campus was the single most important source of information in their college decision making process. This study also indicated that campus visits were most important for out-of-state residents and those who began their college decision making process during their junior year of high school. An additional study at Trinity University in Texas identified a strong correlation between campus visits by admitted applicants and the proportion of admitted applicants who matriculated there (Yost & Tucker, 1995).

There is another body of literature that points to parents as the most influential source of information when choosing a college. At small liberal-arts colleges, parental influence proved to be the most important factor in deciding where to attend college (Comegys, 1991; Zivic, 1989); in fact, in cases where the cost of tuition was

higher, parents seemed to exert more influence. A 1985 survey by the Carnegie Foundation revealed that parents were more than twice as likely to influence students to select a college, followed by friends, then teachers and counselors (Boyer, 1986).

High school guidance counselors also influence students' college choices to a lesser extent. One recent study investigated the opinions of 125 high school counselors about a college's academic reputation and their influence in the college choice process (Grossman & Cooper, 1996). This study revealed a high degree of counselor uncertainty about institutions.

#### Influence of Marketing Materials

According to the literature, another source of information that influences a student's decision to attend a particular university is the marketing materials that are made available to the students. Research suggests that guidebooks and ratings have a small affect on college choices (Hossler & Foley, 1995), but that the Internet is becoming an increasing popular tool for recruiting new students (Brown, 1996).

The most commonly used marketing materials are brochures and booklets that are mailed to prospective

students or distributed through high school guidance counselors. While these university-supplied materials are not as important as campus visits and parental influence, they do serve a role in the decision making process. In the 1985 Carnegie Foundation Survey of the Transition of High School to College, college publications ranked second behind campus visits as the most important source of information for college freshmen (Carnegie, 1986). Mailings from the college ranked second behind campus visits in a survey done by small liberal-arts colleges (Kellaris & Kellaris, 1988).

A thorough study done by Anderson (1994) analyzed the admissions materials from four different universities across the country. This analysis rated publications based on personal attention, how well they answered specific student questions, how their pricing information was presented, and the image they portrayed in their material. The findings were shocking. Some of the universities sent the materials to the student with his or her name spelled wrong. The pricing information was hidden in small print in the back of the bulletin with fees and tuition bundled together so that it was impossible to determine a per-credit-hour cost. Three of the four universities had

pictures in their materials of class being held outdoors on a sunny day, "leading the reader to believe that this was a common occurrence" (Anderson, 1994, p. 36). According to the limited amount of literature analyzing this aspect of the student decision making process, there is a great opportunity to influence students' college choice by improving the marketing materials that are sent to prospective students.

#### College Characteristics

##### Influencing College Choice

Another important element in understanding the factors that influence freshmen students' college choice is to identify not only where they get their information about colleges, but what particular qualities or characteristics of an institution make it attractive to students. A broad scope study investigated variables affecting college-bound students' decision to attend certain colleges. The findings indicated that the institutional characteristics, especially college location and the student's test scores at or above the institutional average, most influenced students' college choices (Weiler, 1994).

In 1981, Joseph Gilmour completed a study for Penn State entitled, "How High School Students Select a

College." Gilmour's study stated that high school students are influenced by academic programs, cost, location, parental views, guidance counselors and alumni. The study also noted that in general, students with higher Scholastic Aptitude Test scores and college-educated parents are less influenced by factors such as cost and location and more interested in academic programs.

A review of the literature reveals that cost characteristics are becoming more prevalent in the college choice decision process. In one study, a group of high-ability students choosing among a small group of similar institutions were influenced by attendance cost (Weiler, 1996). Finance-related reasons were found to have direct and indirect influence on college choice in several other recent studies (St. John, 1996; "Where have all the graduates gone?", 1995). In addition, an ongoing study of tuition discounting at independent colleges and universities reveals the importance, but difficulty, of keeping the public informed of discounts. This study cautions that as the discounting trend continues, administrators must make sure it is in line with meeting institutional objectives (Lapovsky, 1996).

Several studies with high school students were conducted and revealed that regardless of which types of institutions they selected, cost of tuition, published marketing materials, and the opportunity for employment resulting from the educational process were the prime influencers for high school seniors in choosing their colleges (Schultz 1991).

The factor of institutional image has recently surfaced as the prevalent college characteristic that influences freshmen's college choices. Robert Sevier, a consultant for higher education marketing and student recruitment, maintains that image or reputation is the most important factor influencing college freshmen choice (Sevier, 1994). Each year his consulting company asks thousands of high school students and first year college students why they chose the college that they did. When asked to choose their top four reasons, they said: image or reputation, location, cost, and the availability of a specific major. According to Sevier, when the students are pressed to choose their top reason out of the four they generally say "image."

An analysis of the literature reveals a great variety of conclusions from a number of studies dealing with the



topic of college choice. It is obvious that there is no single characteristic about an institution that makes it more attractive than another; but, if taken as a whole and analyzed, the overall top five reasons which influence student choice are: academic reputation, parental influence, geographic location, cost, and programs offered. The relative importance of each of these varies by the type of institution.

The idea that different college characteristics influence different types of students to choose different types of institutions is related to the basic marketing principle of segmentation (Brown, 1991). Market segmentation is the process of dividing a market into distinct, homogenous groups based on their differing requirements of product benefits.

This can be applied to higher education by taking the traditional college characteristics and dividing the student market by the importance they place on each characteristic. Brown did this in his 1991 study and found that among 17 image areas (some academic and some not), students could be segmented based on the importance they place on each of these areas. He identified four segments of the student market: classroomers, socialites,

conservatives and sports enthusiasts. The classroomers group was the largest. They place the most emphasis on quality education, faculty and educational facilities. The socialites were interested in recreational and social activities, the physical attractiveness of the campus, and the campus organizations. The conservatives wanted a convenient accessible location and good community surroundings. This group was most interested in the cost of attending the institution and the opportunity for job placement. The smallest group was the sports enthusiasts. Their primary emphasis was on intercollegiate activities and facilities.

This type of study in college choice research is significant because it recognizes the fact that different types of students will select different characteristics as the most important. It is virtually impossible to identify one quality of the college as being the most important attribute in attracting students, because not all students are the same and not all colleges are the same.

One study was conducted which analyzed the relationship between demographic factors and college choice (McGrath, 1988). The study concluded that college factors rather than demographic factors of the student were more

related to college choice. This finding, taken with Brown's segmentation analysis, has important marketing implications for higher education administrators. It indicates that important factors for college choice will differ by the type of college that is being marketed. Metropolitan universities, like the University of North Texas, would be expected to have different factors which influence its freshmen class than the factors that influence freshmen at small liberal- arts or large research institutions.

#### Factors Influencing College Choice at Metropolitan Universities

It is evident that metropolitan schools, such as the University of North Texas, have different factors which influence their freshmen class than do other types of schools. Metropolitan universities are those institutions that are located in or around large metropolitan areas. Like the University of North Texas, they have specific characteristics by virtue of their urban location that make them unique. These schools are attractive to students for totally different reasons than other types of institutions. For example, according to the Entering Student Survey, the factors which most influence a freshmen student's choice to attend the University of North Texas are location close to

home, reasonable cost and size of UNT. A study done at another metropolitan university - California State University, Hayward - found location and place of residence as being a factor in first-year college students' satisfaction (Gin, 1995). These findings vary considerably from the findings of studies done at large research institutions and small liberal-arts colleges where academic reputation and class size rank high (Zivic, 1989).

An unpublished survey from another metropolitan university - Wright State in Dayton, Ohio (1995) - revealed similar findings to those at the University of North Texas with location and cost being the top two factors which influenced their students' decisions to attend Wright State. These factors are again quite different than factors influencing freshmen who attend other types of institutions. Clearly metropolitan universities have special characteristics which make marketing to their target freshmen different from marketing at other more traditional institutions.

The review of the literature found only a few studies relating to the marketing of metropolitan or urban universities like the University of North Texas. One is a published guide by researchers at Pennsylvania State which

focuses on their use of alumni to recruit undergraduates (McCoy & Allen, 1991), and the other is an article discussing the problems with "marketing positioning" at metropolitan universities (Brown, 1993). A third is a recent dissertation written at the University of Central Florida which measures freshmen students' satisfaction with 12 college characteristics versus their expectations of college life (Anthrop, 1996). This type of study could help Central Florida and other metropolitan universities adjust these characteristics to better meet student needs and wants in the future. It is clear in searching the literature that much more research could be done to understand the specific reasons freshmen students choose to attend metropolitan universities.

A self-administered telephone survey of the institutions belonging to the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities revealed that only slightly more than half (55 percent) of the metropolitan universities annually conduct surveys with their freshmen classes to determine what factors influenced their choice to attend their college. These findings reveal that many metropolitan universities are unaware of what particular factors draw students to their institution and therefore

are lacking in their ability to better market and recruit new freshmen.

#### Focus Group Research

In the few published studies that have analyzed students' opinions and factors influencing their decision making about which college to attend, almost all have used questionnaires and survey research as their method for gathering information. Further, among the metropolitan universities asked, all who did this type of research were using a questionnaire as the sole tool to understanding. These questionnaires are somewhat repetitive in nature and fail to provide in-depth understanding of the students' decision making process. The survey research has served as a good starting point for many institutions; but, as higher education marketing develops, research tools which provide more specific information may be necessary.

Focus group methodology has become a very popular method of customer research for businesses in recent years and possibly the most widely used means of collecting primary data from consumers (Greenbaum, 1990). A survey of marketing researchers revealed that they prefer the use of focus groups as a means of data collection over other methods of research including personal interviews,

telephone interviews, mall-intercepts, and mailed surveys (Pride & Ferrell, 1995, p. 148).

According to business marketing research, focus groups allow researchers to observe a group interaction when participants are exposed to an idea or concept. Focus groups are helpful in spotting consumer trends and are an "excellent means of obtaining valuable information from customers" (cited in Skinner, 1994). By asking probing questions and initiating free open discussion with other consumers, focus group research helps marketers identify their customers deepest desires and provides suggestions for satisfying these desires.

While business has used focus groups widely in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of customers needs and wants, higher education has failed to use this methodology to any degree. In fact, a thorough search of the higher education marketing literature reveals that no studies have been conducted that utilize student focus groups. Most of the student-centered research involves survey questionnaires which can only provide a top-line understanding of the problems and opportunities that students perceive at universities. The use of qualitative,

probing focus groups has been not been utilized in higher education marketing research.

### Conclusion

Higher education marketing is a relatively new research field that has exploded in the last decade as colleges and universities began looking for ways to attract students and build enrollment. A subset of the higher education marketing literature is that of college choice. This body of literature focuses on why and how students choose their colleges. There are two aspects to this research. One aspect is understanding the sources of information that most influence the decision making process, while the other is understanding the key characteristics of an institution that make it attractive to students.

College choice studies up to now have primarily used survey research to collect their data. There is no research to be found in the published literature that goes beyond top-line surveys and uses focus group methodology to more deeply understand freshmen students' motivations, needs and wants. Though focus groups are widely used in business to reveal consumer preferences, they have been completely



underused by higher education according to a review of the literature.

Metropolitan universities - those schools located in major metropolitan areas - are a unique type of institution with unique characteristics and qualities. Few published studies have been done at metropolitan universities. There is clearly a void in the literature regarding the factors that influence college freshmen's choices to attend metropolitan universities. By using focus group research with freshmen students at a metropolitan university, this dissertation will help fill this void in the literature. It can also be applied to other metropolitan universities, therefore contributing to the efforts of recruiting and marketing personnel at these institutions across the country.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Instrument

The instrument for collecting the data in this study was focus groups. According to Greenbaum (1988), focus groups are group discussions approximately 90-minutes long, led by a trained moderator, involving eight to ten persons who are recruited for the session based on their common demographics, attitudes or buying patterns germane to the topic. The focus groups for this study followed these guidelines. The groups were 60-70 minutes in length, were led by a trained moderator, and involved six to ten participants who were all freshmen students at the University of North Texas.

For the purpose of this study, a total of ten focus groups were held on November 4 and 6, 1996, at a focus group facility on the campus of the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. Four one-hour groups were conducted on Monday, November 4, 1996, between the hours of

8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. An additional six one-hour groups were conducted on Wednesday, November 6, 1996, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. A thirty minute break was taken between each group.

Greenbaum suggests that the groups be as homogenous as possible in terms of their ages and sex. Therefore, all of the participants were freshmen students enrolled full-time at the University of North Texas. The groups were either all male or all female. There were a total of five male groups and five female groups.

The recruitment of the participants was a two-stage random selection process. The participants were recruited randomly from a list of 500 male and 500 female fall 1996 freshmen students at the University of North Texas. This list was generated by random selection by the University Registrar's Office from their database of 3,843 freshmen students. Each participant was asked to sign a letter of consent to participate in the study and was given a free pizza coupon in exchange for their time and input.

#### Procedures for Collection of Data

A professional moderator, Janet Baselice, was hired to conduct the groups. Baselice is a field research specialist for Decision Analyst, an Arlington, Texas, based marketing

research firm. Baselice had extensive experience in leading focus groups and was very aware of possible pitfalls of this type of research. Her experience and expertise aided the study by maximizing the level of discussion of the groups by not allowing one participant to dominate the discussion, but instead encouraging every participant to speak freely. She developed and probed into all issues raised by the participants which related to the research questions. At the same time, Baselice was able to successfully redirect the group when the discussion swayed from the research topic. Baselice was compensated at a professional fee for her service.

Baselice led the groups by using a moderator's guide (see Appendix A) which outlined the research questions and provided a flow to the discussion. By strictly adhering to the outline, the moderator was able to conduct each group with a similar format and flow. The moderator's outline also ensured that each group had a chance to respond to every question. This consistency across all of the groups enhanced the quality of the data that was gathered and allowed for all the groups' responses and discussions to be analyzed as a whole.

Baselice began each session by introducing herself and having each participant introduce themselves and state their hometown. Prior to actually beginning the focus group discussion, she explained the purpose of the study and informed the participants that they were being recorded by a video camera and being observed through the two-way mirror in the back of the room.

The facility used for this study was specifically designed for the purpose of observing children's play-groups, so it was ideal for focus group research. A ten-foot by ten-foot specially constructed room was used which had a two-way mirror on the back wall. On the other side of the mirrored wall was a small passageway for the observers. With the lights on in the room and the lights off in the passageway, the focus group participants were unaware of the observers, but the observers could see the participants clearly. The room was also equipped with a video camera and microphone in the ceiling. This equipment was very unobtrusive to the participants, but provided a full view of the room and clear sound for recording. The observers also wore headphones which allowed them to hear the conversation and discussion in the room during the focus groups.

The primary observer of the groups was the researcher, who used a copy of the moderator's outline and a check sheet to record responses made by the group and take notes of their discussion. Each group was recorded on a separate check sheet (see appendix B). These check sheets included the date, time and gender of each group. Each focus group session was also videotaped and marked with the date, time and gender to correspond to the written notes. After each group, Baseline and the researcher would discuss the group and make additional notes about specific insights.

#### The Population

The University of North Texas is a large, metropolitan research university located in Denton, Texas, about 30-miles north of Dallas and Fort Worth. The total student population at the University of North Texas in the fall of 1995 was 18,649; of these, 78.7 percent were white, 7.6 percent were African-American, 7 percent were Hispanic, 5 percent were Asian, .7 percent were Alaskan native; and, .8 percent were nonresident international students. Of the 1995 enrollment at the University of North Texas, 50.7 percent was female while 49.3 percent was male.

The freshmen class in 1995, according to the Entering Student Survey, was primarily between the ages of 18 and 20

with 93.5 percent being age 18 or under. There were 861 female and 636 male students who took the survey. The freshmen population at the University of North Texas is primarily residential. Most freshmen live in the UNT residence halls. Only 8.4 percent live in Denton in off-campus housing and 15 percent live outside of Denton.

Students at the University of North Texas are sensitive about the cost of their education. Almost half of the freshmen students intended to be employed 20 hours or less per week and 16.7 percent intended to work up to 30-hours per week. All but 19.7 percent intended to apply for financial aid at UNT. When asked what factors influenced their decision to attend UNT, 65.2 percent checked reasonable cost.

#### Selection of the Sample

The focus group participants for this study were randomly selected from the total population of freshmen students at the University of North Texas. The University Registrar's Office provided a randomly selected computerized listing of students' names, addresses and telephone numbers from their registration database of 1,750 male and 2,093 female full-time freshmen students in the fall of 1996. The list included 500 female students and

500 male students. The addresses and telephone numbers on the list were the student's permanent home address and telephone number in most cases; therefore, contacting the students for recruiting purposes often involved two steps. First, the researcher contacted the student's parents at the telephone number on the list and asked them for the student's on-campus telephone number. Second, the researcher telephoned the student at their on-campus residence.

Students were telephoned beginning with the first name on the list, followed by the second name, and so on. A student was reached at an average rate of one per every six telephone calls. Once a student was on the telephone the rate of willingness to participate was fairly high at about 85 percent. The primary reason that a student was unwilling to participate was because the time of the focus group conflicted with their class schedule.

When a student was reached on the telephone it was first confirmed that they were full-time freshmen currently enrolled at the University of North Texas. If they passed this screening question, they were asked if they were interested in participating in the focus group research. It was explained that the research was for the purpose of a



dissertation study and that it would only take about one hour of their time. They were told that they would be involved in a small group discussion with other students and asked about their likes and dislikes of the University of North Texas. They were also told that in exchange for their time that they would receive a certificate for a free pizza from CiCi's Pizza. If the student agreed to participate, they were read a series of times which were available for the groups. If a time agreeable to their schedule was available, their name was recorded and their address confirmed.

All students who agreed to participate and had a scheduled time were sent a letter within three days. The letter reiterated the purpose of the study and listed the specific time and place for the study. A return, stamped envelope was enclosed with an extra copy of the letter. Students were asked to sign the letter and return it as an indication of their willingness to participate. Only 30 percent of the letters were returned prior to the study; the remaining students were asked to sign a copy of the letter on the day of the study.

The sample of participants for the study had a high degree of observed representativeness versus the total

student population. The sample consisted of students observed to be between the ages of 18 and 20 with 84% of them white; 9% African-American; 3% Hispanic and 4% non-resident international students.

### Research Design

This study was designed to provide more in-depth information about questions that are being raised on the University of North Texas's Entering Student Survey. It was a qualitative study utilizing focus group discussions, therefore no experimental research design was necessary. The focus groups were held in the fall semester of the participants' freshmen year shortly after these students had made the decision to attend the University of North Texas, participated in freshmen orientation, taken the Entering Student Survey, and completed the enrollment process; so the topics that they were asked to discuss were current and relevant for them.

### Procedure for Reporting the Data

The procedure for analysis of the data of the focus group was handled by analyzing the contents of the group discussion as it related to each of the research questions. Pertinent statements made by the participants and the overall response of the group was documented for each of

the discussion questions. Check sheets were used in recording the responses of the group. The check sheets provided the researcher with a standard format and interpretation of the output of each focus group. Subjective analysis was then applied to the focus group discussions based on the researcher's personal observations, input from the moderator, and review of the videotapes.

Immediately following the focus groups, a post-group debriefing was held between the moderator and the researcher to clarify and discuss the focus groups' output while it was still fresh in their memory. After this discussion, the check sheets from the on-site observation were placed with the videotape of the session and marked according to time, date and gender of the group.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study were organized and presented according to the research questions addressed. Each research question was treated as a separate topic and presented in its own separate section of this chapter. The primary research question of this study was: What factors influence freshmen students to choose to attend large metropolitan universities such as the University of North Texas? The primary research question was then subdivided into three areas for exploration in the focus groups: (1) The level of friendliness of the University as perceived by freshmen students during enrollment; (2) The importance of academic reputation in freshmen's decision making process; and, (3) The effectiveness of marketing materials currently being used by the University. Therefore the analysis of the data is grouped into four sections dealing with the primary research question and the three sub-questions.

After the focus groups were completed, each one was transcribed from the videotape recordings and the observer's notes. This transcript appears in the Appendix. The transcript was then analyzed using the "cut and paste" technique (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). This technique involved going through the transcript and identifying those quotations that were relevant to the research questions. Quotations considered meaningful and important were "cut" from the transcript and "pasted" together with other quotations that answered the same specific research question. Once the quotations were grouped together according to the research question they answered, a pattern for analysis appeared.

Following the suggestions of Stewart and Shamdasani, each research topic was then "treated in turn with a brief introduction. The various pieces of transcribed materials are used as supporting materials and incorporated within an interpretative analysis" (p. 105).

#### Factors Influencing Freshmen Students College Choice

The primary research question - What factors influence college freshmen to attend large metropolitan universities? - was asked directly to each of the focus groups in several different ways. The moderator asked, "Why did you decide to

come to the University of North Texas instead of some other college?," and "What one or two deciding factors that led you to choose the University of North Texas?" Several responses were given to this question including "It was the only school that I got accepted at;" "I heard they had a good psychology department;" and, "My dad graduated from here." The three most common factors that the students reported were location, cost and academic reputation.

The most frequently stated factor for attending the University of North Texas was location. Every group mentioned location, and when pressed to give the one deciding factor that influenced them the most to attend the University of North Texas, location was always given either alone or with the factor of cost. This response was somewhat expected given the metropolitan nature of the University of North Texas and its close proximity to the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex; however, the advantage of the University of North Texas' location to students went beyond being close to home:

It was far enough away from home, but yet close to some family. A good experience to get out.

I live in Arlington about one hour away. I was planning to go to Tech, but I decided it was too far, so I came here.

Location. For me it's close enough to home, but it's far enough that I don't have to go home.

Location. It's close to Dallas and Fort Worth, but you're still in a much smaller place.

It was close to home, but not just down the street. I could come here to live but not be too far away from my family.

I live here, but I'm still close to my family in Dallas/Fort Worth.

I really don't know. I still don't know why. A friend of mine was going to come up here. So we came up. It was close to the metroplex. That's probably the biggest thing - the location.

Students see the location of the University of North Texas as a great advantage and as one of the main reasons they decided to attend. They like the location not only because it is close to many of their homes, but also because it is far enough away that they do not have to live at home. They like that it is close to Dallas and Fort Worth, while still being in a small college town. To many students, Denton and the University of North Texas is the best of both worlds.

The second most frequently given response when asked why they decided to attend the University of North Texas was cost:

Mine was location and price because I'm paying for myself. My job also transferred me up here.

I did know that North Texas has an excellent reputation as a academic institution. They offer a good education at a reasonable price.

The price. SMU was too expensive. I got in-state tuition. If I wouldn't have gotten in-state tuition, I would have gone to Georgia.

My parents were paying for it; they wanted me to go to UNT for that reason. I had to go in-state for sure.

Students are very aware of the cost of going to college and see the University of North Texas as an affordable opportunity. Many students spoke about the value of an education from the University of North Texas. Students recognized the University of North Texas as having an excellent education at a very affordable cost. Many compared the cost of the University of North Texas to other institutions, and when asked where else they considered attending, they often mentioned out-of-state or private institutions, but said they did not go there because of the cost. When asked if their parent's influenced their decision of where to attend, they often indicated that cost a factor.

The third most frequently given response to the question of why students chose the University of North Texas dealt with the area of academics. The participants in the groups represented a variety of academic majors,



however, regardless of their major, many indicated that they came to the University of North Texas because it had a good reputation in their academic field:

I heard about North Texas because of the their accounting program.

At the very beginning of my freshmen year, I wanted to major in psychology, and I knew North Texas had a good psychology program. But then I changed to elementary education, and they also have a good education program too, so I decided to come here.

I didn't hear about North Texas until the middle of my senior year and heard they had a good Psychology department.

They have one of the best programs for my major in the country.

I heard they had a good Journalism department.

While other data suggests that the University of North Texas is not known in a broad sense for its outstanding academic reputation and is often overshadowed by other Texas institutions such as Texas A&M and the University of Texas at Austin, the students in this study felt differently. Many were proud of their academic programs and cited it as their primary reason for attending the University of North Texas.

Probing questions were asked to dig deeper into the reasons why students chose the University of North Texas over other colleges. Students where asked what other

institutions were considered and why. They were also asked how much their parents influenced their decision to attend the University of North Texas. In general, Texas schools, such as the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M, were given as the other schools under consideration.

Reasons that these were not chosen included distance from home and difficulty being accepted. Parents seemed to have little influence on their choosing the University of North Texas except to the extent that they were paying their tuition and required them to attend in-state. Many students said that their parents supported whatever decision they made, just so they went to college somewhere.

#### Level of Friendliness on Campus

The next set of questions dealt with the level of friendliness of the University. To get a thorough understanding of the issues surrounding this question, the students were asked about their impressions when they first arrived on campus. These responses ranged from comments about the size and beauty of campus to the nature of their professors and classes.

I was impressed with the way the professors were able to help you. If you want help they'll get it for you, like in the computer labs.

I thought college was going to be hard. But it didn't seem that hard. I suppose they do that on purpose, so that it isn't overwhelming.

It's a very welcoming environment.

I like all of my professors. It's such a shock to come from high school. The professors here, this is what they want to do with their life. Not just teaching, but learning themselves.

Most of my classes are small and I thought they'd be huge.

People were so friendly.

The first day was good. It wasn't too much at one time. It didn't make me nervous.

The participants were then asked about any problems that they encountered when they first arrived. The most overwhelming response to this question was parking. Everyone agreed that parking was a difficult problem on campus. Other responses dealt with difficulties with registration, their residence halls, and being away from home for the first time.

Scholarship office is madness. I have to make trips back and forth to the Bursar and the Scholarship office. They have things mixed up. It is a big inconvenience.

I hated my hall. I moved after the first month. I didn't get along with my roommate. I'm in Bruce now. I was in Kerr.

It's the first time that you're away from your parents, you have to make the decisions to study or go out with your friends a lot of times. You don't have

to be home at any certain time. All the decisions you make are your own decisions.

Because I'm a commuter the biggest problem is parking. Everything else is pretty good.

I don't like the housing situation. I kind of got ignored. I didn't have a room at first. But when my parents got involved, then all of a sudden I had a room.

I was the first child to go to college. I just wasn't clear on how to get my scholarship money. I was run from building to building. I was kinda annoyed about that.

The students were also asked if they were surprised, either positively or negatively, about the University of North Texas or if their perceptions about the school changed once they arrived on campus. In general, students were surprised that life on campus was much better than they thought it would be. They were very nervous about coming to college, but many said that the University of North Texas was "relaxed," "laid back" and a "comfortable atmosphere." Other misperceptions about campus life included:

The professors were actual people. That was kinda surprising to me.

I was surprised how many people were up here. They said 27,000. At first I didn't realized how many people 27,000 was. But at the same time I have some small classes, like high school classes.

They were also asked if they thought people were friendly on campus. In general, everyone thought that campus was very friendly, though there were some notable exceptions:

No, not my dorm. There are a lot of upper classmen. I really felt out of place at first. Now it's okay.

I really had some problems with the people involved with the housing. I don't find them as friendly as other people on campus. She said they were helpful. But they didn't help me at all. We had problems with people making noise on the hall and being rude and little things, and we tried to get the administration involved, but they don't care. As much as we are paying to live in this place, we should get more respect.

Recruiting of new students is often done by existing students. Many come to the University of North Texas because they hear from family and friends that it is a good, friendly school. The new freshmen in the focus groups were asked if they would recommend the University of North Texas to one of their friends or family members:

Of course, it would depend on what they are studying, but if they are studying music or English or Business I would recommend it. I would also tell them that Denton is a nice city.

Yes, it is so much more laid back than I expected it to be. At first I was so nervous, but now I feel more at home.

There were not a wide range of responses to this question of recommending the University of North Texas to others. No one said that they would withhold a recommendation for the University of North Texas, but many did not respond. They seem a little confused and uncomfortable about influencing other people about such an important decision as which college to attend.

#### Image and Academic Reputation

The Entering Student Survey revealed some concerns about the image and academic reputation of the University of North Texas in the eyes of its incoming freshmen; therefore, this study attempted to use the focus groups to more thoroughly understand the significance of these factors in choosing a college. The focus group results reinforced that there is a problem with the image of the University of North Texas; however, the groups revealed some of the reasons and solutions for this image problem.

Students in the focus groups were ask to describe the image of the University of North Texas. Many said that it was a party school, others said that it was a music and arts school. Other academic strengths listed included psychology, english, business and journalism. As noted earlier, many chose the University of North Texas because

they believed it to possess an excellent academic program in their chosen field of study.

However, regardless of their personal belief that the University of North Texas was a good academic institution, most students admitted that the image and reputation of the University of North Texas was not as strong as other Texas schools. They felt that this was an unfair depiction of the school and was the result of ignorance on the part of their peers. Some believed that the lack of publicity and the lack of a strong football team were the reason for the University of North Texas's poor image.

It doesn't have too much of one. Not too many people, other than around the DFW area, know about it. Austin, a lot people know about it. Football will make it more well known.

It's an easy school. If you're not a music major, all the other majors that they offer are a lot easier than other schools.

Like in Arlington, TCU and SMU is really popular. When you say North Texas they say 'party school' or whatever.

A four year community college.

A music college. People see it as a big music college. It's the second biggest in the nation for music. They don't see the other stuff - economics or english.

The students in the groups were asked if they thought a degree from the University of North Texas was respected

or admired. This was a difficult question for them that caused some confusion. The overall conclusion was that a degree from any institution is respected and beneficial to getting your first job. Most students understood, that regardless of your degree, the major factor in your future success was the amount of effort you put into it personally.

If you told me last year that "I went to North Texas," I wouldn't be impressed because I wanted to go to a big name school, but now I feel different.

I think in this area, North Texas is especially respected. Employers in DFW recognize the name North Texas.

I knew it wasn't a Harvard or a Yale, known throughout the country. But it was known regionally. A lot of people came here. I was surprised of the number of people that have graduated from here. Everywhere I went, I ran into people that went here.

A lot of jobs don't care where you get your degree, just that you have a degree.

The way I see it, even if you do have a college degree, you don't have a guarantee. It depends on what you do with it.

Closely related to the image of the University of North Texas was a large concern about the lack of school spirit on campus. This issue was brought up independently in every group. Students believe that the lack of spirit at the University of North Texas was one reason for its



poor image and described dissatisfaction and disappointment about the lack of student spirit at the University of North Texas. There was no consensus that a better football team would result in more school spirit, but this was related to the discussion. Another related factor was the fact that a large majority of the student population were commuters and those that did live on campus traveled home every weekend leaving little opportunity to build unity and school spirit - at least in the traditional sense.

The spirit is really down.

My dad came up for parents' weekend, and we went to a football game. The visiting team had more fans than we did, and everyone left after half-time. At my high school, it didn't matter if you're losing or winning, everyone had spirit.

I went home for homecoming at my high school. That's what I miss - everyone having spirit. My high school had so much spirit.

I hate that everyone goes home on the weekends. I'm away from home, I don't want to have to go back. More than likely, it's Friday and everyone goes home.

Football does bring the school together. It is a symbol of the school.

I don't like the commuter aspect of it. My friend goes to A&M and everyone's right there. They do things together on weekends.

### Marketing Materials

The final area explored in this study dealt with the marketing materials that the University of North Texas is currently using to recruit students. Three pieces, a booklet, a brochure and a videotape, were shown to each of the groups. They were first asked if they had seen or used these materials when they were deciding to come to the University of North Texas. Almost all of the students said that they had seen the booklet and brochure. Only about one-third said that they had seen the video.

The most common place for obtaining the material was in the mail. Some picked up the information at College Day at their high schools. Students talked freely about the vast amount of literature that was mailed to them from various institutions. The common feeling was that the University of North Texas sent out less and lower quality materials than did the other schools that were recruiting them.

There were mixed responses when asked if the literature influenced their choice of the University of North Texas.

They all look the same except the cover. It comes down to a personal decision. The book gives you an idea, but it comes down to a personal decision - the

person themselves. The book just gives you some more information.

I'd already made up my mind when I saw the book. It's just basically advertising.

The brochure didn't influence my decision, it just provided additional information.

I was reading about my major and the financial section, and that helped me decide.

The students in the focus groups were asked how they would redesign the materials to make them more effective in recruiting high school students. When focus groups are used in this way, to spur creative thought and develop advertising communication, they can prove very beneficial. This study was no exception. The students had multitudes of ideas and were very free and comfortable about making suggestions about improving the materials.

The suggestions for changes to the booklet and brochure were very interesting. The most common suggestions for improving the printed materials were to make them more graphically interesting through the use of brighter colors, unique shapes and more visuals; and, to include easy-to-understand information about cost of tuition, books and housing. Since most students saw the cost of the University of North Texas as a strength of the institution, they believed that promoting the price in the literature and

comparing it to other institutions would improve recruiting efforts.

I just went through so many materials, and some were really neat. The ones from NYU had these bright colored spirals and they were different shapes. Like it needs to have neat shapes and bright colors.

More classroom pictures. Show more of Denton.

Pictures have a lot to do with it. You have to visualize something.

I don't think they have the prices per semester hour. They need to list the prices. I had to wait until orientation to figure out how much I was going to pay.

They don't emphasize enough about how well known they are in some fields, like music, they are known world-wide.

Some statistics to give you an idea that you are going to just some joe-blow college. We are good.

Something I'd like to see. I think this would be helpful to students, for the financial information [is to] show North Texas prices next to UT or Baylor's prices. Say this is our prices and this is what you get for the price compared to the other schools.

Several of the students said that the brochure and booklet were "cheesy." This is a term not familiar to the researcher, but it was worth noting. Apparently, being "cheesy" is not a good thing.

These pictures are cheesy. A lot of it is the same. These little pictures don't have action. I want to see something exciting happening. I want to see something realistic in the real setting, not just someone posing for a picture.

It's just advertising. Every school has their own. North Texas needs to get theirs up to standards.

They're cheesy looking. Some of the pictures look like they're from the 1980s. They need to hire someone to redo it for them.

It's such a cheese-ball thing to do to put a picture of the school on the cover.

#### Summary

The collection of data collected from the focus groups proved both comprehensive and detailed. The goal of the focus groups as a method for probing deeper into the basic research questions was accomplished as the student participants engaged in detailed discussions about their college choice, decision-making process, likes and dislikes of their institution, and ways to improve and enhance the image and communications of their school. The amount and quality of information gathered not only provided in-depth answers and solutions to the research questions, but also provided additional information valuable to the future marketing of the institution.

In summary, the major factors influencing a student's decision to attend the University of North Texas are location, cost and the reputation of certain areas of academic study. Though the location and cost seem obvious features of this metropolitan state institution, they go

beyond the obvious. Students tell us that being near the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex while still being in a small town is a big advantage to attending the University of North Texas.

The focus groups also revealed that students are aware and concerned about the cost of education. The participants in the study strongly indicated that the University of North Texas's low cost should be leveraged and promoted as an advantage of the school. While students are worried about the poor image of the University of North Texas, they believe that it is a strong academic institution, and its only real problem is the lack of publicity.

The University of North Texas is seen as a friendly, relaxed, comfortable place to attend college. The professors are well-liked and highly regarded. Denton is perceived as the perfect friendly, small, college town. While some specific problems were noted in regard to the residence halls, particularly in the area of roommate matching and cafeteria food, the overall satisfaction with college life was high. As on many metropolitan campuses, lack of parking and school spirit ranked as the biggest negatives for students.

The marketing materials currently being used by the University proved to be of greatest concern. Students reported not receiving the materials, getting higher quality materials from other institutions, and not being influenced by the materials that they received. Good ideas for improving these materials so that they are more appealing to college freshmen were generated from the focus groups. These ideas included making them more graphically interesting and including more easy-to-read information about the cost of an education at the University of North Texas.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

Ten focus groups consisting of freshmen students were conducted on the campus of the University of North Texas in the fall of 1996. The focus groups were held with the purpose of identifying the factors that influenced freshmen students when choosing a college to attend and particularly those factors that related to a metropolitan university, such as the University of North Texas.

Participants for the focus groups were selected randomly from a random list of full-time enrolled freshmen students. The groups were conducted in a room equipped with a two-way mirror and a videotape recording device. The room was designed specifically for observing and recording groups such as this. The one-hour sessions contained between six and ten students, either all male or all



female, and was led by a professional focus group moderator.

The moderator followed a prepared outline for each group. The students in each group were asked to speak freely about their feelings. They were specifically asked questions that related to the overall research question, including: What one or two factors influenced their decision to attend the University of North Texas?; How did they perceive the friendliness of the faculty, staff and students at the University of North Texas?; How important was academic reputation in determining their college choice?; And, how much influence did the marketing materials that they received from the University of North Texas influence their decision to attend there? Other probing sub-questions were also asked and related topics were developed as part of the discussions.

The outcome of the focus group discussions was very revealing. Most of the students spoke extensively and openly about their impressions of the University of North Texas and their reasons for attending. The three most mentioned factors influencing their decision to attend the University of North Texas were location, cost and academic reputation in their chosen field of study.

Students, in general, perceived the University of North Texas and Denton as a friendly place to attend college. They spoke very highly of their professors and expressed surprise at how small their classes were and how caring the faculty was about their learning experience. In terms of friendliness on campus, the only negative comments received related to housing and residence hall personnel, facilities, food and policies.

Students in the focus groups spoke highly of the quality of the education that they were receiving. They believed that the University of North Texas had high quality academic programs and deserved a better reputation than it receives outside of the campus. Many said that they chose the University of North Texas because they heard about the quality academic program that was offered in their selected area of study.

Students were less impressed with the marketing materials, which consisted of a videotape, brochure and booklet, that are currently being used by the University for recruiting freshmen students. Very few students saw the videotape, so limited data was gathered concerning this. The booklet and the brochure met mediocre approval. Students expressed frustration in trying to identify the

costs of attending college. They were looking for this information in the brochure and booklet, but felt that the brochure and booklet did not relay this information clearly. The students in the focus groups did provide some outstanding suggestions for improving these materials in order to make them more appealing to students.

### Discussion

This study contributes to the vast amount of literature on higher education marketing and specifically that literature dealing with college choice. This study extends that body of research in that it deals with metropolitan universities - a type of institution that has received little study to date - and, it employs a unique methodology, focus groups, that does not appear at all in the higher education literature.

Metropolitan universities, those surrounded by large urban areas, are a unique type of institution and attract students for different reasons than do other types of colleges and universities. The literature (Gin, 1995; Jones, 1995; "Entering Student Questionnaire, 1995) reveals the two most attractive features of metropolitan universities are their convenient locations and low attendance costs. This study supports those findings. The

two primary factors that students gave for attending the University of North Texas were also cost and location.

A third influencing factor was revealed in the focus groups. This was the perception among students of the outstanding academic reputation of the university. This factor, which typically ranks high among small, expensive, private colleges (Comegys, 1991; Zivic, 1989) proved to be an advantage also for the University of North Texas, a metropolitan university. This finding somewhat disagreed with the general research in the area of college choice.

Focus groups, a very popular method of research for business marketing in recent years, is not found at all as a methodology in higher education research. This study, therefore, provides completely new information on how to apply this effective business research tool to a higher education setting. According to the published literature (Boyer, 1996) most types of college choice research are done with survey questionnaires. Focus group research can provide more in-depth and probing answers to the difficult questions surrounding the wants and needs of students.

The college choice literature can be divided into two subgroups according to the nature of the influencers: sources of information that influence college choice, such

as parents, marketing materials, advertising, and what friends say; and the characteristics of the university that influence college choice such as location, cost of tuition, and availability of certain curriculum. The results of this study include information on both of these areas.

In the area of what sources of information influence students' college choice, this study thoroughly investigated the effectiveness of the marketing materials currently being used at the University of North Texas. The findings relating to these marketing materials were in parallel with the findings in the literature. Anderson (1994) discussed the hidden nature of pricing information in college brochures and bulletins. This concept came out clearly in the focus group discussions. Students repeatedly expressed frustration with being unable to locate the cost of attending college in the materials provided by schools.

The literature (Carnegie Foundation, 1986; Kellaris & Kellaris, 1988) also suggested that the materials that a university distributes to prospective students rank high among important influencers. The fact that this study found that the marketing materials were not, in general, considered interesting or useful to students indicates potential problems in this area.

In the area of college characteristics that attract students to attend a particular college, the literature speaks extensively of the importance of academic reputation (Boyer, 1986; Sevier, 1994). Early studies at the University of North Texas determined that cost and location were primary influencing characteristics for students; but this study revealed the importance and the positive perception of academic quality in choosing the University of North Texas. Some researchers in higher education marketing, such as Sevier, believe that "institutional image" is the single most important factor in recruiting a freshmen class. This focus group study extends and supports this finding and reveals the unique advantages that metropolitan universities have in this area.

In replicating this study, several changes could be made to the procedures. The researcher should attempt to recruit approximately 25% more students than are required for an adequate sample since not all of the committed recruits will be present for the actual focus group study.

Prior to the beginning of the focus group sessions, questionnaires should be completed by the participants. These questionnaires can help the researcher identify demographic characteristics of the participants and enhance

the ability of researcher to establish the representativeness of the sample. Furthermore, the questionnaires can ask a few basic research questions that will be addressed in the focus groups. This will get the students to begin thinking about the discussion topics as well as be used later in analyzing the data. Responses received on the questionnaire can be contrasted and added to the responses given in the focus group discussions for a more thorough presentation of the findings.

#### Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions seem warranted. Location is a primary factor that influences students to attend a metropolitan university. While convenient location is an obvious feature of a metropolitan university, which often goes unmentioned, it can be leveraged as a powerful tool for attracting students.

Students not only spoke of location as being convenient to their homes, but also that it was close to a major metropolitan area. For many students the many advantages offered by a big city is a positive reason to choose a metropolitan university over other institutions.

Cost of tuition and room and board were very important to students and students were very conscious of these costs as compared to other institutions. Students were frustrated by the difficulty of obtaining cost information during the college choice decision-making process.

The affordability of many metropolitan universities is a positive attribute for these schools and should be promoted more heavily in the recruiting process. Not only is the cost of tuition low, but many students live at home and work in nearby metropolitan businesses making the entire college experience more affordable for them. This opportunity for an affordable education is a major factor in the decision making process that can be greatly leveraged in recruiting freshmen students. A conclusion may be drawn that by making cost information more accessible to students during their college selection, metropolitan universities can have a distinct advantage over other institutions.

An important element in recruiting future students is the satisfaction of current students. Many students commented in the study that they heard about the University of North Texas from friends and relatives. The study also indicated that these current students will tell their



friends and relatives who are selecting a college about the University of North Texas. Their positive comments will impact the recruiting success of future freshmen classes.

Keeping this pass-along opinion factor in mind, this study investigated the current level of satisfaction that the students had towards their university after they enrolled. Small class size, friendly professors and the beauty of campus were named as pleasant surprises when students arrived on campus. This is a positive indication that students will pass on their satisfaction with the university to other students who are deciding on which college they will attend.

A conclusion concerning these pleasant surprises may be made for metropolitan universities. Metropolitan universities are not stressing these positive attributes of small classes and a friendly campus. If students were surprised by these attributes, how many more did not attend because they were looking for an intimate academic environment and believed a metropolitan university, surrounded by a big city, would not provide that for them? These are strengths of metropolitan universities that simply are not realized by most students when they are

selecting their college unless they know someone who already attends there.

Academic reputation and image were investigated in this study and a conclusion can be made that the many metropolitan universities do not enjoy a strong public image and may be taken for granted because they are so convenient and affordable. The students in this study revealed however, that they believe that their school was providing them a high level of education and felt that the current image of the institution by outsiders was an unfair depiction of the school. Many chose the university because of its reputation for strong programs in their chosen field of study and referenced outstanding accomplishments of some of the academic departments.

A conclusion may be drawn that students are concerned about image and academic reputation, particularly in their field of study. Metropolitan universities should stress their quality of education and demonstrate their strengths as an academic institution. Publicity and public relations efforts to enhance the school's image are not a waste and can greatly improve recruiting efforts. When the metropolitan university can overcome its "party school" or "four year community college" reputation and communicate

its strong academic programs alongside convenience and affordability; it will rise above most others in the college choice process.

The conclusions that can be made about the marketing materials were the most obvious. There seems to be some difficulty in the distribution of these materials, particularly the videotape. Students spoke of getting vast quantities of college recruiting materials in the mail during their senior year in high school. They described the materials from some schools as being scant, inferior and less interesting than the materials from other schools. Some students spoke of difficulty getting information about nearby metropolitan universities and that their high school guidance counselor did not have any information on these schools. An obvious conclusion may be that distribution methods of the marketing materials can be improved.

The marketing materials also appeared to be off-strategy in communicating with their intended target audience. Students were looking at these materials as a guide for choosing the school where they would spend the next four years of their lives. They did not see themselves depicted in the materials. They described the photographs as being out-of-date and not realistic. They

did not trust the materials as being a true reflection of college life. A conclusion may be drawn that these materials should be re-designed and updated with the college freshmen in mind.

#### Implications

Several implications may be drawn from this study. There are a variety of institutional strengths as perceived by students that are not being stressed by the current recruiting efforts at metropolitan universities. Administrators should refocus attention on these strengths of the university, as perceived by students who attend there, and emphasize these strengths in their recruiting communications and marketing materials. For example, the unique location characteristics are strengths for metropolitan universities. They should be featured in recruiting communications and marketing materials to students.

Promoting the low cost of attending state metropolitan universities, along with the high quality education provided, could be a powerful marketing tool. Students in this study suggested that schools should feature their costs directly alongside other nearby universities so that students and parents can make comparisons and realize the

low price of attending the metropolitan university. Cost information should not be hidden in marketing materials but rather amplified as a selling point for the university.

When marketing a university to 18 year olds, methods and materials will become outdated very rapidly. Trends change among this group more quickly than any other segment in our society. Particular attention to the most current graphic trends and communication styles are critical in achieving and holding the interest of this young consumer.

The marketing materials need to be updated, include more photographs and employ bright colors and more unique shapes. Most of all, the materials need to speak the students' language and show campus life in a realistic, relevant way to them. While the university is a traditional institution, marketing its strengths and benefits to today's student's may require non-traditional methods.

Further research in the area of student needs and wants are necessary to better understand what appeals, attracts and influences students when selecting their college. It is important to recognize that this student-centered research will become obsolete relatively quickly as this population's tastes change from year to year. The

research must be on-going, and key learning must be used quickly before it becomes obsolete. This is particularly true in the case of the metropolitan university, where its target population for recruiting is young, urban, students who are accustomed to fast-paced communication and are on the forefront of trends and fashion.

As marketing materials are developed, focus groups may be useful in critiquing creative executions and identifying communication obstacles. Focus groups with students may also provide a valuable basis for analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the university. This process could be incorporated into the long term strategic planning process of the university. Recognizing the importance of student perspective and opinions in the overall success of the institution will be essential for higher education administrators as colleges and universities compete for students in twenty-first century.

APPENDIX A  
MODERATOR'S GUIDE

University of North Texas  
 Freshmen Focus Groups  
 November 4 and 6, 1996

### RESEARCH QUESTION:

What factors influence freshmen students to choose to attend large metropolitan universities such as the University of North Texas?

### DISCUSSION OUTLINE:

- I. Introduction
  - A. We are tape recording and there are observers - but your responses will be used for research purposes only and your identity will be kept in confidence. The tapes will be destroyed when the research is complete.
  - B. Casual, relaxed, informal
  - C. No right or wrong answers
  - D. Discussion rules
    1. Talk one at a time
    2. Don't dominate the discussion
    3. Talk in any order
    4. Encourage others to participate
  - E. Personal introduction  
 Let's go around the room and tell your first name, major, and where you are from.
- II. Let's start out by discussing how you happened to attend North Texas.
  - A. Why go to college anyway?
  - B. Why North Texas instead of some other college?
  - C. What other colleges, if any, did you seriously consider - why?
  - D. What were the one or two final "deciding factors" that led you to choose North Texas?
- III. Once you arrived on campus, what were your first impressions? How did you feel that first day? That first week?
  - A. What problems did you encounter?
  - B. What surprised you positively? Was it better than expected?
  - C. Were people nice and friendly and make you feel welcome? Was the staff helpful?
  - D. Based on your initial experience at North Texas, would you recommend it to a friend or relative who is getting ready to choose their college.
- IV. Let's talk about what you like/don't like about North Texas.
  - A. What have you most liked, most enjoyed about North Texas?
  - B. What have you not like about North Texas?
  - C. What do you think is the major problems/weaknesses with North Texas from your perspective?
  - D. What are North Texas' advantages/strengths to build on in the future?
  - E. What's missing from the University of North Texas? What should be added?
- V. Let's talk about the image of North Texas
  - A. Do you think that North Texas has a good image?
  - B. How would you describe the image of the University of North Texas?
  - C. Has your perception of North Texas' image change since you started the semester?
  - D. How would you describe academic reputation?



- E. Does North Texas have a good academic reputation?
    - 1. Do people admire and respect a degree from North Texas?
    - 2. Is it known for academic excellence?
  - F. Is it important to you in choosing a school what degree programs are offered?
  - G. Is it important to you in choosing a school that it has good reputation for outstanding academics?
  - H. Do you expect to learn a lot while you are attending college
- VI. These are marketing materials that are used to recruit freshmen to North Texas.
- A. Do you remember seeing these?
    - 1. Did you watch the video?
    - 2. Did your parents watch the video or look at the brochure?
    - 3. Do you remember where you got these materials?
  - B. Before you got these materials were you aware of North Texas? Were you considering it?
  - C. Did these materials influence your decision to come to North Texas in any way?
  - D. What does "A Partner in Your Success" mean?
  - D. How can these materials be improved?
    - 1. Should they be designed differently? How?
    - 2. Should their be a different headline? What would it say?
    - 3. Should they be distributed differently?
  - E. Pretend you are an advertising executive responsible for designing an ad or a brochure cover that will attract high school students to come to North Texas.
    - 1. What would the ad say?.
    - 2. What would it look like?
    - 3. Make a rough sketch of your ad on this piece of paper.

APPENDIX B  
OBSERVER CHECKLIST

University of North Texas  
 Freshmen Focus Groups  
 November 4 and 6, 1996

Group Time/Day \_\_\_\_\_  
 Moderator \_\_\_\_\_  
 Male/Female? \_\_\_\_\_

**RESEARCH QUESTION:**

What factors influence freshmen students to choose to attend large metropolitan universities such as the University of North Texas?

**OBSERVER CHECKLIST:**

I. "Let's start out by discussing how you happened to attend North Texas."  
 (Comments)

A. What were the one or two final "deciding factors" that led you to choose North Texas?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Location/Close to home
- \_\_\_\_\_ Location/Other
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cost of tuition/Total Cost
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parental influence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Friends/Relatives recommended
- \_\_\_\_\_ People are friendly here/My friends go here
- \_\_\_\_\_ It offers the degree that I want to study/academic programs
- \_\_\_\_\_ It's a good school/good reputation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: (List)

II. Once you arrived on campus, what were your first impressions? How did you feel that first day?  
 That first week?  
 (Comments)

A. What problems did you encounter?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Enrollment problems
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dorm problems

\_\_\_\_\_ Felt nervous/confused/didn't understand process

\_\_\_\_\_ Problems with a teacher/in a class

\_\_\_\_\_ Homesick

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (List)

- B. Based on your initial experience at North Texas, would you recommend it to a friend or relative who is getting ready to choose their college.

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ UNSURE  
(Comments)

III. Let's talk about what you like/don't like about North Texas.

- A. What have you most liked, most enjoyed about North Texas?

- B. What have you not like about North Texas?

IV. Let's talk about the image of North Texas

- A. Do you think that North Texas has a good image?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ UNSURE  
(Comments)

B. How would you describe the image of the University of North Texas?

C. Is it important to you in choosing a school that it has good reputation for outstanding academics?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ UNSURE  
(Comments)

V. These are marketing materials that are used to recruit freshmen to North Texas.

A. Do you remember seeing these?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ UNSURE

1. Did you watch the video?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ UNSURE  
(Comments)

2. Did your parents watch the video or look at the brochure?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ UNSURE  
(Comments)

B. Before you got these materials were you aware of North Texas? Were you considering it?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ UNSURE  
(Comments)

C. Did these materials influence your decision to come to North Texas in any way?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ UNSURE  
(Comments)

D. What does “A Partner in Your Success” mean?

(Record Comments)

**KEY LEARNING/OVERALL IMPRESSION FROM THIS GROUP AS IT RELATES TO THE  
RESEARCH QUESTION:**

APPENDIX C  
PARTIAL TRANSCRIPTION  
OF FOCUS GROUPS

**Focus Group Interviews  
University of North Texas  
Partial Transcription**

*Moderator's questions are indicated in boldface type. Focus group participants answers are in regular type. A change in participant speaking is indicated skipping a line.*

**Introduction**

(The introduction was the same for all of the groups)

You all were invited here to participate in research for a Ph.D. dissertation. My name is Janet and I am a professional researcher. I do this for a living. I am not affiliated with North Texas in any way. Anything you say doesn't affect me in anyway, so you should feel free to speak your minds. There is a couple of things I want to let you know about. There is somebody sitting on the other side of the mirror observing us, making sure I ask all of the right questions. We are also being videotaped so we don't have to take so many notes during the session. There are no right or wrong answers. You don't have to speak in any order, let's just make sure we don't talk at the same time so we can hear you on the videotape. Okay, let's start by going around the room and giving your name, major and the city that you're from. (The students all introduce themselves, their majors and their cities).

**Group 1**

**November 4, 1996**

**8:00 a.m. Men**

**How did you hear about North Texas?**

I heard about North Texas because of the their accounting program.

North Texas is pretty big, but not that big.

I chose it for mainly just to get away from home.

Its proximity to Dallas just to get away from home.

**How big are the classes?**



I have one that is 500 but nobody shows up.

Mine varies from 15 to 300.

I have 20-30 in my classes.

**How did you decide to come to North Texas?**

I wasn't sure at first. I got a decent grade on my S.A.T. I wanted to stay in the state. I went to Waco High. I moved to Grapevine. Spent a year working and they asked me to come. They didn't have architecture, but they have design. I'd get my basics out of the way and transfer to an architecture school.

**Why go to college in the first place?**

It's the law. Either win the lottery or go to college. In my house it's the law.

You can't make any money with just a high school diploma.

I just turned 19 today, but I have a family and I'm married. I gotta get a good job.

When I got accepted to UNT my family said they would support me, so I couldn't pass it up.

**Why North Texas instead of elsewhere?**

I did know that North Texas has an excellent reputation as a academic institution. They offer a good education at a reasonable price.

First one I applied to and got accepted to.

I didn't have too much choice because of my S.A.T score.

UT was overcrowded and North Texas was good upcoming program. I applied to A&M and they turned me down., I applied a couple of other places, but I wanted a bigger school with a reputation to get you in the door, not some nowhere college.

Denton was a nice place. 30 minutes outside of Fort Worth and Dallas. Good location. Decent business school. It offered maybe not exactly what I wanted but as a whole, it was good.

I looked at a lot of private schools, like Baylor. That's why I like the cost here. Finally I realized that what I got for the cost here is greater than what I got for the cost there. It was either Baylor or here.

I really didn't have much choice. I wanted to go to UT at first cause everyone goes there. I don't know, I think if I had gone to UT I would have hung around with the wrong people.

I considered Texas Wesleyan in Fort Worth. Also Sam Houston, A&M. Seems like along time ago. I can't remember.

I briefly considered A&M because they have a reputation. They weren't exactly hospitable. I met some people that came to my high school.

I thought about Oklahoma, Arizona State and Baylor. I wanted to run intercollegiately. Mostly other colleges, it was just easier here.

**What were your first impressions when you got to North Texas?**

I was impressed with the way the professors were able to help you. If you wanted help they'll get it for you. Like in the computer labs.

I was expecting more conservative environment. I thought everybody did the same thing. Actually the campus was more liberal than I thought. More diversified. People, environment, in Austin you can stand out. You don't see big improvements here. From the environment I was raised in everyone got along, but up here people weren't open and outgoing. But it is more liberal than I thought.

I was kinda shocked. Up until now I drove everywhere and now I don't drive at all. Never. My job is close to most of my classes. I don't really drive to eat cause I have meal plan.

I thought college was going to be hard. But it didn't seem that hard. I suppose they do that on purpose, so that it isn't overwhelming.

It's a very welcoming environment.

I have doctors teaching my classes. I didn't expect a T.A. for every class but I thought I'd have more than I do. The campus is easy to get around. I knew a lot of people. I'm trying to make it before rush hour cause I live in Dallas.

**Were the people friendlier than you expected them to be?**

I found everyone to be real friendly here. People are willing to talk to you. People will help you out. I like that.

People slow down when you cross the street, where I'm from, you'll get hit (laugh). Most people are nice.

Lots of courtesy. No one wants to offend anyone. People hold doors open for ya. Lots of neat things.

I was expecting that it would be boring and I wouldn't know anyone, but when I got here everyone was a lot nicer than I thought.

Everyone in St. Louis is grouchy, but people here are in a good mood.

**What are North Texas's strengths?**

Not the football team.

For me their strength is academics-wise. They are real clear on what they want. Your studies, planning your courses. All the departments have everything planned out that you suppose to take. They are organized.

The beginning, everything is building. Football team, everything, they may not be winning, but everything is coming up. The business program is coming up. When I decided to come to North Texas I always found one or two people that went to North Texas and were professionals.

The advising is real good here. They take an interest in helping you. Academically I don't think that there's a better place to be in the state. Everything is growing here.

Music. Music is one of their oldest program. I know people who came a long way to be here for music.

That's their major reputation - music.

I heard more, the music, I knew this was a teacher college. I expected a lot of teachers. Either that or business. Everybody is a business major.

It's either music or business.

**What about things that they can improve on? Problems or weaknesses?**

When I was in advising, they didn't get you off on your feet. I jumped into a really hard class. I got a 50 on my first test, from A's to 50's is a shock for me. They need to sit down and specifically explain what to expect in the certain classes, like pre-requisites.

I gotta a class that I'm just happy to get a D in it. I can't see his face because the class is so big. Other than that, my other classes I'm getting B's.

I have no complaints academically. Its been better than I expected. An area that needs improvement is that we need to support our football team more. With 25 thousand students and only 1500 at the games. The student section should be packed.

I can't think of any. Most of the problems are with myself, not with the school.

I think dorm life can be improved. I seen a lot of people get in trouble for trivial things like radios, clicking glasses. Quiet hours are good but they take it too far.

I got written up at 10:05.

Parking is a major problem. I've sat at Sycamore and C and nobody stops at that stop sign. Cops only write parking tickets. They don't stop speeders.

My first week I got a parking ticket every single day. I have to part on the other side of the country. A parking pass is like 40 bucks. I didn't have any money after

buying my books. The meters are cheap. My wife picks me up.

**What other weaknesses?**

I have a self locking door in my dorm. I wear my keys, I take them everywhere I go. Sometimes, I lock myself out. I've gotten in trouble for checking out keys at the desk too many times. They say it's inconvenient. I do all the work, why is that inconvenient to them? It should be a service.

**How many live in the dorms?**

(4 raise hands).

**Do you think people admire a degree from North Texas?**

Going on a campus with a lot of kids, shows a positive. North Texas is an upcoming program. You're part of establishing that program. The more you succeed, the more they succeed.

I'd rather go to a school that has a lot of people that you can compete with.

I think in this area North Texas is especially respected. Employers in DFW recognize the name North Texas.

Before I got here I hadn't really heard of UNT. I knew that business administration was good. I knew that a lot of people came here for music.

I knew it wasn't a Harvard or a Yale, known throughout the country. But it was known regionally. A lot of people came here. I was surprised of the number of people that have graduated from here. Everywhere I went I ran into people that went here.

I figured since we went national with sports, we'll get more recognition.

Having Division One-A football helps.

**Let me show you some materials? Did you all get brochures like these?**

**(Moderator displays "Partner in your Success" booklet, brochure and video. All students nod positively to having seen the materials before)**

No, I haven't seen the video.

North Texas the movie.

**When you got this book what did you do? Did it influence your decision to attend North Texas?**

I'd already made my decision.

I got some specific information about programs. I came and registered that day.

I was getting stuff from everybody. North Texas started sending me a lot of stuff. I sent off for a lot of information. They sent me a lot of information. Plus they sent me stuff on housing.. That book right there, helped me outline what type of degree I wanted.

**Did this (booklet) influence anyone's decision (to attend North Texas)?**

It did a little bit. When a high school student is considering colleges, they are going to get this stuff from colleges all over.

They all look the same except the cover. It comes down to a personal decision. The book gives you an idea, but it comes down to a personal decision, the person themselves. The book just gives you some more information.

I'd already made up my mind when I saw the book. It's just basically advertising.

**Is there something that should be in this book that's not? If you were in charge of designing this book how would it be different?**

List of all the degrees. Like in the manuals, they have every single degree.

I would add more to it. They just showed the strong programs, not all the programs. They could have shown more pictures of the campus., different views. North Texas was

my only campus visit. You can't find out what a campus is like unless you hear from other students.

Something I'd like to see. I think would be helpful to students, for the financial information. Show North Texas prices next to UT or Baylor's prices. Say this is our prices and this is what you get for the price compared to the other schools.

## **Group 2**

**November 4, 1996**

**9:30 a.m. Men**

**Why did you decide to come to North Texas? Why go to college anyway?**

I wasn't ready to go to real work yet.

You have to if you want a decent job, much less a job in the first place. And same as him, I'm not ready to work either.

(You) have to for a decent paying job.

**Why North Texas instead of some other college?**

I originally planned to go to Texas Tech, but I didn't get my dorm papers in on time. My sister goes here, so I came here.

Just to save money for med-school. To keep me out of debt.

It's a good school, but it's not very expensive.

**What other colleges did you seriously consider?**

UT Austin. It's a pretty good school.

UT and Texas Tech because they have an architecture program and ASU.

University of Cincinnati. A&M Galveston. Our Lady of the Lake San Antonio. UC because I always wanted to go there. Galveston because of marine biology. Our Lady of lake San Antonio offered me a real good scholarship, but I went there and visited and it was much too small.

**How much influence did your parents have?**

They said 'wherever you want to go'. It's your choice.

Same here.

Basically anywhere in Texas was my option.

**What was your final deciding factor in choosing North Texas?**

I came up here and I like the campus a lot, it was really pretty. And the psychology program is pretty good.

I didn't have Texas accept me. So I came here, it was pretty close to home.

It was close to home. Save money.

**Once you arrived on campus what were your first impressions?**

I had to walk along way.

Bad parking.

Lot of freedom. It was interesting. You got to share a small room with a roommate. A lot of interesting people.

**What problems did you encounter when you first came here?**

Actually sitting down and studying. Trying to find classes.

Staying awake in classes. I got an eight o'clock history class and it's just like story time. But otherwise you just have to stick with the books.

It's the first time that your away from your parents, you have to make the decisions to study or go out with your friends a lot of times. You don't have to be home at any certain time. All the decision you make are your own decisions.

**What surprised you positively when you arrived on campus?**

The professors were actual people. That was kinda surprising to me.



I have two T.A.s and two professors. The professors are wonderful, the T.A.s are nervous. You can tell they are uncomfortable. But the professors are wonderful.

I was surprised how many people were up here. They said 27,000. At first I didn't realized how many people 27,000 was. But at the same time I have some small classes, like high school classes.

I have some classes that are small. Some that are big. It just depends what class. Like my English class only has 26 students, just like high school.

**Were the people nice and friendly when you got here?**

Yes.

There's a big difference. Maybe just because I'm not from here. But it does seem friendlier, maybe because its a smaller town.

Yeah, Denton is a small town. There are a lot of friendly people here. It's different than high school. Around campus, everyone seems to be pretty friendly.

I'm living off-campus, but there are a lot of college students around. Everyone feels safe because everyone's in the same boat.

In a big city, you feel like you can get in trouble or something, but on campus you feel relaxed.

**Do you fell that the staff and administrators have been helpful?**

Yes,

I don't know. The teachers are, I haven't really been around any staff.

I want to go study at the Biosphere next semester and everyone has been more than willing to help me with references and everything.

**What are North Texas's strengths that they can build on in the future?**

Size, it's not as big as UT Austin. but it's still big enough.

Lot of options for study.

**What have you not liked about North Texas?**

The dorm food.

I guess the fact that I am so close to home. I don't feel like I've gotten away.

I'm thirty minutes away. You basically go to school and you go home.

**What do you think is a major problem or weakness at North Texas?**

I haven't had big complaints, but I've had other people tell me that they've had professors that are real strict and had trouble communicating with the kids.

I'd like to see more clubs or extra curricular activities. I used to play lacrosse in high school. I expected to see something like that. But I haven't.

T.A.s. I know that they're always going to have them because they are cheaper.

It think the school spends a little too much money on the football team. It cuts out a lot of other programs that we don't have. I heard that it killed the men's soccer team and the baseball team because supposedly football brings in all this money.

I think football's important in Texas. To have a football team you need money and they don't have alumni support because they didn't have a team in the past. You have to pay money to make money. Once we have a football team, we can start building other programs.

Football does bring the school together. It is a symbol of the school.

**How would you describe the image of the University of North Texas?**

It doesn't have too much of one. Not too many people, other than around the DFW area know about it. Austin, a lot people know about it. Football will make it more well known.

Around the DFW area, it's kinda the joke. If you say you're going to North Texas people say 'why? It's not a college'. When you go to college, you go away.

Where I'm from, a lot of people use it as a stepping stone to get the basics out of the way before you go to A&M.

**Has your perception of North Texas's image changed since you've been here this semester?**

Oh yeah, I thought it was going to be so easy. But you actually had to study.

I guess when I got here I realized there are a lot of people here for business. It serves a purpose I guess.

I really like the school. I didn't have much of an image before I got here.

**How would you describe the universities' academic reputation?**

They're a joke is what I get from my friends. But I think it's great here. The classes are kinda easy, but they are supposed to be so everyone can pass them.

I know I've been working hard to get good grades. I don't know about the reputation. I study quite a bit. My sister's been here a couple of semesters. She's higher up and she's having some trouble now.

I don't perceive North Texas as having a high academic reputation. I think it is challenging, but it doesn't have that reputation. You don't have to have the best grades to get in.

**Do you think that people respect and admire a degree from North Texas?**

A lot of jobs don't care where you get your degree, just that you have a degree.

It depends what major you're in. If you have a business major, I think that's respected. The way I see it, even if you do have a college degree, you don't have a guarantee. It depends what you do with it.

**How important are the degree plans that are offered when choosing a school?**

Right now I'm just using this to get my med-school requirements out of the way.

It's important.

I think it's very important.

**I want to show you some marketing materials. Do these look familiar to you?**

Actually I got that the day I left for orientation, 'thanks, but I'm already going'.

I got them at college day at school. They had them there.

**Did you parents look through these?**

I don't know honestly.

My parents looked at all this stuff pretty serious.

They looked through the stuff from Lady of the Lake in San Antonio, but I didn't get anything from North Texas.

**Did these influence your decision to come here?**

Not really, I've been on the campus before, I'm from around this area. I was kinda familiar with what was going to go on here.

When I came down and looked at the campus, that made my decision. They (the marketing materials) just brought the campus to my attention more or less.

**What does a 'Partner in your Success' mean?**

That they are going to give you a good education so you can succeed in life.

A partner is someone who is with you. They are going to help you as much as you ask them to help you.

It's just a slogan, but it's kinda true.

**What suggestions do you have to improve those materials?**

I think I would list the actual activities. Kids want to have other things to do. You want to know more about clubs and how to meet people.

I think UNT has a pretty campus. They should show the campus a little bit more. Tell me what college life is like. I think Denton has a whole different thing to offer. Telling that to other people might bring them here more.

(Looking through the booklet) I just noticed here that they have a bunch of roller bladers on campus, that's illegal laughter). Yeah, same thing they say about social life. There's a decent amount in here. I guess I would add a couple pictures of Fry Street. All of the clubs, festivals, Fry Street Fair.

Let kids know that there is more to do than just school. That they aren't always going to be in classes.

**Group 3**

**November 4, 1996**

**11:00 a.m. Women**

**How did you happen do be here at North Texas?**

**Why go to college anyway?**

It's something my parents always told I was going to do. You go off and go to college

It has more to do with being qualified for the career that your going to do. You're going to mainly learn your career on the job. College just gives you the basics.

**Why did you all decide to go to North Texas?**

I was looking for a graphics arts school. Southwest Texas was too far away.

I really don't know. I still don't know why. A friend of mine was going to come up here. So we came up. It was close to metroplex. That's probably the biggest thing - the location.

The Journalism department. The price. SMU was too expensive. I got in-state tuition. If I wouldn't have gotten in-state tuition, I would have gone to Georgia.

**What other colleges were you considering?**

I was considering SMU. I came here because of the price. Plus SMU was too close to my house. I wanted to go away, but not too far away.

I considered UT in Austin.

Abilene Christian, but Abilene is too far away.,

I thought about Tech, but it was a joke. I went to boarding school in Tennessee.

**What were the one or two deciding factors that made you decide to come to North Texas?**

Cost and location

Cost and accounting program.

I looked here and Tech. People were really nice. Plus cost. I also looked at UT Austin and it was too big.

It is very diverse. SMU is not at all diverse. Look at this room, it is all different colors right now.

My sister went here. She is a senior now. She had a lot of influence.

The one friend came here and we started talking about it. It helped me make my final decision.

It was very popular at my high school. I think about 20% of my class came here.

I only knew two people from my high school that came here.

**Once you arrived on campus, what were your first impressions?**

People were so friendly.

The first day was good. It wasn't too much at one time. It didn't make me nervous.

I didn't have a roommate the whole first week. I was kinda lost by myself. But once I started meeting people and getting involved.

**What problems did anyone encounter?**

I didn't have any problems.

I don't think they really help you with classes and advising. The guy helping you enroll was so impatient.

Orientation was so rude. Like, here it is, do it.

Some people in my dorm

I had an appointment with my peer advisor last week and he helped a lot.

**When you first started what positive surprises did you have?**

The classes were smaller than I thought. I thought the classes were going to be huge, but they weren't

Some of my classes are smaller than my high school classes.

**Where people nice and friendly did they make you feel welcome?**

Yes.

No, not my dorm. There are a lot of upper classmen. I really felt out of place at first. Now its okay.

Everyone was on the same ground at first. We were all desperate to make friends.

I like my dorms. I live in Clark. We are all freshmen.

**Is there any problems with the faculty or staff?**

I have two teachers that barely speak English.

I have a teacher that is a genius, but he can't speak English very well. So he really can't communicate.

My economics teacher told us on the first day that she can't speak English very well. But if we can't understand

something about economics and we can't understand her it's a real problem.

I have a teacher with a hearing problem. He told us on the first day that he couldn't hear very well. The class started with 50 people, but there are about 12 of us left.

The lab helpers, the computer lab in Matthew's Hall, the majority are international students and don't have very good English.

**What have you most enjoyed about North Texas?**

I like my dorm. It is art majors and music majors. That's the kind of stuff I want to do too. It's really cool. There are upperclassmen that live there too. It's really fun.

On other campuses, everybody looks the same, they are all dressed the same. But here everyone is different.

I live at home. I wouldn't enjoy living here. But I like the school part. I don't know. It's like my teachers here tell you things that go on in the real world. They don't try to block you out. They teach you from experience.

**What are North Texas's advantages or strengths?**

The classes are great. The amount of classes. The different types of classes are great. The teachers really know what they are talking about.

I like the classes. I came here to go into music. I am still taking music, but I'm not going to major in it.

The schedule. You start your major your first year. You take some of those classes early so you can change before its too late.

They have good programs for people who are undecided about their major. They have good study programs to help you learn to study better.

**What are weaknesses of North Texas in your opinion?**

Spirit. The spirit is really down.



My dad came up for parents weekend and we went to a football game. The visiting team had more fans than we did and everyone left after half-time. At my high school, it didn't matter if you're losing or winning, everyone had spirit.

I went home for homecoming at my high school, that's what I miss. Everyone having spirit. My high school had so much spirit.

I forget we have a football team.

Just the past couple of weeks I have had some communication problems about my scholarship with the financial aid office and the bursar's office. That was difficult for me. They should have some sort of connection between offices.

Transportation. There is no transpiration to and from the airport. My taxi didn't show up and I missed my flight. There aren't a lot of things within walking distance. You need a car.

A lot of things that go on campus, I'm not aware of, like clubs and activities. You don't find out about them.

There is no communication. You can't read the bulletin board because there is so much trash up there.

There are a lot of people here, when you need to get something done, the lines are so long. The wait is so long. There are only two or three people working and the lines are so long - like for financial aid.

I had problems in my dorm room. I've turned in a work order, but they never get to it.

There is no major problems. Nothing that makes me hate North Texas.

**How would you describe the image of North Texas?**

In my high school if you can't get into other colleges, they say, 'you can always got to North Texas's.

At my high school nobody knew about North Texas.

I hate to back track, but I just thought of a major problem - the food. I have been going to Burger King. Kirk dorm has these chicken strips that are just awful.

**Do you think people admire or respect a degree from North Texas?**

I worked for Trammell and my supervisor graduated from North Texas. In my field (accounting) they do.

The music program is really respected.

I always wanted to major in journalism. If they didn't have journalism then I didn't consider going there.

Academic reputation doesn't matter. You decide if you're going to graduate or not.

Accounting is great here. You have to go to a school that has a good program for what you are looking for.

**Here are some marketing materials? Have you seen these before?**

**(Moderator displays "Partner in your Success" booklet, brochure and video. All students nod positively to having seen the materials before)**

I saw the video at my school

I chose the college, not my parents, but they watched the video.

I didn't like the video because it didn't show the school. It did a lot of talking. It didn't show in depth. It was like taking pictures, but it didn't explain.

I didn't have much of a choice, either here are Southwest Texas. It really didn't influence my decision.

I like the school, I kinda like the video. It only focused on certain areas. It didn't really focus on journalism or accounting or whatever.

**Where you aware of North Texas before you saw these materials?**

Yes, because my sister when here. At college night, I said I was interested in SMU and they sent me video tapes

brochures, but I didn't get anything from North Texas. I only knew about it because of my sister.

I didn't get much from North Texas. I only knew because they had a regional drama contest here. My counselor didn't have anything about North Texas.

I had to write to get everything. My high school didn't have anything. North Texas didn't advertise at all at my school.

SMU sends you tons of stuff, but North Texas just sends you one brochure. You didn't have to even tell other schools you were interested to get stuff from them. I listed schools on my SAT and then got stuff from them.

In the college books you get this little card and you check the schools you are interested in; but North Texas wasn't on any of those cards.

**Did these materials influence your decision to come to North Texas?**

Yes, I thought the cover was really pretty.

It was so green and pretty.

**How would you all improve these materials?**

The cover is great. It caught my attention.

They tell about people and stuff, but they don't tell about prices. When I started to look through books, I wanted to know how much they cost. If I can't afford it, then I can't consider it. The tuition is in here, but it isn't really clear.

I couldn't ever find out how much everything cost, tuition, boarding and everything.

When you start looking at books, you're starting to get serious so you need to know about costs.

They could put more pictures about people. There is a picture of a girl directing band, that did nothing for me.

The tuition and fees are very confusing. It gives you all of these lists of all of these numbers.

**What does a "Partner in your Success" mean to you?**

It didn't make that much of an impression on me.

It says that the faculty and staff want to work with you and stuff.

It says they are going to help you be successful.

You may love a school, . but if you can't afford it, what can you do - you can't go. The book should stress the cost.

**Group 4**

**November 4, 1996**

**1:30p.m., Women**

**Why are you all attending North Texas?**

At the very beginning of my freshmen year, I wanted to major in psychology and I knew North Texas had a good psychology program. But then I changed to elementary education and they also have a good education program too, so I decided to come here.

I didn't hear about North Texas until the middle of my senior year and heard they had a good psychology department.

I live in Arlington about 1 hour away. I was planning to go to Tech, but I decided it was too far, so I came here.

**What other colleges did you consider?**

I wanted to go out of state, but I have two younger sisters, so I couldn't afford to.

This is the school I really wanted to go to. I also applied at East Texas State.

A&M, but it's too far away. My family is in Dallas.

I only applied at Tech and North Texas. I also considered A&M, but I didn't apply.

**What were the main reasons that caused you to decide to go to North Texas?**

I heard they had a good journalism department.

It was close to home.

It was far enough away from home, but yet close to some family. A good experience to get out.

Because of the education department. My parents are divorced. My dad lives in Denton. I am living with him and commuting to campus.

**How much influence did your parents have in making your college choice decision?**

A lot of influence.

I really don't know. I guess my parents never went to college. They just wanted me to go to college.

They had a lot of influence. They didn't want me to go to Tech. That was a big factor in me not going there. Basically my whole family wanted me to go here. I have a boyfriend that lives in Arlington. That's not the main reason I came here, but it effected it a little bit.

**What was the one deciding factor that made you come to North Texas?**

Location.

Location.

Location.

**Once you arrived on campus, what were your first impressions?**

It was big. I got lost. Once I got around the first day, it was nothing.

It was big. I had to find the buildings.

I liked it because it was so big. I'm from a small town and I liked the change.

There is such a variety of people that go here. Everyone is different. They have their own style. You don't want to be around people just like you.

**What problems did you encounter when you first came to North Texas?**

Because I'm a commuter the biggest problem is parking. Everything else is pretty good.

I don't like the housing situation. I kinda got ignored. I didn't have a room at first. But when my parents got involved then all of a sudden I had a room.

I agree, the housing was a problem. I was in the dorms the first part of the semester, but I moved out because of a health problem. I have a chronic ulcer and I couldn't eat the food.

**What surprised you positively about North Texas?**

I think, what surprised me is that I recognize people that I went to elementary school with. I realized they were going here too.

The professors are friendly here. They aren't so distance.

I wasn't really surprised, except I didn't know if I'd like it. But I do really like it. I like the size of it. Most of the kids from my high school (Arlington) were going away. I guess when you're around a school you don't like going there as much, but I did. Denton really isn't a small town or anything.

**Do you find the people at North Texas friendly?**

It's a home town feeling.

I think North Texas is very friendly.

The staff was really helpful about my housing situation.

I really had some problems with the people involved with the housing. I don't find them as friendly as other people on campus. She said they were helpful. But they didn't help me at all. We had problems with people making noise on the hall and being rude and little things and we tried to get the administration involved, but they don't care. As

much as we are paying to live in this place, we should get more respect.

**Would you recommend North Texas to a friend?**

I would because it's a good all around school to come to. I would recommend North Texas to anyone. They have a variety of different majors. It's a great.

Its not overwhelmingly large. It is a good size.

North Texas is building. It's up and coming.

They make you feel at home. You feel welcome here.

**What do you most like about North Texas?**

I like the campus a lot. Its a big campus, but its convenient for me. I can walk to class. Everything is around this area.

I like living in the dorms. Because you get to meet people and make new friends.

I like best about it is the diversity of organizations they offer. They have lots of different organizations and activities.

I like all of my classes. They are challenging and interesting.

The instructors. I am really pleased with the professors. They actually care. Its all new to me. Instructors really care and want you to succeed. They have an interest in your success.

The staff and faculty are great.

People choose a school based on their athletic department. They are starting to get school spirit here. It seems to be getting spirited here. It needs to get a lot more spirited.

**What have you not like about North Texas?**

The commuter parking lots.

A lot of people here live around this area and they leave on the weekends. That hurts school spirit. If people stayed on the weekend and went to the games, we'd have more spirit. If you look in the parking lot of the dorms on the weekends there is no one here.

It's an adjustment to learn to live with other people. It has been a big adjustment for me.

**How would you describe the image of the University of North Texas?**

I think a lot of people think of North Texas as a big party school. I don't necessarily think that's true. No more than any other college I've been to.

Other than that, it has a very positive image. For me I think its highly known among employers. It's illuminating a positive image among high school seniors. I told a lot of my friends to consider coming here.

I think for adults in the community, they think of North Texas as an academic school. They know that people that graduate from here are going to be good to hire. But when you are going to high school, that it is not anything that you think about.

Because Denton is in the metroplex, there are a lot of jobs around here when you graduate. I think if it was more academically challenging, it would have a better reputation.

I didn't know anything about it until one of my friends told me.

**Do people admire and respect a degree from North Texas?**

In my country a degree from here is very good. When you go back home you get much respect.

I think its well respected, I know personally that in psychology it is. I have friends that are getting their masters at UT that went here as undergrads.

**How important are the degree programs when choosing the college that you'll attend?**

If they don't have your program, you won't consider it.



A good academic reputation is very important. The first thing you look at when choosing a school is the academic reputation and if they have the program you want to study

**I want to show some marketing materials? Have you seen these before?**

(Moderator displays "Partner in your Success" booklet, brochure and video. No one received or remember seeing the video )

They may have shown the video at my high school.

**Did your parents look at the materials?**

Yes.

I went to a college fair and signed up for information from North Texas. I started getting stuff about a month later.

I got one brochure then sent in a card for more information.

**Did these materials influence your decision to choose North Texas?**

(Shaking their heads 'no')

They help me. It gave me more understanding about what the school's about.

I had never been here before, so it gave me a visual. When choosing a college, it was important what the campus looked like. I liked how the pictures of the campus looked.

**What does 'A Partner in your Success' mean to you?**

They are going to help you succeed in your degree.

Yes.

I agree.

**How can these materials be improved? If you were given the job to re-do this booklet, how would you change it? What changes would you make?**

It wasn't that memorable. It needs to elaborate more about music and art.

It wasn't really a deciding factor on whether I came here or not.

It really doesn't matter what the title of the booklet is.

I don't remember North Texas every coming to my school. Other colleges did. They should visit schools and distribute materials there.

It needs to say that it's one of the largest universities in Texas. This isn't a small school.

I'm not sure what I'd change.

#### **Group 5**

**November 4, 1996**

**3:00 p.m., Women**

**Why did you decide to come to North Texas?**

It was close to home.

**What other colleges, if any, did you seriously consider?**

University of Texas at Austin and A&M. North Texas was more affordable for my dad to pay for. I talked to a lot of people who recommended it.

I checked out Southwest Texas, U-Mass, and Ohio. Ohio didn't have my major and U-Mass was way to far away. Southwest, I didn't really like there program.

I also checked out Southwest, but it was too far away from home.

I looked at Georgia and Baylor. I came here, but I may transfer.

I thought about Kilgore Junior college because I was on drill team in high school, but I realized that an education is more important than something frivolous that I won't use again in my life.

**How much influence did your parents have when you were choosing a college?**

Not too much except for affordability.

My mom encouraged me to come here because it' where she went.

Really none, my parents said they would stand behind me wherever I went.

Same thing. They just wanted me to do what I wanted. They wanted me to go to Baylor, but we couldn't afford it.

**What were the one or two final deciding factors that made you choose North Texas?**

Southwest, I didn't get into. Well I had to submit a second transcript and I didn't want to do it, so I came here.

I was too late applying any place else. And my mom wanted me to go here, she was like. "we want you to stay close to home."

It was far enough away from home, but not too far.

I have an apartment with my sister, we have been away since my parents divorced. They thought it was a good way to bring us closer together.

I didn't like it during orientation. North Texas was my last choice. But I like it now.

**Once you arrived on campus, what were your first impressions?**

Confused. Too much stuff I looked at my schedule and I was so confused.

I didn't know what to expect from the whole college experience.

I was nervous. I wasn't ready to let go of the summer. I had so much fun over the summer.

I was away from home.

It was too hard for me to leave home. I was looking forward to it. I just didn't like the rooms and I didn't like the food, but that was the worst of it.

**What kind of problems did you encounter?**

There really weren't any.

My first roommate. She was kinda weird. She was psycho.

Just walking to class. I am so short people run into me.

At first it was kinda boring. I had to find stuff to do. But now it's not bad at all.

Nothing really except it was hard to meet people.

My first roommate. We had a lot of disagreements. So that was a big problem at first. At first it was hard to buckle down and do the school work.

**What surprised you positively?**

I thought all the teachers would be stricter and harder. I thought you'd have a project every week, but you have time to do your work.

I had known a couple of people that had come up here, so I pretty much knew about it.

I got away from a lot of hassles at home and made a lot of good friends. I have a lot more time on my hands than I thought I would. I can do my own schedule. I'll sit in front of the TV instead of doing my homework, though.

I was really nervous about the school work. I had heard horror stories that college was so hard, but as long as you do what is expected of you, it's not that hard.

**Were people nice to you on campus?**

They were nice in general.

There were a couple of people who were kinda rude. Like this one lady in orientation.

I haven't noticed anyone rude, but I have come into contact with anyone overly friendly either.

There have been some really friendly people. My first impression at orientation, they seemed outgoing, but the

minute you had a problem they wouldn't give you the time of day.

The professors are helpful. If you have a problem, they tell you to come by and they are really open.

If you have a questions and talk to them, they are really nice.

**Based on your initial experience, would recommend to family or friend to come to North Texas?**

I haven't found anything bad about it, overall its a pretty good school.

They have a lot of good programs. Not just one major area. The teaching is real good.

I would recommend it.

I might. If that's what they're looking for. But I'm really hoping to transfer. I have a big hang-up because this isn't the school I wanted to go to. If they're looking for a Texas school close to home, then I might. Also if you have people you know going there.

**What have you most like about going to school here?**

The birds and squirrels everywhere.

The area is perfect. It's right in the middle of everything. Its a nice campus, You can go to the city if you want to, but it's not just right in your way.

I like the atmosphere. It's friendly and comfortable. You have a group that you hang around with.

I like the campus. Everything is close. I'm thinking about transfer to UT. I like big campuses. There is just nothing to do around here. There's kinda stuff to do, but not really. When you don't know anybody and your really not active in any organizations, its hard.

I do some things in the dorm, they have sand art and finger-painting. It's kind cheesy, but it's okay.

It's not like really publicized what there is available to do outside of class. Its more word of mouth. If someone just happens to stumble across the information. You might find out about it.

If we knew more about what was going on it might be helpful. They really don't advertise things.

I live in Kerr, they always have a lot of activities, like tonight you can watch the election stuff.

**What are North Texas's advantages or strengths?**

I think they have a variety of strengths. I think they are going to grow in every area. Because we have moved up in the football category, we are going to begin to be heard of more, not just in our area, but all around. More people are going to start coming because of football.

Diversity on campus is a strength. Its kind cool.

**What do you not like about North Texas?**

I lost weight because of the food in the dorms. I don't like it.

The rooms are a little bit small. My roommate can go home on the weekends and bring new clothes, but I have a bunch of clothes and there is not room for them.

I don't think the university is to be blamed for this, but I just haven't met the right people. I don't have many friends yet.

At orientation they had all these activities to sign up for. So I just decided to sign up for everything. I signed up for gymnastics club. Then they called and said they were redoing the floor and after that I never hear from them again. They are real excited in the beginning of the semester and then it just fades away.

**What is the major problem or weakness at North Texas?**

I think hearing about the clubs. There is no advertising. They don't tell you how to get involved.

The bulletin boards are impossible to read. We depend on word of mouth. If they had one list that wasn't so chaotic - something to announce the meetings for different groups.

I think another weakness is the dorm situation, not putting compatible people together.

I was worried about the dorm. I didn't want to live in the dorm. If you want to sleep or study it is difficult. I was shocked because they didn't ask you about your habits, likes and dislikes so they can match you up with other people like you. At other schools they have forms that do this. If I'm going to pay this much money, I want to make sure I like the person I'm living with.

**Are any of you homesick?**

I miss my girlfriends and my boyfriend. I can talk to my mom anytime. I talk to her more now that I'm away. One of my friends went to Wisconsin for school and I'm here. I miss them.

I told my sister you can come visit me every weekend. I just had to go home. I just wanted to see my family.

My mom and I are really best friends. I talk to her on the phone, but I still miss her. Some of my friends aren't great pen pals.

I was really homesick, and I still am. I go home every other weekend.

I went home for homecoming. I'm not homesick, because my boyfriend is here. We are together all of the time.

**How would you describe the image of North Texas?**

I really had never even heard of North Texas before, before my boyfriend brought it up. Then I found out a couple of my teachers had graduated from here. My uncle had. Not many people have heard of it.

I have never been given any ideas about it.

The image is that anybody can get into North Texas. They'd say that North Texas is a last resort. But now I'm glad I

came. I can't believe I'm saying this, but I'm glad I came.

I'd heard that just about anybody can get into North Texas and it must be true cause half my high school is here. In the summer, I wanted to go anywhere but here. But now I'm glad I'm here. Its good that I didn't go too far away from home my first year.

I expected real anxiety, but its not too bad. I like my own personal time. I'm an only kid, I wasn't looking forward to the dorm, but my roommate and I get along really well.

**How would you describe North Texas's academic reputation?**

I have never heard anyone talk about it. I heard from my high school teachers that it was a really good school. They said that it had a good music department, art department and a good education department. Those were the three things I heard.

I heard good things about the chemistry department.

I came from Austin, so I really didn't know about it, except for my boyfriend.

Every time my mom says that my daughter went to North Texas, they say, oh I went there.

I have some really good professors. My English teacher is the best teacher that I've ever had.

It has a good academic reputation. My uncle went here and said it was a real big party school, too.

You are more likely to get hired when you have a degree from a school with a good reputation.

**Do people respect a degree from North Texas?**

As it becomes more well known, it will be better. UT is just too big, but it has a good reputation.

If you told me last year that "I went to North Texas", I wouldn't be impressed because I wanted to go to a big name school, but now I feel different.



I want to show you all some marketing materials. Have you seen them before?

(Moderator displays "Partner in your Success" booklet, brochure and video.)

I saw the video in my high school

I got the video at college night. It didn't make me want to go here. It was cheesy. It reminded me of a real low, low budget movie. It was informative, just boring.

When I saw it I wasn't concentrating on picking out schools, it didn't have much impact. I saw it with my friends in the library.

My sister had already been here, so she told me about it.

I got the booklet at a college fair. It was easy to get information about UNT.

You filled out a card at college night and they sent stuff back really fast. They even sent me stuff I didn't ask for, like teaching for special education.

**Did these materials influence your decision to choose North Texas?**

I got stuff from lots of schools. If I got a tiny envelope with nothing in it, then I didn't pay much attention to that school. This one showed up with lots of stuff in it so I could really understand about the school.

I had a lot of brochures, but some were small and vague.

I had already made my decision before I got any of the brochures. After I took my S.A.T. and looked at the applications.

**What does 'A Partner in your Success' mean to you all?**

They are here for us to succeed. They are like a best friend, they are here all the way.

It's just a slogan. Everyone has one, that's there's.

That's what I thought at first, but not now. They really do help you succeed.

**What would you do to improve this booklet?**

You want to know about the academics, but you also want to know what else you can be doing with your time, like the Teacher's Club. Other things except just class. I think club information should be in there too.

The clubs, it just lists them. It doesn't really tell you about them.

People in high school aren't going to spend the time reading. More pictures and captions. Spend less time on wordy things.

More like advertising. Bright colors and weird shapes. Quotes from other students.

These pictures are cheesy. A lot of it is the same. These little pictures don't have action. I want to see something exciting happening. I want to see something realistic in the real setting, not just someone posing for a picture.

The pictures are kind stereotyping the person that goes into that major. The pictures are all of the same type of person. They don't show enough diversity, like what is really here. Business majors wear jeans and T-shirts, they don't always dress up like in these pictures.

**Group 6**

**November 6, 1996**

**8:00am. - Women**

**Why did you decide to go to college anyway?**

It's hard to find a job without college.

It was always assumed that I would go to college. It's hard to get a job if you don't go.

I agree about getting a job.

**Why go to North Texas instead of some other college?**

More affordable.

It's not too big, but it's not a small junior college.

They have one of the best programs for my major in the country.

**What other colleges did you consider?**

Texas Tech. A lot of people in my high school went there.

I thought about UT, but it's too big and too expensive. I guess the reason I thought about it was because they're suppose to be good in journalism.

Not any really. I don't why. I got a brochure in the mail one day and I just knew I wanted to go to UNT. I just had that gut feeling.

Unless money just fell out of the sky and I could go to NYU, but that didn't happen.

**How much influence did your parents have?**

Not any really.

They pretty much supported me wherever I wanted to go.

My parents were paying for it, they wanted me to go to UNT for that reason. I had to go in-state for sure.

**What were the one or two deciding factors that made you choose North Texas?**

I guess because of my major, journalism. I was going to go to UT but it was too far.

I guess because of the fact that its cheaper. It was a pretty good school.

The cost and the convenience.

Location. It's not too far from home, but it's not too close. It's also close to Dallas.

**Once you arrived on campus, what were your first impressions?**

I knew I was going to get lost. I didn't know anything. You could tell I was a freshmen.

I walked into the wrong class several times.

I felt pretty much at home.

The first day, I only had one class. I parked and ran because I was late. The next day, I kept getting lost. Everyone I stopped to ask was lost too. I felt really uncomfortable.

**What other problems did you encounter?**

Registration. It was hard. I couldn't get into a lot of the classes I wanted. The class you designed your whole schedule around would be full.

Trying find a place to park. I'm driving from Sherman every day. I don't have enough time.

I have problems with the dorm. Putting in a work order, then they never get around to fixing things. You have to wait.

**What surprised you positively?**

How friendly people are. People really care.

People are outgoing. They'll just sit down and start talking to you.

I'm in honors program. I really like it. The classes that I have that aren't honors, I don't like. The honors classes are real small. You really feel close to those people.

**Based on your initial experience at North Texas, would you recommend it to family or a friend?**

Yes, because its a pretty good school and I'm learning a lot. It's harder than I thought. It was a really good choice.

If you want to get a way, but not go too far, it's good.

My sister is two years behind me, now she wants to go here.

**What do you most like about the University of North Texas?**

Freedom, being away from home.

I appreciated that my journalism class is taught by a professor. I thought it would be taught by a graduate student, but it's not.

I like the teachers. They're a lot better than my high school teachers. They make you feel special.

**What do you think North Texas strengths or advantages?**

Diversity. Because when I visited other campuses, people were either all black or all white or liberal or extremely conservative. Here you have all types of people.

Just their specialized departments - teaching or music, that are already well known for and draw people in.

**What do you not like about UNT?**

They don't get out their name enough. Cause when I was in high school they didn't have a lot of information.

I hated freshmen orientation. It was probably good for a lot of people, but I don't live on campus and most of it was about living on campus. I already knew what I wanted to take before I came to orientation, so it was a waste. My schedule, I had four schedules ready, but by the time I enrolled, all the classes were taken. If you don't know what you're going to take you need to go, but if you already have it figured out, you don't need it.

I was really rushed at first.

No school spirit. In high school we had a lot of school pride. Here nobody goes to football games. It was homecoming, but you'd never know. They don't publicize the games. They probably do, but I didn't know about them.

The town of Denton is not really supportive. Like in Lubbock the whole town supports Texas Tech. Everywhere you go they are behind that school.

**What do you think the major problem that North Texas has?**

Publicity. They don't go out and get their name out. We had one representative come talk to us at our high school, but other than that I didn't hear about it.

I had no idea what it was or where it was.

I live close, so I knew about it.

**Let's talk about the image of North Texas. How would you describe the image?**

They are known for music and art. Not sports.

It's a good art school and music.

It's very well rounded.

Diversified.

**How has your perception changed since you've been here?**

I think the campus is prettier than when I first got here. I didn't realize how pretty it was.

Living in town, every time I came near the campus, no one talked to me, so I thought everyone was mean. But when I came here and was a college student, I realized they aren't mean.

**How would you describe the academic reputation at North Texas?**

I started talking to more adults. When I said I was going to North Texas they were just thrilled. They said it was a good school. The kids in high school think you have to go to A&M or Yale or something, but the older crowd really respects North Texas.

Everyone I talked to thought it was really cool. I didn't have anyone say it was a bad school or anything.

I think its inexpensive compared to UT where most of my friends went. But my parents went here, and it's a good school. Some people think it's just cheap so it isn't a good school. That's not true.

**Do you think people admire and respect a degree from North Texas?**

Yes; I haven't heard anything bad about it.

I don't think it's know for academics necessarily. I'd say more arts than academics.

It's known for music.

**How important are the degree programs in choosing a college?**

I like the fact that you have to take a little bit of everything, not just the basics and your major. You get to take things like art and music.

It's more important that you get a good academic education. You want your employer to know that you have a good education.

**These are some marketing materials that are sent out by North Texas, have you seen these before? (Moderator displays "Partner in your Success" booklet, brochure and video)**

I saw the video, it was cheesy. Parts of it were really good. I guess because I live here, but when they showed the local pizzeria, I just laughed. I saw it at a college fair where they had a video player set up.

I got the materials in the mail. I got the little brochure at college night and then sent off for the other stuff.

I never really heard much about it, but I decided before I saw the booklet.

**Did the materials influence your decision to attend North Texas?**

Not really.

The booklet had a list of organizations that you can be in. It had just everything. That really impressed me. It had some religious organizations.

I just remember the pictures of the people. I thought it was neat that they not only showed the professors but also showed the students. It didn't really influence me because I'd already decided to go here.

**What do you think 'A Partner in your Success' means?**

That they are here to help.

I think partner means equal. If you put in, then we'll put in.

**How can these materials, this booklet, be improved? Any suggestions?**

Make it a little more about campus life. I think that's a major factor in people's minds. You go to learn more, but you want to know about life on campus.

Show more about the dorms. Mostly just give them out more. I got a lot of catalogues from far away schools, I don't why they sent them to me. I guess they could just send them to prospective students.

Other schools send a lot more information than North Texas does.

I had got stuff from the journalism department in my high school. Hardly anybody in Sherman has heard of North Texas. If they'd send their stuff to programs like that more people will have heard of them.

Just more emphasis on tuition.. What it came down to is the cost and the quality. It really isn't that expensive compared to other schools.

#### **Group 7**

**November 6, 1996**

**11:00 a.m.- Men**

**Why go to college anyway?**

Money.

To get a job.

Yeah, to get a better job.

**Why go to North Texas?**

It is close to where I live.

Most people go because of in-state tuition, it's cheaper

**What other colleges did you consider?**

Tech.

UT Arlington



Other Texas schools. I didn't apply for anything out of state.

**How influential were your parents in making your decision where to attend school?**

That's why I came here, because my parents went here.

They paid for it. I could of gone somewhere else, but.

We had the final say, but they were leading us in this direction.

They said, 'just go', where, it doesn't matter.

**What were the one or two major factors why you went to North Texas?**

Close to home and probably because I got a scholarship here.

It's real close to where I live and that's about it really. I know it's a good college. I don't know if its a good college, but its not a junior college.

It had my major, and I can always transfer.

I live pretty close, that was a big influence right there.

**Once you arrived on campus, what was your first impression?**

I thought it was a nice campus.

It was smaller compared to what I've seen.

It was well maintained, no trash on the ground. Pretty decent.

**What problems did you encounter?**

Parking. That's the biggest. I had to park out in the boonies.

Yes. Parking.

Parking.

I had to walk 4 miles to campus. If you park off campus you have to walk, even if its stormy and you get wet. The lot I park in was empty, but I got a ticket for it.

Other than that I haven't had any real problems.

Besides parking, nothing.

Registration was a big hassle.

**What surprised you positively about North Texas? What was better than you expected?**

Probably, the professor for most of my major, he seems to have a different attitude.

A lot of the professors here actually do try to help you.

They leave the responsibility to you, but as long as you're willing. It's not that you're all out there by yourself.

It's a lot different than I first thought. The classes are smaller.

**Were people nice and friendly when you got to campus?**

People don't go out of their way to say hi, it depends who you're talking to.

If your in class, its easy to talk to people, but not on campus.

In bigger classes, you talk a little bit. But mostly people in your labs that you do work with are the nicest.

**What about the staff?**

They just tell you where to go and what to do.

When I go to the Bursar's office for my scholarship check, I don't have any problems.

Basically, if they don't have the answer, they'll find someone who does.

Like this morning I registered, that was pretty simple

**Based on your initial experience would you recommend North Texas to family or a friend?**

If that's what they're looking for. If they can pay to go to a better school, like Texas A&M.

I would recommend this business school. I've heard this is one of the best. It's one of the toughest, it's one of the most recognized. Also education. Once you get past undergraduate. For graduate school, it's suppose to be good. I know a lot of my friends can't afford to go away.

**What do you most like or most enjoy about being here?**

There are other places you can hang out. There's always something going on. It's pretty cool. Fry Street.

It's a college town.

I've been in some other college towns, I like Denton a lot better. It's a more laid back attitude towards things. I like the general atmosphere here.

Like Texas A&M is pretty preppy.

**What do you think North Texas advantages or strengths to build on in the future?**

I guess it's, not just school, it a whole life. A college life atmosphere. It's a good atmosphere. As opposed to Dallas. It's not a real big city. The school part is good.

Well, they say the program I'm in, electronic engineering, is really coming up.

**What do you not like?**

I hate that everyone goes home on the weekends. I'm away from home, I don't want to have to go back. More than likely, it's Friday, everyone goes home. I hate to go home and hang out with the folks. If I had an apartment here, I just stay here, but no one is in the dorms on the weekends.

You don't get the actual one on one in classes, like you do in high school. Some teachers do, but not all of them.

The classes move to slow sometimes, because there are some students that aren't, how do I say it? - that intelligent.

Like political science is really basic. I've already learned all that stuff.

They pretty much hit on most of it.

The other thing, is they have athletics here, but it's not really big. Not like UT. Like football and basketball. They say basketball is supposed to be big, but football, it's not as big. At other schools, they are just die-hard fans for their teams.

I played sports all my life, but I got here and nobody cares about sports. North Texas got their butts kicked and everybody just laughs.

We should support them. You should go to the games.

**What do you think is the major weakness at North Texas?**

Parking.

I think they need to get a more diverse student body. They need to attract people from all over. Not just the metroplex. They need to get people from around the state and from Oklahoma.

They need to make it worthwhile to come here, from down south.

**Have there been any adjustments to living on your own?**

Yeah, there is a lot of things. You can do anything you want really. Everything's up to you.

I have to wash clothes now.

I'm not homesick, I'd rather stay up here on the weekends.

**Let's talk about the image of North Texas. How would you describe the image?**

Liberal.

I've been around a couple of other colleges. The general view is that anyone that comes here is really liberal and wacky.

It's a general consensus. The NT Daily just bashes people.

**Is the liberal image a positive or a negative?**

It goes both ways. It's good to be liberal, but it goes to the low spirit. They don't care what happens to the university they just care about what happens to them. so they just go to school and that's it. That's all that matters.

Even before I came here I was going to school in Japan , my dad's in the military. Even some teachers over there knew of it. They knew it was a music school?

**Has your perception of North Texas changed since you've been here?**

I thought at first, academically it wouldn't be real strong, but now that I'm here it is. But sports is real weak. But maybe basketball will be stronger, I won't know until the season starts.

Not really. I knew it wasn't strong in sports. I didn't know much about the academics, I knew it was a real good music school.

The academics aren't as hard as I thought it would be.

I was kinda expecting it to be real big on music, but since I'm not in the music department, I'm not aware of it.

**How would you describe the academic reputation of North Texas?**

It's just a college.

It seems to me, they don't concentrate on undergraduates so much. Once you pass through your basics, then it gets harder. Stick through the first portion, the upper level classes are better.

I noticed that a lot of the undergrad programs are more generalized. I guess they are supposed to be. Graduate programs concentrate more on individual needs.

I guess it's pretty easy to get into here.

**Do people admire and respect a degree from North Texas?**

Depends on what degree you have, a business degree yeah, but PE , well.

The top three are business, music and education. You'll get lots of job offers.

People respect a degree from anywhere.

**How important are the degree programs when choosing a school?**

Basically, the breakdown of the programs are pretty much the same all over.

It should hold pretty strong in what you choose towards school. It does vary from school to school. Here we can take some ethics and values classes. I don't know if you take that anywhere else.

**How important is academic reputation?**

It's pretty important. The bigger schools have a reputation of weeding out the weak people.

I think its very important. 'I went to A&M, or, I went to Harvard'. Who's gonna get a job first?

It's really important. To go to Rice or ITT Tech, I mean how does that sound?

**I'm going to show you some marketing materials. Have you seen these before?**

(Mixed nods yes and no).

**Did you parents look at this booklet?**

My mom did.

My parents asked me what it was about.

**Do remember where you got these?**

College days.

On my SAT, when you put down colleges, You get stuff.

My dad came to check out the school and he got them.

**Before you go these materials were you aware of North Texas?**

We just found out about it just before we got the materials. My uncle told us about it.

**Did it influence your decision to come to North Texas?**

Not to come, but it influenced my decision to stay.

Yeah, about the same, pretty much. When I found out they had what I wanted.

**What do you think a 'Partner in Your Success' means?**

A slogan. It's just a slogan.

It means the university is going to help you do what you want to do.

**How can these materials be improved? What suggestions do you have to improve these things?**

I don't think they have the prices per semester hour. They need to list the prices. I had to wait until orientation to figure out how much I was going to pay.

They don't emphasize enough about how well know they are in some fields, like music, they are know world wide.

Some statistics to give you an idea that you are going to just some joe-blow college. We are good.

They've got that band, that everyone knows about around the world. That jazz band. They should promote it more.

There's one thing. Scholarships are hard to find out about. They give you a little information, but not much. I know there are more than I applied for, but I never found out about them. I heard there are so many, but you can't find out about them.

**Group 8**

**November 6, 1997**

**1:30 p.m. - Men**

**What reasons did you all have for going to college?**

Success.

To make money.

I was a carpenter for ten years, and it's not secure. There's no future. I moved around a lot when I was young. My dad was a carpenter and every year I was in a new school. My kid's not going to have that.

Money.

Knowledge. Basically a secure job.

**Why North Texas? Why did you decide to come here?**

It was close to home, but not just down the street. I could come here to live but not be too far away from my family.

I live here but I'm still close to my family in Dallas/Fort Worth.

It's just about a 35 minute drive home. Basically I came here to save up some money and then hopefully go to A&M. Good location and good school.

A&M turned me down.

I was accepted. I ride my bike it is so close.

I have a brother that's graduating, he has one more class for his marketing degree. We live close.

**What other colleges did you seriously consider?**

Austin and UT Arlington, but I just didn't like either one. At UTA there's not much of a college life there.

I was thinking about UT and St. Edwards in Austin. This was a lot cheaper than some private schools.

I was offered a scholarship to Bethany in Linsborg (?) Kansas. The population is about 300 during the school year, so I didn't want to go there.

**How much influence did your parents have in deciding what school you were going to attend?**

They wanted the decision to be mine. They wanted me to be satisfied.

The same, my mom didn't care where, just as long as I went to college somewhere.



As long as I went in state they didn't care.

They didn't really specify, we were financially stable enough.

They pretty much left it up to me. My dad wanted me to look at Tarleton..

**What were the one or two deciding factors in deciding to go to North Texas?**

Location. It's close to Dallas and Fort Worth, but you're still in a much smaller place.

Location.

Price.

Mine was location, price because I'm paying for myself. My job also transferred me up here.

**When you first arrived on campus what were your first impression?**

I didn't know where any of the buildings were.

I was pretty impressed. It was clean.

It was pretty big to me. I was looking for things to do. I came the week before so I was looking for things to do. For friends and things like that.

It was great. I was so happy to be in school again. I was surprised that I got accepted, but I did. I was just happy.

I noticed that most of this school had no school spirit. Nobody shows up at football games.

North Texas is a commuter college. Nobody goes to things here. Not like A&M. Aggies have school spirit, but that's A&M.

It was kinda quiet on campus. I didn't expect that. Coming from a small school and going to a big one, I thought it would be more rowdy.

**What problems did you all have with North Texas?**

I got one. I just got done with an appendectomy a couple of weeks ago. I went to see the dean of students of few days ago and he said that it was up to the teachers to whether or not they are going to give me the grades that I missed. He said that his hands were tied, that there were no rules that he could force the teachers to give me my grades or not or that I had to make up a test. So I could just get a zero if the professor doesn't like me. That worried me, but when I went to all of my professors and they're pretty nice about it.

I was an English major until I got here in a class with 700 people in it. It's completely impersonal. I got my first C on an English paper ever. I went to see the T.A. and finally got a hold of the professor. I asked her why I got a C and she reevaluated it and now I'm getting an A on it. It's like you have to fight for your grades.

Just problems scheduling my classes. I couldn't get the right classes I wanted.

**What surprised you positively about North Texas?**

People are a lot friendlier than I'd thought they'd be. The fraternities and all, I thought they'd be more stuck-up. But they're friendlier than I thought they'd be.

I was surprised at orientation. The R.A.s and stuff were a lot cooler, more laid back than other schools that I've been around.

Yeah, I agree, everybody here is real laid back. Everyone is pretty respectful.

**Have you found the staff to be helpful?**

I had some trouble with an R.A. and that English teacher. But I admit, she has 700 students. I was having trouble in algebra and the professor told me to drop it and take another algebra class that would better suit my style of learning. I thought that was pretty cool of him..

I found the professors to be very helpful. The T.A. will come to his office once a week and help me with pre-calc.

They want you to learn. They don't act like you're putting them out when you ask them a question.

If you want to learn they'll take time to teach you.

**Based on your initial experience here at North Texas, would you recommend North Texas to a family member or friend?**

Yes, it is so much more laid back than I expected it to be. At first I was so nervous, but now I feel more at home.

I have a bunch of friends that go to Austin College. There you can get harassed by the campus police for just being out late. But here, I keep very odd hours because I wait tables, I was walking around campus at 3 in the morning and it's a lot safer. It's real laid back and real safe. It's real relaxed in class, but we still cover the same information. My English class is ahead of Austin College.

**What have you most enjoyed about going to school here?**

I like all of my professors. They all stress that if you have any problems to come see them in their office. They try to get people to participate.

I like a lot of people here. Everywhere you go, there are people to meet. They want to meet you and hear what you think.

I like all of my professors. It's such a shock to come from high school. The professors here, this is what they want to do with their life. Not just teaching, but learning themselves.

The professors are very enthusiastic.

**What do you think North Texas's advantages or strengths are that they can build on in the future?**

They do a lot to try to get the student body active, but I don't think they are succeeding very well. This is an arts college more than anything. Their art department is awesome, their music department is awesome, but their engineering is just okay. It could be stronger. I think a broader schedule would help out a lot of people.

I was thinking about the "studies abroad", I don't know if all schools do that but I think it's a good thing. I think they are pushing that more this year.

I think one of their advantages is their location, but when they recruit, too many students come from the metroplex. They should use the location to attract students from other parts of Texas. Here Denton is only 70,000 people, but you can just drive 35 miles to Dallas, they could use that to attract more students.

**What have you not liked about North Texas?**

Parking.

Parking.

Living accommodations. I didn't get either choices for my dorms. I was put in a room with two guys. I get along with them, but one roommate is from San Antonio and the other guy is from Chico Texas and he graduated with a class of nine! So there's this guy that graduated with a class of nine and I graduated with a class of 400 and this other guy went to Catholic school. So we are completely opposites and we all live in the same room. It is like hell.

My girlfriend goes to a school where you fill out a survey on what your personality is. They look at other forms and match people, not just pot-luck.

Yeah, they do that at Stephen F. I thought they'd do it here, but they didn't.

I got good roommates, but I look at all the other people I could have gotten just looking down my hall and it's scary.

I was fortunate to get my first choice. I live in Kerr. But if you don't know when to show up to get a parking place, you're not going to get one. They must sell more parking stickers than they have places.

I have a '63 Volkswagen. It is my prized possession. I brought it up to school and I moved in the day before classes started. I couldn't find a parking place, so I had to park at the stadium. In two days it got vandalized. I

was sick about it. So I took it home and brought back my motorcycle.

**What do you think is the major problem or weakness that North Texas has?**

Parking.

We have to pay so much for parking.

I'm not sure. I haven't come across a big one. Seems like a lot of the student body doesn't want the emphasis that they are trying to put on sports, especially football. But some students want them to. I think they should decide what it's going to be - a major arts school or attract a good football team.

They pump so much money in the team and it sucks and stuff. This is an arts school and the art department gets less money than football. What is college for - education or a game? This is the second school in the nation when it comes to music, there's no reason why it couldn't be the first if they focused on it.

I think the feeder school, all the schools in Dallas, have a huge music base. High school band is real big Texas. That could make North Texas stronger.

**Has it been a huge adjustment moving away from home?**

Not for me it hasn't.

I'm not homesick. I can drive home in 40 minutes. How could I get homesick?

**Let's talk about the image of this school. How would you describe the image of the University of North Texas?**

I hear it's a music school.

It's an easy school. If you're not a music major, all the other majors that they offer is a lot easier than other schools.

Arts. Music. Commuter School.

I live in Plano, but I didn't know this college was here. You never hear about it.

Arts School.

**How has your perception of North Texas changed since you've been here?**

My friends that go here are all artist. They did not make the grades in high school but they do here. It depends what you want to do, if it's a good school.

I didn't hear a whole lot about it until my senior year in high school. I heard it was a music school and now that I'm here, they're right. There are a whole lot of music majors.

**How would you describe North Texas's academic reputation?**

I don't think it has one.

People don't look at this school and think it's a Yale or Harvard or anything. That's not what they focus on.

When those reports come out on the nation's best schools, we're always at the bottom on the back page.

I think academically it's growing. I have family that lives here and they always talked a lot North Texas as a party school, but now it's being more respected as an education; facility.

**Do you think people admire and respect a degree from North Texas?**

It's respected, it's just not as popular.

If you go to community college, people respect that.

It's slowly gaining respect, though. I was reading in the North Texas Daily, two or three weeks ago, about why people come here, only half of the people said because they thought it was easy.

I think there is a lot of competition with being Texas. There are so many elite schools within Texas that UNT doesn't get noticed. But you really get a good education here.

How important are the degree programs offered in choosing your school?

It's very important.

I didn't know what I wanted to do. I went to college and got interested in engineering. My step-father is an engineer. It's demanding, it takes a lot of math, but definitely, I think the degree is important.

**How important is a good academic reputation in choosing a school?**

When you go apply for job, you know, and you graduated from UT, it says a lot, you must really know what you're doing or you wouldn't have that degree. It helps you get a job.

I think it's second to experience. Whatever school you go to will carry you so far, but that's not all.

**I have some marketing materials. Have you all seen any of these before?**

(Nodding yes and no)

**No one has seen the video?** (All say no)

**When you got the booklet, did you parents look at it?**

(Mixed responses)

**Where you aware of North Texas before you got these materials?**

Barely.

No.

I knew because my brother went here. When your high school people don't come and say 'my school is wonderful', so you have to find out on your own.

The brochure didn't mean that much to me. I talked to people that went here.

The brochure is going to glorify whatever. You can think when you read something that it is wonderful on paper.

The brochure didn't influence my decision, it just provided additional information.

**What do you all think 'A Partner in your Success' means?**  
They're here to help us if we have the initiative.

It's an interactive experience.

I think they live up to that. The professors that I have do.

They are real friendly. It's a good slogan.

**How did you receive these materials?.**

In the mail. I think my teachers put me on a bunch of lists for colleges.

On college day I got it.

**What suggestions could you offer to improve these things?**

More about housing on campus. They should tell you about what living on campus is like. They need to do a lot more on housing. I realize that's not what we're here for, but if you're not happy in the dorm, it's bad.

They never had much to do with my selection.

Other schools send you a book. These are pretty thin.

**Group 9**

**November 6, 1996**

**3:00 p.m. - Men**

**First of all, why go to college?**

You're not going to get anywhere in this world unless you get some kind of degree.

I came here because it was close to home, I wanted to go away but not too far away.

Too be intellectually smarter.

I wanted to learn more.

Just the job thing. To find a better job.

**Why are you at North Texas instead of some other college?**



The accounting degree is pretty good here. They have a five year program. You can earn your bachelor's and master's at the same time in five years.

Location. A lot of people from my high school went here. And the cost, it's a lot cheaper than a lot of other schools.

It's close to home. I live in Dallas.

The cost and the quality of the education is pretty good here.

Location.

**What other colleges did you seriously consider?**

A&M. At the time I wanted to be a veterinarian.

University of Missouri or UT. Cause UT has a good English program.

Either Northwestern or Harvard. Actually I got accepted to Harvard but I'd have to be on the debate team and I don't really want to do law.

TCU, but it costs about ten more than it costs to go here.

**How much influence did your parents have in choosing your college?**

Mine didn't care. My brother graduated from here. My father graduate from here, so.

None.

Mine did cause they're paying for it.

They just wanted me to go somewhere.

**What were the one or two major factors that made you pick North Texas?**

Mainly the location.

Location definitely a factor and the English program. I wanted a challenge in college.

The degree plan in psychology. My scholarship.

Well I've got a couple guys in my band that came here and when I visited the campus I felt a lot more comfortable. It was a more easy going atmosphere here.

Location.

The cost and the quality of education. The fact that I knew people in Texas.

The cost and the diversity of the campus.

**Once you arrived on campus, what your first impressions?**

There were a lot of squirrels.

It's pretty. A lot of walking.

I like the way it's laid out. I went to UT and there's four thousand people in a building at the same time.

Most of my classes are small and I thought they'd be huge.

I was taken aback by everything.

**What problems did you encounter when you first arrived?**

Teleregistration. You have sit there and listen and go over and over.

Just hit 11 and you get right through it. You don't have to listen to the whole thing.

Oh really. Wow.

I don't like the way they make you wait to register. I register tomorrow like I'm the last in the alphabet. If you know your classes, you should be able to register. My classes will be filled up.

Scholarship office is madness. I have make trips back and forth to the Bursar and the scholarship office. They have things mixed up. It is a big inconvenience.

Some parking problems too. No matter when you get here, you can't find a spot.

There are a lot of people I know that have gotten stuff stolen. They need more security in the parking lots.

**What surprised you positively? What has been better than you expected?**

The class size.

There is a better teacher-student thing going on. In a big class you don't want to ask anything because you feel weird. But here it's like high school.

My psychology class has 300, but all the others are small.

All my classes are close together in one area.

The computer lab is good and the library is extensive.

**Were people nice and friendly when you got here?**

You mean students?

**Just everybody.**

When you go to advising it was kinda impersonal, but the students are real friendly.

I thought orientation was well put together. I know people that had bad experiences with freshmen orientations, but I thought they did a good job.

**Based on your initial experience here at North Texas would you recommend it to a family member or friend?**

Yes. It would be nice having them here.

Of course, it would depend on what they are studying, but if they are studying music or English or Business I would recommend it. I would also tell them that Denton is a nice city.

Yes, I agree, I would recommend it. I would also warn people, that Denton is a small city.

I would recommend it. I wouldn't recommend it for music, because here you are just a number. But it has a really good business school. If you live in the area, it costs less.

**What have you most liked or most enjoyed?**

I think some of the rules in the dorms are stupid. I think since you are in college you are old enough to act responsibly.

**What have you most liked about most about North Texas?**

The diversity. I like the fact that it's close to where I live. On weekends I'm back in Dallas.

I like the atmosphere and the people here. Most of my classes are good. People are very friendly.

I like the size, because it's not really big and not really small. The classes aren't too big, but not every single person has to know every single person.

This is pretty big school and thought the classes would be huge, but they're not.

I only have twenty in English. We interact with each other a lot.

Class size. You actually know the professor.

**What do you think North Texas's advantages or strengths to build on in the future?**

The fact that they have small classes. Let people know your not just a number.

I like how they are trying to expand and build up the football program.

I agree with the growth thing. Some company out of Japan is building a dorm for international students and they're building a new student center.

**What don't you like about North Texas?**

I don't like the commuter aspect of it. My friend goes to A&M and everyone's right there. They do things together on weekends.

The location. I don't have a car so I'm kinda stuck here on the weekends.

I stayed here for the first time last weekend, it was so dead. Tumbleweeds were blowing by.

Everyone goes home on the weekends. I do too. There is no where to party here. Everyone goes to Dallas.

I have to agree. I live in West and stayed here the past two weekends, there was probably 100 of the 600 that live there. I went Austin a while back and everyone was in the dorms, of course it was the biggest dorm in America.

West is overcrowded and there are parking problems.

I live with two roommates. One is from England and one is from Plano. They are two totally different people.

We have community bathrooms in the hall.

**What do think is the major problem or weakness at North Texas?**

If they had a really good football team, they would be as big as A&M. We have one of the best music programs in the nation, but people can't watch it on TV every Saturday like they can A&M. It's beat in your head and you see people up in the stands yelling. A guy from Austin said, 'oh you're going to see North Texas play? You get to watch them lose'.

The problem is reputation. Everyone considers it a four year communicate college basically.

It's a small state college.

I don't know a major weakness. What you were saying about he football team. But some people just go to a school for the football team.

Here you can go to the games free, but nobody goes.

I think the city needs to put more commercial stuff around the campus. It's like a ghost town. That's why people leave.

I wish I would have known more about credits and how things work before I registered for my classes. Everything is on you. If you mess up, you mess up.

I can't think of anything real big. Like Mario said about not knowing about things, I'm not sure if that's not my fault.

**How would you describe the image of North Texas?**

A four year community college, like I said earlier.

The problem is people don't know about the college.

A music college. People see it as a big music college. It's the second biggest in the nation for music. They don't see the other stuff - economics or English.

I thought of a weakness - I don't like the campus radio station. I don't mind jazz, but they should have more variety.

**How has your perception of North Texas changed this semester since you've been here?**

Mine hasn't, I've been here a few times because of friends I knew that went here.

It's not as hard as I thought college would be.

**How would you describe North Texas's academic reputation?**

It could be better. It's like 80 percent arts.

**Do you think North Texas has a good academic reputation?  
Do you think people respect and admire a degree from North Texas?**

I think those who go here and got one do, but I don't think other people do.

A degree is a degree. It's a Texas school. You take the same things here that you do at UT.

I don't care how people perceive my school as long as I get a job.

UNT has a pretty respected psychology school, doesn't it?

**Do think UNT is known for its academic excellence?**

Whenever you say UNT, people say 'music? What instrument do you play?'

**How important is the degree program in choosing your school?**

Pretty important, if they don't have your program, you won't go there.

I don't know.

I know a lot of people at this school that probably wouldn't be going here if the academic requirements were higher.

I don't think it's that important, because your first two years all the basics are the same everywhere.

**I'm going to show you all some marketing materials that are used to recruit freshmen to North Texas. Have you ever seen these?**

(people nodding).

**Has anyone seen the video?**

(Only one)

**Did you parents look at these materials?**

My parents went here so they knew what was going on.

My parents looked at them.

**Where did you get these materials?**

They sent them in the mail.

I got a lot of stuff in the mail.

They were easy to get.

**Before you got these materials were you considering North Texas?**

I went to college day and they said, here's a plan, so I came here.

I don't see how you can live in Dallas and not be aware that there's a school up here.

**Did these materials influence your decision to come to North Texas?**

It's just advertising. Every school has their own. North Texas needs to get theirs up to standards. They're cheesy looking. It's just like looking and political ads and deciding who to vote for. They don't look as good.

**What do you mean when you say they're cheesy looking?**

Some of the pictures look like they're from the 1980s. They need to hire someone to re-do it for them.

The website they have is cool. I looked at that before I came here.

I got a brochure from the chemistry department and I was amazed at all that they offer. I was just going to come here and take basics, but I found out they are building a new research building.

**What do you think 'A Partner in your Success' means?**

They will help you succeed.

I never pay attention to those things. They are just trying to set up a theme. It doesn't mean anything.

**What suggestions do you have for improving these materials?**

They should list degree plans. I asked for my degree plan and that's why I came here. They should include them in that folder.

They should have individual sheets for different programs. They should redo the whole thing.

It looks boring. Old. Like the 1980s.

Be more specific about the costs of tuition.

They need step by step on what to take each year.

Just the cover. Maybe it's just me. You can only see a couple of people and it looks uninviting. Maybe a picture of union in the middle of the day. It's more interesting. It's not square.



**Group 10**  
**November 6, 1996**  
**4:00 p.m. - Women**

**Why did you decide to go to college anyway?**

To get an education first of all. I want to make money.

To get a good job.

My dad grew up in the 40s. That was when you could graduate from high school and get a job. But the job market today is so competitive. If you don't the right education you are lost.

The whole experience. Meeting people.

I agree with what you said, experience. I just want to be college educated.

**Why go to North Texas? What reasons do you have for coming to North Texas?**

Location. For me it's close enough to home, but it's far enough that I don't have to go home.

That, and I have some older sisters that went here too and they all went into business.

Because I could afford it.

I was going to go to other schools, but I have family here.

It's close, if I need to go home and do laundry I can.

Location. I'm not far from home at all.

**What other colleges did you all consider?**

I wanted to go to either Stephen F. Austin or Texas Tech. That was before when I was undecided on my major, I just liked the programs that they offered. But I just decided to go to North Texas because it was the best school.

I also looked at Georgetown. My preacher at my church went there. I looked at the campus, but it was a pretty elite

school., The atmosphere is a lot more comfortable here for me.

I thought it would be a cool experience to go to an all-girls school.

I looked at TCU a little bit. It was private, the campus was beautiful. Most of the people that go there have a lot of fun. But it was too expensive.

I've only lived here a couple of years, so I didn't know a lot of colleges here. I liked it here because it was a small.

University of Houston and Austin College and Southwestern.

I thought I was going to go to Stephen F. Austin, but I decided to come here because it was closer.

**How much did your parents influence your decision to attend here?**

Texas A&M - Commerce is about ten minutes from my house. My parents were dead set that I would go there so I would be home all the time. Well, I'm home pretty much all the time anyway.

My parents wanted me to stay home another year or two. But they finally let me go this far.

I was pretty set on not going to college at all, but my parents finally convinced me.

My parents were really supportive. They like this school anyway.

My parents wanted whatever I wanted.

**What were the one or two factors that made you decide to go to UNT?**

I know the journalism department is strong and where I'm from a lot of the students that graduated from here did well.

Well I know people who come here. I know it's a really good school. My dad went here.

Probably the fact that everybody in my high school went to another school. I wanted to go somewhere that I didn't know a lot of people already. I think college is to meet new people and get out of your comfort zone.

To tell the truth I was suppose to go to the University of Houston, but I went for a half day and I hated Houston. So I transferred up here. I just hated it down there, so I came here.

I think the main thing is I wanted to be near my mom. That and the journalism program is good.

I don't know what I want to be and this is supposed to be a really diverse school.

**Once you arrived on campus, what were you first impressions?**

It was hot outside. Once people got here, it was like a little Austin. There are so many different kinds of people.

When you're a freshmen you're really vulnerable. I was really impressed that the upper classmen were nice. The friendliness of people. I don't know if it's just Texas or what.

I thought the campus was really pretty. People were opening up to me. It really did help.

The diversity is a lot of it. It's good to know you can do anything you want.

**What problems did you encounter when you first got here?**

I was pretty lucky, I had no problems with classes or anything. Probably the worse thing was it being so hot.

Parking spaces.

It's bad.

It's not as bad anymore. There are more spaces now it seems. They have a lot of parking spaces behind Maple Cafeteria.

You drive around and waste gas.

I hated my hall. I moved after the first month. I didn't get along with my roommate. I'm in Bruce now. I was in Kerr.

Wow, that's quite different.

Living with someone was quite an adjustment.

**What surprised you positively?**

I thought I'd hate it, but I don't.

The small town life. The shops and little restaurants.

The music department. I went to a couple of concerts and I was amazed.

How helpful some of my teachers were. The teachers are there for you. They are really understanding.

**Were people nice and friendly on campus?**

Yes.

I was just walking around trying to find where the Bursar's office was and people were saying, 'hello, how are you today?'

Well, I'd say the people in the dorms and teachers are helpful.

It goes both ways. People are willing to help you. A lot of the problems have to do with it being such a large school. They run you in circles. Sometimes they don't send you to the right place.

I was the first child to go to college. I just wasn't clear on how to get my scholarship money. I was run from building to building. I was kinda annoyed about that.

**Based on your initial experiences at North Texas, would you recommend it to a family member or a friend?**

You meet so many kinds of people. It is a great cultural experience.

**What do you most like about North Texas?**

Intramural sports.

The people I've met. The friendships that I've established.

I like the different organizations and activities. Not so much like fraternities and sororities, but North Texas has a lot of clubs. You wouldn't believe what you can get in to.

There's this thing - Ultimate Frisbee - on Monday night. Who would have thought that there was something like that. And it's really fun, I went and did it.

I like my classes. They are interesting. The teachers talk to you like your an adult It's so much better to be treated that way because I can learn more.

I like the atmosphere. I like being in my room and somebody's playing the trumpet on the hill across the street. You go downstairs and there's jazz a band. And there's art everywhere. It's student art. It's amazing. I like being around all of the talent.

**What at North Texas advantages or strengths that they can use to build on in the future?**

I think location. Like with Denton, its a college town, there's restaurants and pubs. But its just college kids.

A disadvantage is that no one stays here on weekends.

The parking lot is cleared. I feel like there is no college life, I go home every single weekend. Because it is a commuter school, it is a disadvantage. There's not so much going on the weekends.

**What other advantages?**

Probably the class size. My perception when I came here was that the classes were going to be huge, but for the most part, most of my classes are small. Like French, there are people struggling. Something that difficult you have to start out small.

**What have you not liked about North Texas?**

The dorm food.

The fish was awful today.

It started out good. What I heard is that the guy who is the head chef, moves around to different cafeterias. That's why I think it was good at first, but it's terrible now. Like Baked Cod. Yuk, we have that everyday.

You get run-around in circles. That bothers me. If you don't the answer to questions you get sent a million different places. It's almost impersonal.

I like pretty much everything. I don't like my dorm because it's kinda run down.

The only thing that I really don't like is that there isn't a lot of involvement on the weekends. Also the spirit. I like to get involved in things. But there is no spirit, you can't compare it to A&M or anything. But people don't get involved.

I agree. Not just for football. I don't know anything about their sports.

Parking is a big negative. That's really all.

I don't like my dorm. I'm in Kerr.

There is no drainage on campus when it rains. You step in these huge puddles on the way to class.

**What is the major problem or weakness?**

Admissions needs to get organized. I would receive one thing in the mail and then the next week I would get the same thing. They weren't keeping track of what they sent out.

I agree.

**Let's talk about the image of North Texas. How would you describe the image?**

A lot of the kids from my high school go to Brookhaven Community College. A lot of people say things about North Texas, like it's not a good school. But I don't agree with

that. I think it's a good school and they just don't know about it.

I used to look at the school in Commerce like that too, but I think it's because it's so close. If you lived next door to Harvard, you'd think the same thing. People think if you don't go far away, then you aren't going to a good school.

I think it should be a little more publicized. I think that would help that situation. My high school complained about how they hardly had any literature from North Texas. They need to publicize more in high schools all over the state. They need to send more the high schools.

I was going to agree with her. Like in Arlington, TCU and SMU is really popular. When you say North Texas they say 'party school' or whatever. But when you say TCU, they think you're smart.

**How has your perception of North Texas changed?**

Now that I'm here it's different.

It seems more academic than I imagined it would be.

**How would describe the academic reputation of North Texas?**

It's good.

Okay.

**Do you think that people admire and respect a degree from North Texas?**

Yes, I think it's getting more so that way.

When people ask me where I go and what I'm studying, people are impressed. The reputation is getting better.

I read about it, because it used to bother me. The more I learned about it, they really do. There are a lot of prominent people that went here.

**How important is a good academic reputation?**

Very important. I heard that it was a big party school. It is more, it is an academic campus. It depends what you're going for.

**I want to show you some marketing materials that are used to recruit freshmen students. Do these look familiar?**  
(All nod yes to booklet and brochure, not all saw the video).

**Did you parents look at these materials?**  
No.

**Do you remember where you got these materials?**  
Mail.

The brochure was handed out at college day at my high school.

I called and they sent them to me.

There was some stuff I got on college day and talked to a recruiter. Then months went by and I didn't get anything, and then I started hearing from them. The other schools sent me stuff immediately.

**Before you got these materials were you aware of North Texas?**  
Yes.

I heard from my friends.

**Did the materials influence your decision to come here?**  
I was reading about my major and the financial section and that helped me decide.

I had already decided to go here when I got the materials.

I was kinda stubborn during the whole process. Nothing had much effect.

I had come to campus to visit with my parents.

**What do you think a 'Partner in your Success' means?**  
They are helping you.

**Say you were given the task of re-designing these materials. What would you do to make these materials more appealing to high school students?**



Something different on the cover. It's such a cheese-ball thing to do to put a picture of the school on the cover.

I just went through so many materials and some were really neat. The ones from NYU had these bright colored spirals and they were different shapes. Like it needs to have neat shapes and bright colors.

More classroom pictures. Show more of Denton.

Pictures have a lot to do with it. You have to visualize something.

People don't really read. They mainly look at the pictures.

## REFERENCES

- Absher, K. & Crawford, G. (1996). Marketing the community college starts with understanding students' perspectives. Community College Review, 23(4), 59-67.
- Anderson, C. (1994). Dear prospective student: an analysis of admissions materials from four universities. College and University, (70) . 28-36, 38.
- Anthrop, P. (1996). Expectations and satisfaction of freshmen in higher education. Dissertation. University of Central Florida.
- Brown, H. (1993). Positioning the undervalued metropolitan university. Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 4 (1-2), 159-75.
- Brown, J. (1991). Identifying benefit segments among college students. The Journal of College Admission. NEED VOLUME 30-33.
- Brown, S. (1996). Surfing for international opportunities: How the internet shapes student choices. Metropolitan Universities: An international Forum, 6 (4), 47-56.
- Buresch, M. (1994). Marketing higher education to urban black youth: a comparison between the practices of urban American Jesuit colleges and universities and urban private historically black colleges and universities. Dissertation. Saint Louis University.
- Boyer, E. (1986, December). Smoothing the transition from school to college. Phi Delta Kappan, pp 283- 287.
- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1986, January/February). How do students choose a college? Change, pp. 29-32.

- Coccari, R. & Javalgi R. (1995). Analysis of students' needs  
in selecting a college or university in a changing environment. Journal for Marketing for Higher Education, 6(2), 27-39.
- Comegys, C. (1991) Consumer buying roles and decision attributes in the college choice process: implications for marketing a small private college based on prospective students' and parental p perceptions. Dissertation. Boston College.
- Entering Student Questionnaire, (Summer 1995). Wright State University. Unpublished.
- Fram, E. (1973, March). Positive steps for marketing in higher education. Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Higher Education, Chicago.
- Galotti, K. & Kozberg, S. (1996). Adolescents' experience of  
a life-framing decision. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 25(1), 13-16.
- Gilmour, J. and others. (1981). How High School Students Select a College.
- Gin, H. (1995). The relationship between first-year college student satisfaction and place of residence. Dissertation. University of San Francisco.
- Goldgehn, L. (1989). Admissions standards and the use of key  
marketing techniques by United States' colleges and universities. College and University, 44-55.
- Greenbaum, T. (1993). The Handbook of Focus Group Research. New York, NY: Lexington Books.
- Greenbaum, T (1990, January 22). What the '90s will hold for  
focus group research, Advertising Age. p.26
- Greenbaum, T. (1988). The Practical Handbook and Guide to

- Focus Group Research. New York, NY: Lexington Books.
- Grossman, R. & Cooper D. (1996). From the outside looking in: The high school counselor's perspective on academic reputation. College and University, 71(3), 2-9.
- Grossman, R. (1987). Key to institutional survival and success. College Board Review, 143, 14-17, 32-33.
- Hamrick F. & Hossler, D. (1996). Diverse information-gathering methods in the postsecondary decision-making process. Review of Higher Education, 19(2), 179-98.
- Horvat, E. (1996). African American students and college choice decision making in a social context: The influence of race and class on educational opportunity.  
Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.
- Hossler D. & Foley E. (1995). Reducing noise in the college choice process: The use of college guidebooks and ratings. New Directions for Institutional Research, 88 91-107.
- Huddleston, T. (1980). In consideration of marketing and reorganization. Journal of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, 25(1), 18-24.
- Hurtado, S. (1996). Differences in college access in choice among racial/ethnic groups: Identifying continuing barriers. Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Albuquerque.
- Johnstone, D.B. (1986). The United States. ASHE Reader on Finance in Higher Education. Needham Heights, Mass.: Simon & Schuster.
- Jonas, P. (1992). By the seat of your pants. The Journal of College Admission. 12-15.
- Jones, J. (1995). Entering student survey, summary report

- and trend analysis. Office of University Planning. University of North Texas. Denton.
- Kellaris J & Kellaris, W. (1988). An exploration of the factors influencing students' college choice decision at a small private college. College and University, 63 (2), 187-97.
- King, K., et al (1986). Factors influencing students' perceptions of college recruitment activities. College and University, 61 (2), 99-113.
- Kotler, P. & Levy, S. (1969). Broadening the concept of marketing. Journal of Marketing, 45, 10-15.
- Kotler, P. and Patrick M. (1991). Strategic planning for higher education. Organization and Governance in Higher Education, an ASHE Reader. Needham Heights, Mass.: Ginn Press.
- Lapovsky, L. (1996). Tuition discounting continues to climb. Business Officer, 29(8). 20-25.
- Lynn, J. (1985). Parental influence in college choice process. Dissertation. University of Colorado at Boulder.
- McCoy, J. & Allen, D., Jr. (1991). A guide to effective use of alumni student recruitment. Journal of Marketing for Higher Education 3, (2), 105-12.
- McDonough, P & Antonio A. (1996). Ethnic and racial differences in selectivity of college choice. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association., New York.
- McGrath, J. (1988). The relationship of selected college and demographic factors to applicants' college choice: a discriminate analysis. Dissertation. University of Akron.
- Milo, K.J. (1985). A study of college faculty and administrator attitudes toward and involvement with,

- educational marketing and student recruiting.  
Dissertation. The University of Tennessee.
- Pace, R. (1976). Better information for student choice:  
UCLA  
Who goes and what's it like? California University,  
Los Angeles. Laboratory for Research on Higher Education.
- Peeler, L. (1995). Personal identity, cultural identity and  
occupational choice among African-American youth.  
Dissertation. State University of New York at Buffalo.
- Pride, W.& Ferrell O. (1995). Marketing. Boston: Houghton  
Mifflin Company.
- Schultz, G. (1991) Factors of influence on high school  
graduates of northwest Kansas in electing post-  
secondary educational institutions. Dissertation.  
Kansas State University.
- Sevier, R. (1994). Image is everything - strategies for  
measuring, changing and maintaining your institution's  
image. College and University, 69 (2), 60-75.
- Simmons, J & Laczniak, G. (1992) Marketing in higher  
Education: a stage model concerning where it's been  
and  
where it's going. College and University 67 (1), 263-  
74.
- Skinner, S. (1994). Marketing (2 ed.). Boston: Houghton  
Mifflin Company.
- Stewart, K. (1988). Applying the marketing concept to a  
higher education setting: does student opinion reflect  
implementation of the marketing concept? Dissertation.  
University of Pittsburgh.
- St. John, E. (1996). The nexus between college choice and  
persistence. Research in Higher Education, 37(2), 175-  
220.
- Stewart D. & Shamdasani, P. (1990). Focus Groups Theory and  
Practice. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

- Stout, R. (1995). Community attitudes about economic impacts of colleges: a case study. Dissertation. University of Iowa.
- Sussman, G. (1979) Views of administrators in higher education regarding the extent and adequacy of the marketing activities performed by their organizations. Dissertation. Boston College.
- Taylor, R. (1981). Perceptions of academic deans toward selected marketing approaches to higher education. Dissertation. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.
- Weiler, W. (1994). Transition from consideration of a college to the decision to apply. Research in Higher Education, 35(6) 631-46.
- Weiler, W. (1996). Factors influencing the matriculation choices of high ability students. Economics of Education Review, 15(1), 23-36.
- "Where have all the graduates gone? Survey of the Oregon high school graduation class of 1995". (1996). Oregon State System of Higher Education, Eugene.
- Yost, M. & Tucker S. (1995). Tangible evidence in marketing a service: the value of a campus visit in choosing a college. Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 6 (1), 47-67.
- Zivic, L. (1989). Evaluation of private higher education marketing strategies in New England Colleges: A descriptive study. Dissertation. Vanderbilt University.