

**DETERMINING AND ORGANIZING A SUMMARY OF GOALS AND
PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDENT RECRUITMENT PRACTICES FOR
CONSERVE SCHOOL**

by

Terry A. Young-Burke Jr.

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Dr. Randy Champeau, Associate Dean of the College of Natural Resources

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on developing a summary for the best recruitment practices for Conserve School. As Conserve School went through a transition from a 4-year boarding school to a semester school, their recruitment practices needed to change. Therefore, after discussions with the Director of Admissions at Conserve School, it was clear that they are in need of analysis of various recruitment strategies and practices in order to best fit their current and future needs. By examining why it is beneficial for students to attend Conserve School, this study has been able to determine appropriate marketing strategies to recruit the kind of students Conserve School wants. Ongoing communication with Conserve School's Director of Admissions has helped convey the needs of the admissions department which in turn helped guide this study. Interviews were conducted with admissions departments from similar semester schools in order to figure out what worked best for them. This will allow Conserve School to sample ideas and strategies that have already been tested and practiced. Additionally, questionnaires were distributed to students in the fall 2010 and the spring 2011 semesters to see how they heard about Conserve School and to gauge their reasons for attending. Results showed that "word of mouth" is still the most powerful recruiting tool for Conserve School, along with internet advertising and networking through *Facebook*. Also, an overwhelming majority of students claimed to not only want to pursue secondary education in environmental studies, but would also like to pursue an outdoor or environmental career. Furthermore, a number of suggestions were taken from admissions staff at other semester schools, such as alumni gatherings and search engine optimization. A summary of suggested recruitment practices has been included as an appendix in the report.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of Problem

This study will determine and organize a summary of goals and procedures for student recruitment for Conserve School

B. Statement of Sub-Problems

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Sub-Problem 1 | Determine why it may be beneficial for students to attend Conserve School based on its mission and vision |
| Sub-Problem 2 | Establish the needs of the Conserve School admission department. |
| Sub-Problem 3 | Determine what techniques, practices, etc. have worked for similar programs. |
| Sub-Problem 4 | Identify aspects of Conserve School that are most appealing to students accepted to the semester program. |
| Sub-Problem 5 | Develop a summary of goals and procedures for student recruitment for Conserve School |

C. Hypothesis

There is no hypothesis for this study.

D. The Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is (1) to help the Conserve School admissions department in determining and organizing the best recruitment practices, (2) to help other schools & families provide new opportunities for their students and (3) to help Conserve School provide an opportunity for a wide range of students to take part in their program.

E. The Limitations

- Limitation #1 This study will focus on high school students and what attracts them to Conserve School.
- Limitation #2 This study will focus on the development and organization of best practices, not a long-term study of how those practices will work in the future
- Limitation #3 This study will not make predictions on the outcomes of these practices in the future
- Limitation #4 This study will not focus on parents, educators or any party other than students.
- Limitation #5 This study will not focus on school visits or presentations

F. Definitions

Conserve School – Conserve School is a semester school for high school students that focuses on the theme of environmental stewardship.

Recruitment practices – strategies designed to engage students in Conserve School to the point of wanting to enroll

Admission – the right, ability, or permission to enter a place, organization or institution

Environmental Education - organized efforts to teach about how natural environments function and, particularly, how human beings can manage their behavior and ecosystems in order to live sustainably.

Program - A system of services, opportunities, or projects, usually designed to meet a social need

G. Abbreviations

CS: Conserve School

CS1: Fall 2010 school semester

CS2: Spring 2011 school semester

H. Assumptions

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Assumption #1 | The Conserve School admissions department has the need for the organization of best recruitment practices |
| Assumption #2 | Students accepted to a semester at Conserve School are the most important people to determine the most appealing aspects of Conserve School to potential participants |
| Assumption #3 | Other programs similar to Conserve School will be willing to share information regarding their recruitment practices |

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter, which reviews literature written by a number of professionals in the field of Environmental Education (EE), will provide supporting evidence in the four main areas of focus for this project: (1) Why It May Be Beneficial For Students To Attend Conserve School Based On Its Mission And Vision, (2) The Needs Of The Conserve School Admission Department, (3) Techniques And Practices That Work Well For Similar Admission Departments, and (4) Aspects Of Conserve School That Are Appealing To Students Already Accepted To A Semester At Conserve School.

(1) Why It May Be Beneficial For Students to Attend Conserve School Based On Its Mission and Vision

The Conserve School Program Guide (2009) describes the schools mission as follows: "Conserve School inspires young people to environmental stewardship through academics and engagement with the forests, lakes, and wildlife of Lowenwood". With a growing interest in environmental sciences and care for our natural resources, this type of education can be invaluable to students today. A large aspect of becoming environmental stewards is one's "commitment to protecting the environment", which is part of Conserve School's vision. This is supported by a study that was conducted concerning students at secondary schools and their attitudes towards the environment. It was clear in the findings that both girls and boys strongly disagree with the statement "Threats to the environment are not my business". Additional findings concluded that the majority of boys and girls in this study agree with the statement that "I think each of us can make a significant contribution to environmental protection" (Jenkins & Pell, 2006). This study shows that threats to the environment and environmental protection are issues that are being taken seriously by students today, and therefore education in becoming an environmental steward could be valuable to their values and beliefs.

A large transition has been occurring at Conserve School to change from a four-year boarding school to a semester school, primarily for juniors in high school. This transition allows students to take advantage of the numerous benefits that semester schools have to offer. Research shows that the idea of a semester school began with Milton Academy's Mountain School in 1984. This was followed by the founding of Swiss Semester in 1986 as well as Chewonki's Maine Coast Semester in 1988 (Liebmann 2008). Since then a number of semester schools have arose to offer unique

experiences to students across the globe. Semester programs have shown that they can help increase both a student's motivation for and interest in learning. By having experiences they might not otherwise get at their local school, students at semester schools are able to broaden their range of interests and skills, as well as progress in their maturity level. Not only does an experience like this help students more deeply pursue specific areas of interest (academic or otherwise), but it can also help them learn what it takes to be on their own as they prepare for college by allowing them to develop life skills and independence (Conserve School 2009). Furthermore, a setting like this can allow students to have more contact with their teachers, providing them with more intimate classes and individual instruction. Living closely in a school community can allow teachers and peers to work together for the benefit of the group, which in turn helps students develop better communication skills and interpersonal accountability, as well as cooperation and leadership skills (Braun 2009).

(2) The Needs of the Conserve School Admission Department

When determining the best practices for a department or organization, it is necessary to discuss the needs of that department or organization with a person in authority. After speaking with Phil DeLong, Director of Admissions & Residential Life at Conserve School, it is apparent that the admissions department has a variety of needs. First, they are interested in discovering a better practice of finding college-bound students who are interested in the environment. They wish to learn a variety of ways to contact students who are best fit for the Conserve School semester program based not only on their academic standing but also their enjoyment of the outdoors. Second, they are interested in discovering what works best for reaching the types of students who are right for the Conserve School semester program. There is an interest in how to "craft the message" that is sent out to prospective students. They desire to know what type of message would be best received by the student to attend Conserve School. Finally, active support from schools is needed. Conserve School wishes to develop long-lasting relationships with sending schools throughout their target area, which includes Wisconsin, upper Michigan, the Twin Cities of Minnesota and northern Illinois. They hope to create a network of schools that will continuously send one or two students each semester to Conserve School (P. DeLong, personal communication, October 26, 2009).

Furthermore, in the Conserve School Program Guide (2009), it states that “Conserve School is looking for students who can demonstrate:

- Prior success with college-preparatory academic material.
- An interest in understanding the science of natural resource conservation.
- A commitment to protecting the environment.
- A willingness to learn about careers that help preserve the natural world.
- The fitness level necessary to engage in outdoor activities such as canoeing, backpacking, biking, skiing, and snowshoeing.
- The desire to learn new skills. (Students need not have prior experience with outdoor activities.)
- Readiness to live responsibly in a trusting community”

In order to determine which students meet these criteria, Conserve School has developed interview questions specific to many of the areas listed above. The first question is concerned with why, in general, the student is interested in coming to Conserve School. This allows the admissions department to determine if the desires of the students match up with the mission and vision of the school. The second question asks if the student has had time to look over the Conserve School curriculum, and if the student has any concerns about it. Asking this question helps Conserve School to see if the applicants have taken the initiative to examine the courses being offered and if they are ready for the college-preparatory curriculum. Another question asks how the applicant feels about leaving home for a semester. This is important to know because Conserve School is looking for students who feel confident enough that they can live away from home for four months in order to complete the semester. Additionally, the interviewer will ask applicants how they feel about the emphasis on outdoor activities. This question is asked so that the admissions department may get a sense of how applicants feel about being physically active outside as often as they will be expected to be at Conserve School. Lastly, the interviewer asks how the student feels about the “Ethics Pledge” they signed in the application, in which they pledge “abstention from alcohol, tobacco and other illicit drugs; commitment to living by the values in the Conserve Code: Compassion, Honesty, Justice, Respect, and Responsibility; communication about their whereabouts as required by the school”. This lets the admissions department see if the student applying has the ethical caliber necessary for them complete the semester in a behaviorally proper manner.

(3) Techniques and Practices That Work Well For Similar Admission Departments

In 2009 members of the Administrative Team at Conserve School spent time visiting semester schools throughout the United States. This was done in an effort to learn more about semester schools and how they operate. One of the reasons for these trips was to find out more about the recruiting strategies these schools used. Three of the schools visited were The Rocky Mountain Semester in Colorado, Chewonki Semester School in Maine, and The Mountain School in Vermont.

One of the main techniques found to be used by these schools were presentations to sending schools. Admissions members from these schools claimed to make dozens of presentations each year to various schools that have sent students to them in the past. They feel that word of mouth has been a large factor in drawing students to their schools, and that has generally been spread by making these presentations at sending schools. They usually organize an assembly at each school that is mandatory for sophomores. Many of the schools they visit are partners with them, known as “sponsor schools” or “member schools”. These are sending schools that helped the semester schools begin by making some sort of investment (even financially) to the start-up of the semester school. These “sponsor schools” are generally guaranteed a certain number of seats at their partnered semester school each semester, so naturally they are open to having the semester schools organize presentations for their students.

Because Conserve School does not have a relationship with any “sponsor schools” similar to the ones mentioned above, this option has not been widely available to their admissions department. Offers for Conserve School to do presentations at potential sending schools have not been accepted. Additionally, Conserve School sees these presentations to be time and cost intensive, especially at this point in their transition. Therefore, Conserve School is anxious to explore other avenues in order to diversify their recruiting efforts. Consequently, that will be the main goal of this project, to help Conserve School find effective techniques that can work for them both now and in the future (P. DeLong, personal communication, February 10, 2010).

(4) Aspects of Conserve School That Are Appealing To Newly Accepted Students

After reviewing the admission interview materials for applicants to Conserve School, there are a few areas that seem to be of most interest to these potential students. First

is the idea of learning more about the natural environment. A number of applicants have commented on their interest in pursuing environmental studies as a career, or at least a field of study in college. They claim to be excited about the opportunity to attend a school that places so much emphasis on learning about and protecting the natural environment. Additionally, applicants seem to be very interested in the way classes are held at Conserve School. Many potential students have mentioned in interviews that taking classes where there is abundant opportunity to explore the outdoors is one of the main draws for them. They comment on how they want to take advantage of some of the outdoor opportunities that they may not be able to experience at their home school.

Furthermore, applicants seem to be very interested in the emphasis Conserve School places on outdoor activities. Many of the students have extensive experience in outdoor recreation such as camping, hiking, canoeing, skiing and much more. Applicants therefore claim to be excited about the trips, recreational activities and outdoor skills lessons that they will be able to experience at Conserve School, something that they might normally not get to participate in on a daily basis at their home school. A final common theme of interest among applicants is the idea of living away from home for a semester. While many students also saw this as a challenge, a large majority of applicants saw this as an opportunity for them to be more independent and practice the skills needed to be away from home when they left for college.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is (1) to help the Conserve School admissions department in determining and organizing the best recruitment practices, (2) to help other schools provide new opportunities for their students and (3) to help Conserve School provide an opportunity for a wide range of students to take part in their program.

Sub-Problem 1 - Determine why it may be beneficial for students to attend Conserve School based on its mission and vision.

In order to properly determine why attending Conserve School may be beneficial to students, it will be important to look at research material on the importance of both semester schools and schools that emphasize environmental awareness. Additionally, newly enrolled students in the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011 will provide some insight into why they felt attending Conserve School is important. It is expected that the benefits of attending a semester school, as well as the values people hold with concerns to the environment and its protection, will all play a factor in discovering the benefits of attending Conserve School.

Sub-Problem 2 - Establish the needs of the Conserve School admission department.

It is essential that, prior to implementing any sort of methodology for gathering data, a researcher understand why they are doing the research. Therefore, for this study, it is important to understand what is needed from the Conserve School Admissions Department, specifically the Director of Admissions Phil DeLong. Open discussions with Phil DeLong were had early on in this process. As methodologies are developed for further sub-problems, constant communication with Mr. DeLong will be necessary, as well as with other administrators and members of the Admissions Department at Conserve School. This will help the researcher determine the growing needs of the Admissions Department with respect to student recruitment.

Population – The Conserve School Admissions Department, specifically Phil DeLong (Director of Admissions)

Data – The needs of this admissions department as a foundation from which to build the rest of the project.

Methods – Informal discussions with Conserve School’s Director of Admissions as well as frequent contact and updates with the admissions department.

Sub-Problem 3 – Determine what techniques, practices, etc. have worked for similar programs.

Information from other schools that have used the semester boarding school model for a longer period of time than Conserve School will be helpful to the researcher. Since other programs similar to Conserve School’s semester program are already succeeding in terms of student recruitment, it is important to discover why and how this has happened and how Conserve School can follow similar trends. Finding out what has been done in the past, as well as what has worked and what hasn’t worked, will help guide the methodology of this research. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with administrative members of schools with similar programs, such as (but not limited to) Chewonki Semester School in Maine and The Mountain School in Vermont.

Population – Similar semester schools, such as Chewonki Semester School in Maine and The Mountain School in Vermont.

Data –.Since other programs similar to Conserve School’s semester program are already succeeding in terms of student recruitment, it is important to discover why and how has happened and how Conserve School can follow similar trends.

Methods – Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with administrative members of these schools with similar programs

Sub-Problem 4 - Identify aspects of Conserve School that are most appealing to students accepted to a semester at Conserve School

This sub-problem will be the main focus of this research. In order to understand what will be most effective in bringing students to Conserve School for a semester, this study will look at what was most appealing to students that have been accepted and arrive in Fall 2010, the first semester of the new semester model at Conserve School. With guidance from of Conserve Schools Director of Admissions, questionnaires will be

developed to gather the data. These questionnaires will be completed by accepted students in the fall of 2010 semester (CS1) and students in the spring of 2011 semester (CS2). The data will then be analyzed to determine some useful recruiting strategies.

Population – Newly enrolled students in CS1 and CS2

Data – Statistical data on what attracted newly enrolled students to Conserve School

Methods – Questionnaires will be used to gather information.

Sub-Problem 5 - Develop a summary of goals and procedures for student recruitment for Conserve School

Once the data gathered in this study has been analyzed, it must be organized into a manner that will be helpful for Conserve School. A summary of goals and procedures for student recruitment will be developed and provided to Conserve School. Both positive and negative aspects from this study will be added to help Conserve School better focus and direct their recruitment practices.

Population – The data that has been collected from the previous 4 sub-problems

Data – The positive and negative aspects realized throughout this study will be organized into a summary for the Conserve School Admissions Department

Methods – Gathering and analyzing all of the information gathered throughout this study

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Sub-Problem 1 - Determine why it may be beneficial for students to attend Conserve School based on its mission and vision.

As discussed in Chapter II above, there are specific reasons why students would benefit from a semester experience at Conserve School. Some of those reasons include:

- Attending Conserve School will educate students in environmental stewardship and awareness, allowing them to practice and teach others about caring for the environment – a subject proven to be important to young people today
- Living closely in a school community can help students develop better communication skills and interpersonal accountability, as well as cooperation and leadership skills
- Semester programs have shown that they can help increase both a student's motivation for and interest in learning

Sub-Problem 2 - Establish the needs of the Conserve School admissions department.

Through discussions with Conserve School staff, specifically the Director of Admissions, it seems that some of the main needs of the Conserve School admissions department are as follows:

- discovering effective practices of finding college-bound students who are interested in the environment
- discovering what works best for reaching the types of students who are right for the Conserve School semester program
- gaining active support from sending schools as the program grows more popular

Sub-Problem 3 – Determine what techniques, practices, etc. have worked for similar programs.

During the winter and spring of 2011, admissions staff members at various semester schools which have some outdoor or environmental focus were contacted and asked to participate in a short interview for the purposes of this study. Of the 7 semester schools that

were contacted, 3 agreed to participate. The questions for this interview, the objectives for each question, and some of the responses are below.

QUESTION 1 – Please give me your 30-second “elevator speech” about your school.

The reason for asking this question was to understand the organization the interviewee works at, to get an idea of the interviewee’s perspective, and to help the interviewee feel comfortable by starting off with a non-threatening question. What these responses had most in common is below:

- All offer unique components

QUESTION 2 - Tell me about the kind of students you target when recruiting.

This question was asked to understand the overall aim of the admissions department and to learn if the students targeted by one school compare to that of another. Responses included:

- Students who are interested in what each school is uniquely offering
- Motivated
- Good academic standing
- Many come from private schools

QUESTION 3 - What makes students interested in your program?

The objectives for asking this question were to understand the focus of the organization and to understand what areas of the organization might be stressed when recruiting. Common responses were:

- Unique components
 - o Wilderness trips
 - o Interest in environment
 - o Living in community

QUESTION 4 - In addition to presentations to sending schools, tell me about some of the recruitment practices

This question was asked to understand some of the recruitment practices the organization uses, to learn what practices exist at semester schools and to learn how these practices differ by organization. Similar responses include:

- Alumni evening presentations, where alumni families host an event and speak on behalf of the program
- Continuous follow-up with students who show interest
- Mandatory meetings at schools, speaking to an entire class
- Email marketing
- Social media (i.e. *Facebook*, blogs)
- Search engine optimization (being at the top of an internet search)

QUESTION 5 - Are there things you have tried when it comes to recruitment strategies that you wouldn't do again?

The reason this question was asked was to understand what recruitment practices have been tried at semester schools and to understand what recruitment practices have been ineffective according to admissions professionals. The most common reply was as follows:

- Optional or "lunch table" meetings

QUESTION 6 - In addition to presentations to sending schools, if you had to choose one technique to use to recruit students, what would it be?

This question was asked to understand what recruitment practices have been tried at semester schools and to understand what recruitment practices are most effective according to admissions professionals. Responses included:

- Alumni evening presentations
- Follow-up and continued contact
- *Facebook* ad
- Search engine optimization

Sub-Problem 4 - Identify aspects of Conserve School that are most appealing to students accepted to a semester at Conserve School

A questionnaire was given by Conserve School to its high school students in the fall 2010 school semester (CS1) and the spring 2011 school semester (CS2). The objective of this interview was to gather information specific to each student with regard to how they heard about Conserve School, what interested them about Conserve School, and so on. Of the students who attended, 42 out of 48 students in CS1 participated while 43 out of 44 students in CS2 participated.

QUESTION 1 - How did you hear about Conserve School (if word of mouth, like from a parent or friend, how did they hear about it)?

The reason for this question was to determine what marketing strategies Conserve School has implemented that has captured the attention of students who applied. The results are as follows:

		CS1 Responses		CS2 Responses	
		Response Percent	Response Count (out of 42)	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 43)
A friend who is also attending Conserve School		16.67%	7	23.26%	10
Facebook		16.67%	7	16.28%	7
Internet Search		11.90%	5	9.30%	4
From a teacher/counselor		26.19%	11	32.56%	14
Other (please specify)	Conserve School AP Institute	4.76%	2	-	-
	Neighbors	2.38%	1	-	-
	Homeschool network	4.76%	2	-	-
	Current staff	4.76%	2	4.65%	2
	By mail	2.38%	1	6.98%	3
	The American Birkebeiner	2.38%	1	-	-

	Alumni	2.38%	1	-	-
	Mentor at the Shedd Aquarium	2.38%	1	-	-
	Trees for Tomorrow	2.38%	1	-	-
	Canoecopia	-	-	4.65%	2
	Nature center	-	-	2.33%	1

QUESTION 2 – If you heard about Conserve School because you met a Conserve School representative at a conference or event, please list that specific conference or event. If not, please move on to Question 3.

This question was asked in order to determine which conferences Conserve School employees have exhibited at that seem to attract applicants. Responses showed the following:

	CS1 Responses		CS2 Responses	
	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 42)	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 43)
Conserve School Open House	2.38%	1	-	-
Homeschool Families of Illinois Conference	2.38%	1	2.33%	1
American Birkebeiner	2.38%	1	-	-
Bioneers Conference	2.38%	1	-	-
Canoecopia	-	-	4.65%	2
Midwest Renewable Energy Association Fair	-	-	2.33%	1

QUESTION 3 – What was appealing to you about Conserve School? (please check all that apply)

This third question was asked to determine what aspects students find (or don't find) appealing about Conserve School. The results are as follows:

	CS1 Responses		CS2 Responses	
	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 42)	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 43)
It's only a semester long	66.66%	28	51.16%	22
The emphasis on environmental stewardship/ education	88.10%	37	95.35%	41
The non-traditional learning environment	92.86%	39	86.05%	37
Affordability	92.86%	39	83.72%	36
The quality of the faculty & staff	71.43%	30	79.07%	34
The Northwoods location	76.19%	32	74.42%	32
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0	0.00%	0

QUESTION 4 – Of those above, what was most appealing to you about Conserve School?

The objective for asking this question was to determine which of the above listed qualities of Conserve School were most appealing to students when deciding to apply.

	CS1 Responses		CS2 Responses	
	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 42)	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 43)
It's only a semester long	0.00%	0	2.33%	1
The emphasis on environmental stewardship/ education	38.10%	16	48.84%	21
The non-traditional learning environment	47.62%	20	27.91%	12
Affordability	2.38%	1	6.98%	3
The quality of the faculty & staff	2.38%	1	4.65%	2
The Northwoods location	9.52%	4	9.30%	4
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0	0.00%	0

QUESTION 5 – Did the fact that it's a semester long instead of a year of 4 years make it more appealing?

This question was asked to determine how appealing a semester school is to high school students as opposed to other boarding school models available to them.

	CS1 Responses		CS2 Responses	
	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 42)	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 43)
Yes	83.33%	35	83.72%	36
No	16.67%	7	16.28%	7

QUESTION 6 – Are you interested in pursuing higher education in environmental studies?

The reason for asking this question was to determine if students who attend Conserve School are interested in pursuing environmental studies as they move on to college or some other sort of higher education.

	CS1 Responses		CS2 Responses	
	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 42)	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 43)
Yes	83.33%	35	88.37%	38
No	16.67%	7	11.63%	5

QUESTION 7 – Are you interested in pursuing an environmental or outdoor career in the future?

The objective of this question is to find out if students who attend Conserve School are interested in pursuing a career in a field related to the outdoors and/or the environment.

	CS1 Responses		CS2 Responses	
	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 42)	Response Percent	Response Count (out of 43)
Yes	83.33%	35	81.40%	35
No	16.67%	7	18.60%	8

Sub-Problem 5 - Develop a summary of goals and procedures for student recruitment for Conserve School

Based on implications driven from the data gathered in the sub-problems above, summary of recommendations for recruitment practices will be developed. This summary will include recommendations including, but will not be limited to:

- Suggestions for methods to continue in the future
- New practices that should be implemented by the admissions department
- Recommendations of practices that should be avoided in the future

CHAPTER V: IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Sub-Problem 1 - Determine why it may be beneficial for students to attend Conserve School based on its mission and vision.

Based on the results listed above for this sub-problem, it seems that Conserve School would benefit from emphasizing its mission of inspiring “young people to environmental stewardship”. This is currently a focal point of Conserve School’s recruitment strategies. However, it seems essential that this practice continue based on the studies showing young people’s feelings towards caring for the environment. Additionally, it will be important to investigate powerful ways to highlight the community environment Conserve School has to offer, considering the benefits that can offer student development. Lastly, it would seem pertinent for Conserve School to focus marketing strategies on the benefits of a semester school. The idea of a semester school is still somewhat young and many people are still unaware of what it entails. While some research is posted on Conserve School’s website, it would seem important to find additional ways to relay this information to interested students and parents.

Sub-Problem 2 - Establish the needs of the Conserve School admission department.

When looking at the needs of the Conserve School admissions department, it seems that the primary goal is to find ways to consistently search out students who are right for the program. Based on the enrollment numbers for the first two semesters of the Conserve School semester program (48 students during CS1 and 44 students during CS2), it would appear that the current practices being used are satisfactory to meet their desired quota (between 30 and 60 students each semester). This would lead one to believe that their methods (such as *Facebook* ads, exhibiting at conferences, and consistent follow-up with interested students) are working and should be continued. That being said, another need of the admissions department is to gain support from sending schools. This will be more reasonable as the program grows in popularity. Additionally, in order to gain this support it would seem necessary for Conserve School to use the support of its alumni in the process. Relying on its alumni to gain Conserve School’s favor in their sending schools will be very useful as time goes on and the pool of alumni grows.

Sub-Problem 3 – Determine what techniques, practices, etc. have worked for similar programs.

The first question of the Admissions Staff Survey was asked mainly to understand a bit more about the schools that the admissions staff work at. Each of the schools are semester schools with a focus (with varying levels of emphasis) on the environment. Each school seems to work to instill positive feelings towards the environment in its students. That being said, they seem to go about this in a variety of ways, whether it's through wilderness trips or political issues. Because these schools focus (even somewhat) on the environment and continue to be successful, it leads one to believe that high school students care deeply about taking care of and learning about the environment (as previously discussed). Therefore, it is necessary for Conserve School to continue placing an emphasis on the environmental aspects of its program when developing marketing and recruitment strategies.

The next question addresses what kinds of students are targeted by the schools. One shared response was that students who are specifically interested in what each school is offering are targeted. In order to prosper, it seems that each school tries to find a unique niche that sets them apart from the other semester schools. This will not only help them be distinctive, but also to recruit students who are interested in the program. It would be a much more productive and successful program if the students involved are interested in specifically what the school is offering, and not attending for other reasons (such as getting away from home for a semester or only because it may look good on a college application). The survey results also showed that motivated students in good academic standing are also targeted. It seems like this is desirable for a number of reasons. One main reason could be that semester schools (and some boarding schools in general) rely on the student to be somewhat independent in their studies. They do not have parents looking over their shoulders to make sure they are getting their homework done. They are living on their own in a community and are expected to remain in good academic standing on their own. Having motivated, academically independent students that are sincerely interested in what the program has to offer, it seems, would be the target of any school. Seeing as these students are the same types of students Conserve School targets, the information gained from the rest of this survey would be applicable to Conserve School and helpful in improving its recruitment practices.

The third question of the interview asks what makes students interested in the participants' programs. While Conserve School does not focus primarily on wilderness trips as some of the other semester schools do, it does offer one extended trip in the wilderness each semester as well as frequent day trips around the 1,200 acre campus and the Sylvania Wilderness. So, while wilderness trips do occur occasionally at Conserve School, they don't occur to the extent of some of the other semester schools in the country. In other words, that is not Conserve School's "niche". Therefore, it doesn't seem necessary to devote a lot of time marketing wilderness trips to potential students. Conserve School's trips are more of a result of its main focus – environmental stewardship. Like the other semester schools who participated in this study, Conserve School focuses a great deal on the environment. Seeing as these semester schools are finding success when recruiting students who are interested in the environment, this should encourage Conserve School to continue focusing recruitment practices on presenting the many ways its semester program "inspires young people to environmental stewardship". Additionally, living in community with staff and other students seems to interest the students that are recruited for the other programs. The sense of community that exists at Conserve School comes out when reading the school's blog or when attending one of the Open Houses (both of which are marketed through follow-up emails with students interested in the program as well as *Facebook*). However, it seems that it would be beneficial for Conserve School to investigate more about how they can use this aspect of the school as a recruiting tool. Phil DeLong, Director of Admissions at Conserve School, has stated that the word "community" is a frequent answer in the school's admissions interview when students are asked why they want to attend Conserve School. Additionally, it has been mentioned previously in this report that living in community has a number of things to offer with regards to student development. Because of these factors, and the apparent interest that students in similar semester programs have in living in community, it seems that this aspect of a semester boarding school is an important one and should be considered a key theme when developing recruitment strategies.

The fifth question asks what types of things these other schools have tried that have not worked as well. The most common answer was optional or "lunch table" meetings when visiting a school. Basically, some of these participants feel that when they visit a school that is not invested or involved in their visit, the visit becomes fruitless. One implication this brings up is that there need to be ways to get schools interested in being involved with these visits. This could come from alumni support at their schools. Students who have had good experiences at Conserve School could be very useful in getting their schools to be more invested in a visit from

a representative. Additionally, there is always a serious investment of both time and money when sending an employee to travel anywhere. It will be important for Conserve School, as additional recruitment strategies develop and/or change, to constantly assess whether or not the outcome of an admissions trip or school visit is worth the time, money and other resources put into it. If not, it seems necessary to put that time, money and resources towards practices that have proven to be more productive in the past. This assessment is something that should be constant with all recruitment practices, not just ones that involve travel.

The fourth question asks what practices have worked well for these other semester schools, while the sixth question tries to determine which of these practices have worked the best. The responses to the latter question identify the most effective recruitment practices for semester schools like Conserve School. The first that is mentioned is alumni evening presentations, where an alumnus of the school will invite interested families to their house for a presentation on the school itself. Seeing as this is only Conserve School's second semester as a semester school, it has not been feasible to devote a lot of resources into this kind of strategy until now. As the number of alumni grows, it will be imperative for Conserve School to utilize them as tools in recruitment and marketing. The results of both this admissions interview and the student questionnaire (from Sub-Problem 4) both illustrate that "word of mouth" is a very powerful tool in marketing a semester school. It will be important for Conserve School to find ways to harness that power for its own benefit, such as alumni evening presentations. Another common response was that follow-up and continued contact with interested students is a useful practice. Currently this is a practice that Conserve School works at. The Admissions Department utilizes graduate students that rotate to various jobs each of their four semesters at Conserve School to respond to interested students and parents. This is a practice that Conserve School will need to continue in the future. That being said, it would also be helpful for the school to evaluate how this is being done. After conversations with the Director of Admissions at Conserve School, it seems that a need that has grown over time is consistent help in responding to these admissions inquiries. In the current model, graduate students are rotating in and out of this position each semester, and also are consistently being pulled out of their duties in the Admissions Department to help with other projects that come about. It would seem necessary to have more stable help in the Admissions Department where staff would be responding to admissions inquires consistently on a day to day basis. When a student or parent expresses interest in Conserve School, it is vital that this relationship be fostered and nurtured to ensure that interest continues. Additionally, the more contacts an interested parent or

student receives from staff at Conserve School can only help to pique that interest more, creating a stronger desire for the student to apply. Therefore, more consistent help in the Admissions Department would play an important role in the follow-up and continued contact with interested students.

Continuing with the responses from question six of the Admissions Staff Interview, another response of a practice that works best was *Facebook* ads, as well as increasing search engine optimization. These responses imply that search engines and social media play an important role in recruiting students to these semester schools. Therefore, it will be important for Conserve School to continue to keep up to date with this technology. New ways to utilize this technology should be constantly evaluated considering it will change as time goes by. Updating or refreshing ads will be vital so as to keep things from getting old, which in turn will make it much easier for people to pass over them. New pictures and slogans will be an effective way to keep these ads new to those who may need to view them more than once to have their interest piqued. So, continuing to stay up to date with the technology and finding creative ways to use it will be important tools for recruitment and marketing as things move forward for Conserve School.

Sub-Problem 4 - Identify aspects of Conserve School that are most appealing to students accepted to a semester at Conserve School

The first question on the student questionnaire aims to identify how CS1 and CS2 students heard about Conserve School. According to the result from this question, the biggest tool for getting information out about Conserve School was “word of mouth”, such as hearing it from a teacher, counselor or friend. When one looks closer at the results, however, these are not the only categories that represent “word of mouth”. Under the category “Other”, students listed things such as alumni, current staff, neighbors and mentors. These answers further insist how important “word of mouth” can be when promoting a semester school. As discussed earlier, one way to do this is to utilize alumni support as Conserve School continues to grow. One way to do this would be to contact alumni within a month of their departure from Conserve School, encouraging them to spread the word about their enrichment experience. This could be accompanied by a token of appreciation as incentive, along with some marketing materials (brochures, fliers, etc.). Alumni could also be encouraged to visit Conserve School with the incentive that, if they bring along potential students who want to view the campus, they could

stay for free. Additionally, Conserve School could reach out to alumni via the *Conserve School Connection* page on *Facebook*. Comments or blog links could be posted when interesting events take place at Conserve School, such as a Winter Skills Weekend, Family Weekend, Exploration Week, etc. This could inspire alumni to share these things with students at their schools, helping to spread the word about the semester program. Furthermore, it would be productive for Conserve School to prepare its staff for marketing the school. By explaining recruitment procedures, informing them more about current marketing tools such as the website and the school blog, and perhaps providing them with a short “elevator speech” could all be productive preparation strategies. This way, when a staff member is approached about Conserve School and asked about the program, all staff, from teachers to support staff to graduate students, should be able to provide a positive, intriguing message that is consistent with what is being marketed on a regular basis by the Admissions Department. Also, as mentioned previously, conferences could be an important way of getting information about Conserve School out to teachers and school counselors. As time goes on it will be important for Conserve School to find additional avenues to reach these educators in order to inform more people about what the school has to offer. Finally, another important factor students identified was that they found out about Conserve School via the internet, whether it was through a search or through *Facebook*. As mentioned previously, it will be important for Conserve School to continue to stay up to date with the technology that exists and is being utilized by high school students. Keeping ads fresh, continuing with search engine optimization, and finding new technological avenues to grab the attention of students are all ways that Conserve School can continue to be productive in marketing through the internet.

The next question asks students to identify if they heard about Conserve School because they met a representative at a conference or event. There was not an overwhelming response in the affirmative to this question (only 4 students each semester). That being said, it doesn't mean that exhibiting at conferences is not a useful recruitment tool for Conserve School. What these results show is that exhibiting at conferences may not be a very strong strategy for reaching students directly. However, of the 10 conferences that Conserve School exhibited at during the 2010-2011 school year, 7 of them were directed specifically at educators and school counselors. As was discussed previously, the majority of students from CS1 and CS2 claim to have heard about Conserve School from a teacher or a counselor. So it seems there is a correlation between the kinds of conferences Conserve School exhibited at and the number of students who heard about the school from a teacher or counselor. Therefore, while exhibiting at

conferences may not be the strongest practice to directly recruit students, it seems that it could be a very strong tool in indirectly reaching students via educators and school counselors. Hence, it will be important for Conserve School to continue its practice of exhibiting at conferences that are directed towards counselors, teachers, administrators and other school officials. Additionally, it would be wise for Conserve School to identify additional ways to get the word out to people in these professions so that they may spread the word to their students.

Question three of the questionnaire asked which aspects of the school are most appealing (according to the list provided). When allowed to choose as many appealing aspects of Conserve School as they wished, most students checked each category. This implies that all of these categories are important and that each one should be very clear in Conserve School's marketing and recruitment practices. Next, question four asked students to choose just one selection from the list to identify what they found most appealing about the school. The top two responses to this question were "the emphasis on environmental stewardship/education" and "the non-traditional learning environment". While all the aspects of Conserve School on the list should be included in the recruitment practices (according to the response to question three), this question should help direct what will grab attention the most. These are the two things that students have identified as being most appealing, so once their attention is grabbed by these aspects, it will be important for Conserve School to promote the other categories on the list to keep the students' interest piqued. Also, while the non-traditional learning environment and the emphasis on environmental stewardship/education are both important tools, Conserve School should prioritize which will be marketed more. The main focus of Conserve School, as stated clearly in their mission, is to "inspire young people to environmental stewardship". While the non-traditional learning environment is something that should also be highlighted, it should come secondary to the mission of the school. Students who attend Conserve School should be most interested in studying the environment, not just looking for an alternative to their sending school. Therefore, stressing the environmental focus of Conserve School will be more productive in attracting the kind of students who should attend, rather than students who just want a change and are not as interested in the environment. This also leads to the point that Conserve School will need to consistently seek out how to get this information to students who are interested in the environment. Whether it is more outreach to nature centers or attending/sponsoring more environmental events that high school students attend, it should be a constant practice not just to get the word out about Conserve School, but to get it out to the right kinds of students.

Question five of the questionnaire was aimed to determine whether or not Conserve School being semester program made it more appealing than a year or four-year program. A large majority of both CS1 and CS2 students claimed that being a semester long made Conserve School more appealing. This suggests that it will be important for Conserve School to advertise the fact that it is a semester boarding high school. The administrators will need to find ways to keep people from passing the exhibit table at a conference or skipping over an ad because they think it's a college or a four-year program. Conserve School will need to constantly evaluate marketing materials as well as their communications with other schools to make this point stand out and not allow those viewing the materials to gloss over this fact and dismiss it prematurely. This also implies that it will be imperative for Conserve School to look into where students, families and schools look to discover semester-long enrichment opportunities. Whether it is printed material, the internet, or their state's department of education, Conserve School will need to make constant efforts to discover these avenues of information in order to get advertisements and marketing materials to the right place and, consequently, the right people.

The responses to questions six and seven of the questionnaire attest not only to the CS1 and CS2 students' interest in the environment, but also their desire to pursue that interest in the future – both in college and after. Therefore, it would be in the best interest of Conserve School staff to continue to emphasize the school's environmental focus. Additionally, it would be important to create relationships with colleges and universities that have a strong environmental or natural resources department. It will be helpful if Conserve School could utilize those relationships as a means of marketing their environmental focus to students who have that interest. Along those same lines, it will be important for Conserve School to foster relationships with people who are in the fields that students are interested in pursuing or hearing more about. A relationship with these colleges and universities, as well as professionals in environmental careers, would be a strong marketing strategy to high school students. It will be imperative for Conserve School to find ways to market their relationship with places like the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with their Graduate Fellowship program. Additionally, Conserve School will need to find effective ways of spreading the word about the guest speakers and other professionals who come to the school to interact with the students. These relationships could also help Conserve School find events and other organizations that potential students would be interested in, and thereby find ways to get involved as well. The school should also consider offering its facilities for meetings or conferences to organizations like the Department

of Natural Resources or the Association of Nature Center Administrators in order to continue to create new and lasting relationships with professionals in environmental fields who interact with young people interested in the environment.

Sub-Problem 5 - Develop a summary of goals and procedures for student recruitment for Conserve School

A summary of the implications and recommendations based on this study will be included as an appendix in this report. The purpose of this summary will be to inform Conserve School as to what admissions practices have been working in the past. Additionally, it will provide suggestions of what to begin doing in the future based on what other semester schools have tried. While this summary will not be something that will be used in the long run, it will give Conserve School an idea as to whether or not certain practices have been working, and how to begin to move forward as the semester school program continues.

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Appendix A

Student Questionnaire for CS1 and CS2 Students

- 1) **How did you hear about Conserve School (if word of mouth, like from a parent or a friend, how did they hear about it?)**
 - a. A friend who is also attending Conserve School
 - b. *Facebook*
 - c. Internet Search
 - d. From a teacher/counselor
 - e. Other (please specify)

- 2) **If you heard about Conserve School because you met a Conserve School representative at a conference or event, please list that specific conference or event. If not, please go on to Question 3.**

- 3) **What was appealing to you about Conserve School (choose all that apply)**
 - a. It is only a semester long
 - b. The emphasis on environmental stewardship/education
 - c. The non-traditional learning environment
 - d. Affordability
 - e. The quality of faculty & staff
 - f. The Northwoods location
 - g. Other (please specify)

- 4) **Of those above, what was most appealing to you about Conserve School?**

5) Did the fact that it's a semester long instead of a year or 4 years make it more appealing?

Yes

No

6) Are you interested in pursuing higher education in environmental studies?

Yes

No

7) Are you interested in an environmental or outdoor career in the future?

Yes

No

Appendix B

Admissions Staff Interview Questions

Name of interviewee _____

Organization _____

Position _____

Date _____

Time _____

- 1) Please give me your 30-second “elevator speech” about your school.

- 2) Tell me about the kind of students you target when recruiting.

- 3) What makes students interested in your program?

- 4) ***In addition to presentations to sending schools***, tell me about some of the recruitment

- 5) Are there things you have tried when it comes to recruitment strategies that you wouldn't do again?

- 6) ***In addition to presentations to sending schools***, if you had to choose one technique to use to recruit students, what would it be?

Appendix C

Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subject Research

T.J. Young-Burke, graduate candidate for a Masters Degree in Residential Environmental Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point would like to request your participation in a research study designed to determine a guide of goals and procedures for best student recruitment practices. You are being asked to complete a 15-minute phone interview as part of this study.

Please find attached the questions that you will be asked during the interview. These questions will be used to provide insight into both positive and negative approaches to student recruitment. If, after reading the questions, you decide that you do not want to participate in the interview, you are free to do so with no repercussions. Please note that this interview is completely voluntary and you may choose to leave any questions unanswered if you wish to do so.

Participating in this phase of the research should pose no risk to you other than the time needed to complete the interview. Benefits to participating in this phase of the research include access to the finished product – a guide of researched recommendations for student recruitment.

For the purpose of the study, your phone interview will be recorded via an audio conferencing service. The recording will be accessible only to the researcher via password. Once the recording is downloaded, it will be saved on a password-protected computer. The recording will be transcribed and assigned an identification number, and any identifying factors linking the interview to you will be removed. No information about you will be released to anyone other than yourself, and publication or presentation of the study data would in no way identify you as a participant. Only the researcher will have access to the names associated with the identification numbers assigned to each interviewee. This information will be kept on a password-protected computer in his home and destroyed at the end of the study.

If you want to withdraw from the study, at any time, you may do so without penalty. Any information collected on you up to that point would be destroyed. Once the study is completed, you may receive the results of the study. If you would like these results, or if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact:

T.J. Young-Burke
5400 N Black Oak Lake Rd
Land O Lakes, WI, 54540 (612)202-1248

If you have any complaints about your treatment as a participant in this study or believe that you have been harmed in some way by your participation, please contact:

Dr. Jason Davis, Chair
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Department of Business & Economics
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Stevens Point, WI 54481, (715) 346-4598

Although Dr. Davis will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

Your participation in this survey represents your consent to serve as a subject in this research

This research project has been approved by the UWSP Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board Submission Form

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Protocol for Original Submissions

A complete protocol must be submitted to the IRB for approval prior to the initiation of any investigations involving human subjects or human materials, including studies in the behavioral and social sciences.

For all research protocols, please submit the following:

- **1 printed copy with Faculty Mentor and Department Chair signatures** of (1) the completed protocol; (2) project abstract; and (3) samples of informed consent forms to the IRB chairperson. PROTOCOLS LACKING ANY ONE OF THESE THREE ELEMENTS WILL NOT BE APPROVED.
- **A second copy of this page, with signatures.** Printed materials should be submitted to: IRB/Grants Office, 204 Old Main.
- **Electronic copies of all submission materials (multiple files are acceptable)** emailed as attachments to Jason R. Davis, IRB chair: jdavis@uwsp.edu

PLEASE TYPE

Project Title: Determining and organizing a guide of goals and procedures for the student recruitment practices of Conserve School

Principal Investigator: Terry Young-Burke

Department: CNR Rank: Graduate Student

Campus Mailing Address: 5400 N Black Oak Lake Rd. Land O Lakes, WI 54540

Telephone: 612-202-1248 E-mail address: tj.youngburke@conserveschool.org

Faculty Sponsor (if required): Randy Champeau
(Faculty sponsor required if investigator is below rank of instructor.)

Expected Starting Date: September, 2010 Expected Completion Date: May, 2011

Are you applying for funding of this research? Yes _____ No X

If yes, what agency? _____

Please indicate the categories of subjects to be included in this project. Please check all that apply.

Normal adult volunteers _____ Minors (under 18 years of age)
 Incarcerated individuals _____ Mentally Disabled
 Pregnant women _____ Other _____ (specify)

(Faculty Member) I have completed the "Human Subjects Protection Training" (available at <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/irb/start.htm>) and agree to accept responsibility for conducting or directing this research in accordance with the guidelines.

(Signature of Faculty Member responsible for research)
(Department Chair or equivalent) I have reviewed this research proposal and, to the best of my knowledge, believe that it meets the ethical standards of the discipline.

(Signature of Department Chair or equivalent)

***** Do not write below this line – for IRB use only *****

IRB approval _____ Date _____
(Signature of IRB Chair)

**Approval for this research expires one year from the above date.
If research is not completed by this date, a request for continuation must be filed and approved before continuing.**

Revised form: January 2001

Proposal Abstract

Write a brief description of the purpose of the proposed research project. (100-200 words)

This study will focus on developing a guide for the best recruitment practices for Conserve School. As Conserve School goes through a transition from a 4-year boarding school to a semester school, their recruitment practices must change. Therefore, after discussions with the Director of Admissions at Conserve School, it is clear that they are in need of analysis of various recruitment strategies and practices in order to best fit their current and future needs. By examining why it is beneficial for students to attend Conserve School, this study will be able to determine appropriate marketing strategies to recruit the kind of students Conserve School wants. Ongoing communication with Conserve School's Director of Admissions will help convey the needs of the admissions department. Interviews will be conducted with admissions departments from similar schools in order to figure out what works best for them. This will allow Conserve School to sample ideas and strategies that have already been tested and practiced. Additionally, being able to identify aspects of Conserve School that are most appealing to students will help direct future marketing strategies. Finally, a guide will be developed to help determine effective recruitment strategies for Conserve School.

Please complete the following questions for all research.

1. Describe the characteristics of the subjects, including gender, age ranges, ethnic background, health/treatment status and approximate number.

The subjects of this portion of my study will include admissions directors at semester schools similar to Conserve School. It is assumed that these participants will be over 23 years of age and either male or female. Ethnic background and health status cannot be determined at this point, but will have no bearing on the results of the interview. Approximately 7 to 12 people will be interviewed.

2. Indicate how and where your subjects will be obtained. Describe the method you will use to contact subjects.

Subjects are located all over the United States so it will be necessary to do these interviews over the phone. Initial contact will be made either via telephone or email to set up a convenient time for the interview to be conducted.

3. What are you going to ask your subjects to do (be explicit) and where will your interaction with the subjects take place?

I will simply ask my subjects to answer the questions on the attached interview sheet. These questions will help me understand what type of student recruitment practices are done at similar semester schools. It is not expected that it will take more than 15 minutes. I will ask if I may have their permission to tape record the conversation.

4. Will deception be used in gathering data? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, describe and justify.

5. Are there any risks to subjects? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, describe the risks (consider physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal risks) and include this description on the informed consent form.

6. What safeguards will be provided for subjects in case of harm or distress? (Examples of safeguards include having a counselor/therapist on call, an emergency plan in place for seeking medical assistance, assuring editorial rights to data prior to publication or release where appropriate.)

This interview will be done over the phone and will not involve any harm or distress. The subjects have the right to stop the conversation at any point if they wish. Additionally, the consent form they will be given will act as a safeguard seeing as their participation in the interview will represent their consent to act as a subject in the research

7. What are the benefits of participation/involvement in this research to subjects? (Examples include obtaining knowledge of discipline, experiencing research in a discipline, obtaining course credit, getting paid, or contributing to general welfare/knowledge.) Be sure to include this description on the informed consent form.

I will offer to share my results and completed guide of recruitment suggestions with all of the subjects so that they may see what my study has concluded and possibly use some of the recommendations provided.

8. Will this research involve conducting surveys or interviews? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, please attach copies of all instruments or include a list of interview questions.

Please see the next page for a copy of interview questions and objectives

Admissions Staff Interview Questions & Objectives

Name of interviewee _____

Organization _____

Position _____

Date _____

Time _____

- 1) Please give me a brief description of your school.
Objectives – to understand the organization the interviewee works at
to get an idea of the interviewee’s perspective
to help the interviewee feel comfortable by starting off with a non-threatening question
- 2) Tell me about the kind of students you target when recruiting.
Objectives - to understand the overall aim of the admissions department
to learn if the students targeted by one school compares to that of another
- 3) What makes students interested in your program?
Objectives - to understand the focus of the organization
to understand what areas of the organization might be stressed when recruiting
- 4) ***In addition to presentations to sending schools***, tell me about some of the recruitment practices you use to get the right student at your school.
Objectives - to understand some of the recruitment practices the organization uses
to learn what practices exist at semester schools
to learn how these practices differ by organization
- 5) Are there things you have tried when it comes to recruitment strategies that you wouldn’t do again?
Objectives - to understand what recruitment practices have been tried at semester schools
to understand what recruitment practices have been ineffective according to admissions professionals
- 6) ***In addition to presentations to sending schools***, if you had to choose one technique to use to recruit students, what would it be?
Objectives - to understand what recruitment practices have been tried at semester schools
to understand what recruitment practices are most effective according to admissions professionals

9. If electronic equipment is used with subjects, it is the investigator's responsibility to determine that it is safe, either by virtue of his or her own experience or through consultation with qualified technical personnel. The investigator is further responsible for carrying out continuing safety checks, as appropriate, during the course of the research. If electronic equipment is used, have appropriate measures been taken to ensure safety?
Yes No

10. During this research, what precautions will be taken to protect the identify of subjects and the confidentiality of the data?

Subjects will be assured that any information shared will be confidential. Additionally, they will be assured that the a final report of this study will not include the names or places of employment of the subjects. The consent form will also guarantee destruction of all recorded and written materials after the study which may identify any of the participants

11. Where will the data be kept throughout the course of the study? What provisions will be taken to keep it confidential or safe?

Data will be kept in a locked bedroom in my place of residence.

12. Describe the intended use of the data by yourself and others.

This data will be used to discover what other admissions programs have done in terms of recruiting students. It will provide information on what has worked and what hasn't worked for these admissions departments. This data will be used to extrapolate implications and recommendations for future recruitment practices.

13. Will the results of the study be published or presented in a public or professional setting?

Yes No

If yes, what precautions will be taken to protect the identity of your participants? **State whether or not subjects will be identifiable directly or through identifying information linked to the subjects.**

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point will publish this study. There will be no identifying information regarding the participants.

14. State how and where you will store the data upon completion of your study as well as who will have access to it? What will be done with audio/video data upon completion of the study?

There will be no access to the collected data after the study is completed. The written documents will be shredded and the audio data will be erased.

A completed protocol must include a copy of the Informed Consent Form or a statement as why individual consent forms will not be used.

Revised form: January 2001

Appendix E

Summary of Goals & Procedures for the Student Recruitment for Conserve School

Starting in the Fall of 2009, a study was conducted to determine best practices for student recruitment at Conserve School. Over an 18-month period, this study looked at literature based on semester school recruitment, common practices by admissions departments of other semester schools, and studied successful marketing strategies currently in place at Conserve School. The following is a summary of this study's findings.

Based on the results of this study, it seems that Conserve School would benefit from emphasizing its mission of inspiring "young people to environmental stewardship". This is currently a focal point of Conserve School's recruitment strategies. However, it seems essential that this practice continue based on the studies showing young people's feelings towards caring for the environment. Additionally, it will be important to investigate powerful ways to highlight the community environment Conserve School has to offer, considering the benefits that can offer student development. Lastly, it would seem pertinent for Conserve School to focus marketing strategies on the benefits of a semester school. The idea of a semester school is still somewhat young and many people are still unaware of what it entails. While some research is posted on Conserve School's website, it would seem important to find additional ways to relay this information to interested students and parents.

When looking at the needs of the Conserve School admissions department, it seems that the primary goal is to find ways to consistently search out students who are right for the program. Based on the enrollment numbers for the first two semesters of the Conserve School semester program (48 students during CS1 and 44 students during CS2), it would appear that the current practices being used are satisfactory to meet their desired quota (between 30 and 60 students each semester). This would lead one to believe that their methods (such as *Facebook* ads, exhibiting at conferences, and consistent follow-up with interested students) are working and should be continued. That being said, another need of the admissions department is to gain support from sending schools. This will be more reasonable as the program grows in popularity. Additionally, in order to gain this support it would seem necessary for Conserve School to use the support of its alumni in the process. Relying on its alumni to gain Conserve School's favor in their sending schools will be very useful as time goes on and the pool of alumni grows.

Admissions professionals at other semester schools were interviewed to determine what types of practices have worked well for their organizations in the past, as well as what has not worked well. Many of the interviewees agreed that having students who are interested in the specific components their schools have to offer is important in getting the “right” type of student to apply. They also commented that the practice they’ve found to be most ineffective in the past are optional student meetings at high schools that aren’t invested in helping recruit students for these semester schools. These professionals feel that more interest is taken by students when schools help them organize mandatory informational meetings. Also, these admissions professionals have found that presentations by semester school alumni have been extremely productive. This is when alumni from these semester programs invite interested students and families to their house for an informational meeting and give a testimony about their experience. Social network marketing (such as blogs or *Facebook* ads) as well as search engine optimization are also commonly used practices that have been fruitful for these programs. Based on these results, it would seem effective for Conserve School to steer clear of any meetings or presentations that do not have the full support of the schools they are visiting. Instead, the school should continue to stay up to date with social media and find new ways to utilize it. Updating and refreshing the Conserve School blog and *Facebook* ads will help keep things fresh for the students who view them. Furthermore, now that Conserve School’s semester program is producing more alumni, it seems essential to utilize those students for marketing purposes. Holding evening information presentations or even sharing their experience at school assemblies are great ways for Conserve School alumni to give something back to the school that provided them with such a memorable experience.

Additionally, a questionnaire was completed by Conserve School students during two different semester programs – Fall of 2010 and Spring of 2011. These questionnaires were aimed to discover how these students found out about Conserve School, as well as target what kind of marketing strategies have been effective in the past. Based on the results of this questionnaire, it is clear that “word of mouth” is still the primary source for students finding out about Conserve School. Most claim to have heard about it from a teacher or a counselor at their sending school. Many others have said they heard about Conserve School from a friend, current staff and other mentors. Others have said that *Facebook* ads or an internet search is what helped them discover Conserve School. Based on these results, it would seem essential for Conserve School to continue to try to find additional avenues to reach teachers and counselors who may help promote the semester program. It may also be important to look at

possible incentives or other ways to encourage alumni to help spread the word and promote the school. As mentioned earlier, it will remain significant for Conserve School to continue to look at the technology they use for marketing in order to keep up to date with the constant changes. When asked about conferences that Conserve School has exhibited at, few students reported having discovered the program in that manner. That being said, Conserve School exhibits at a number of teacher and school counselor conferences. Since most students heard about this program from a teacher or school counselor, it seems that exhibiting and these conferences can still be an effective marketing strategy. Students also reported that the most appealing thing about Conserve School is its emphasis on environmental education/stewardship and its non-traditional learning environment. Based on these responses, it seems reasonable for Conserve School to continue to emphasize its focus on the environment in its marketing strategies. While it is important to also stress its non-traditional learning environment, the school should be cautious to actually recruit kids who are interested in the environment, not just students who may be looking to get away from home for a semester. The school should also continue to look for ways to go out and find students interested in the environment, whether that is reaching out to more nature centers or getting more involved with environmental organizations and activities. Lastly, a large majority of students responded that they are not only interested in pursuing higher education in environmental studies, but that they are also interested in pursuing an outdoor or environmental career. That being said, it will be important for Conserve School to market how attending the semester program can help open doors for students who want to continue to study the environment, whether that's because it looks good on a college application or because the direction Conserve School provides in a student's decision on what to study. Also, Conserve School often brings in guest speakers who are environmental professionals, which could be a big draw to students who want to follow that path but are not quite sure in how to get started.