

Entering Student Survey Report 2001- 2003

Introduction

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has administered the Entering Student Survey each fall semester since 1999. The objectives of the survey are as follows:

- to identify the characteristics of incoming freshmen,
- to garner information on various issues unique to freshmen and
- to recommend strategies for improving retention.

Texas Southern University (TSU) is sincerely interested in the retention of our students, particularly students in their freshman year and as they transition from their freshman year to their sophomore year. The institution continues to evaluate possible factors that may impact student retention for the purpose of developing and implementing policies, strategies, activities, and programs that may facilitate students achieving their degree goals and thereby graduating from Texas Southern University. The development of a detailed profile of the average freshman entering TSU is an initial step in our understanding of the retention issues associated with our freshman students. Data from the *Entering Student Survey* is used to answer the following questions:

- “Who are our freshmen?”
- “Why do they choose to attend TSU?”

- “What are their expectations of TSU?”

The data collected from student responses cover a broad array of issues: demographic characteristics, academic preparation in secondary schools, college finances, reasons for continuing their education, degree goals, collegiate preferences, and perceptions about TSU. A profile of the typical TSU freshman is generated based on an analysis of the data.

Demographic Comparisons

The survey is administered to freshman and new transfer students enrolled in Sociology 211, Social Adjustment to College, during Fall 2000, 2001, and 2002. Sociology 211 is an orientation-type course required of all freshmen and new transfer students. Figure 1 displays the number of respondents as a percentage of the university’s entering student populations. Thirty seven percent of the entering student population is sampled in 2000, 22% in 2001, and 28% in 2002.

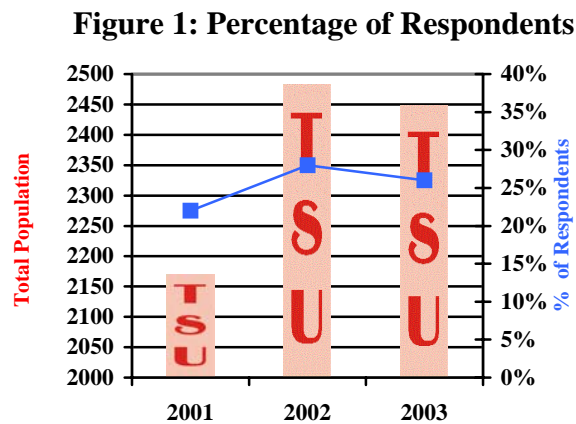


Table 1 displays the percentage of the entering student population sampled each year, the percentage of entering students in Fall 2002 and the percentage of entering freshmen and transfers nationally that attend four-year colleges. In excess of 80% of our students entering the University in 2000 and 2001 are younger than twenty years old. In 2002, just

36% of our entering students are younger than 20 years old. A larger proportion of our students (36%) are now entering TSU at an older age than in 2001 (18%) and in 2000 (15%). The gender and ethnicity composition of the populations of entering students also appears to have remained fairly constant over the years. Approximately 55% of our entering students are female. Ninety percent are African-American. In excess of 80% of our entering students are freshman. The freshman to transfer ratio in the 2002 sample is indicative of the national ratio for other colleges. The composition of the 2002 sample also appears to adequately reflect the overall composition of the population of entering students in 2002.

Table 1: Demographics¹

	Percent Sampled 2001	Percent Sampled 2002	Percent Sampled 2003	Percent Enrolled at TSU 2003	National Percentage
Age					
19 and Under	82%	64%	84%	57%	78%
20 and Over	18%	36%	16%	43%	22%
Gender					
Male	49%	42%	43%	44%	44%
Female	51%	58%	57%	56%	56%
Ethnicity					
African American	88%	89%	93%	89%	15%
Caucasian	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	65%
Other	11%	10%	6%	10%	20%
Classification					
First-time Freshmen	90%	82%	92%	67%	84%
Transfer	10%	18%	8%	33%	16%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges.

Background Characteristics of Entering Students

This section of the report details the background characteristics of an average entering student at TSU. Forty-five percent of entering students describe their high school programs of study as college preparatory in 2000. This percentage decreases slightly to

44% in 2001 and to 40% in 2002. These percentages are less than the national average of 52%. In accordance with the national average, a majority of students report they rank in the top 25% or 50% of their high school graduating class. Additional details on high school characteristics are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: High School Characteristics¹

	2001	2002	2003	National
Type of High School Program				
College Preparatory	44%	40%	40%	53%
Business/Vocational or Occupational	13%	14%	13%	11%
General or Other	43%	46%	47%	36%
High School Class Rank				
Top Quarter	22%	22%	20%	30%
Second Quarter	37%	41%	33%	39%
Third Quarter	35%	33%	40%	26%
Bottom Quarter	6%	4%	7%	5%
High School GPA				
A- to A (3.50-4.00)	11%	10%	8%	20%
B to A- (3.00-3.49)	29%	30%	27%	30%
B- to B (2.50-2.99)	30%	30%	33%	25%
C to B- (2.00-2.49)	20%	23%	22%	18%
Less than C (Less than 2.00)	10%	7%	10%	7%
Number of Students in High School Graduating Class				
Less than 200	22%	20%	21%	44%
200-399	41%	40%	42%	32%
400-599	22%	20%	21%	16%
600 or more	15%	20%	16%	8%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges.

Other characteristics that are surveyed include student employment status (Table 3) and the receipt of financial aid by entering students (Figure 2). In 2000, 32% of students sampled indicate that they intend to be employed ten to twenty hours per week, during their first semester at TSU. This is reflective of the national average. This percentage

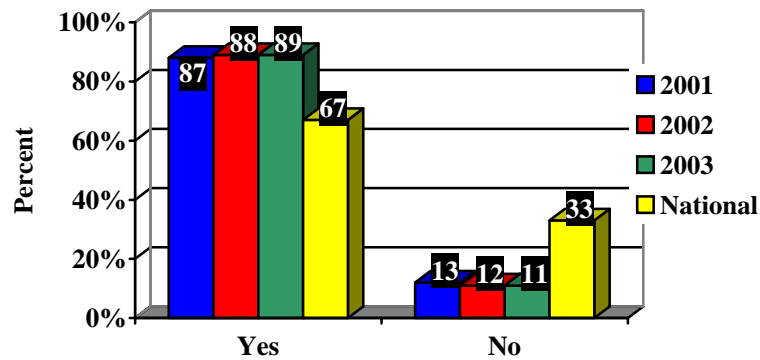
decreases to 23% in 2001 and 2002. In accordance with the national average, approximately 26% of entering students intend to be employed twenty to forty hours per week during their first semester. Approximately 88% of our entering students report receiving some sort of financial aid over the three-year period. This surpasses the national average of 67%.

Table 3: Employment Plans¹

	2001	2002	2003	National
Hours Per Week Worked				
0 or Occasional Jobs	38%	36%	40%	21%
1 – 20 hours	23%	23%	27%	32%
21-40 hours	26%	29%	15%	27%
40 hours or more	2%	3%	2%	3%
Undecided	11%	9%	16%	17%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges.

Figure 2: Percentage Receiving Financial Aid¹



Clearly the vast majority of our entering students are in need of financial aid and employment to fund their education. Student employment affects the academic

performance of our students and creates a need for more convenient course offerings that are not always readily available.

The survey also examines the ways in which entering students finance their education. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Sources of College Funding^{1, 2}

Source of Funds	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>Parents/Relatives</u>	77%	72%	78%	77%
<u>Social Security Benefits</u>	17%	18%	17%	10%
<u>Veterans Benefits</u>	9%	8%	7%	5%
<u>Spouse's Income</u>	9%	10%	10%	7%
<u>Educational Grants</u>	76%	81%	82%	46%
<u>Scholarships</u>	58%	60%	55%	50%
<u>Student Loans</u>	59%	64%	63%	47%
<u>Other Loans</u>	31%	32%	34%	24%
<u>Employment While Attending College</u>	58%	58%	53%	69%
<u>Summer Employment</u>	57%	59%	54%	63%
<u>Personal Savings</u>	51%	56%	54%	59%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges. ²Original responses “Major Source” and “Minor Source” are combined to calculate percentages.

Funding from parents and relatives remains the primary source of funding. Seventy-eight percent, 77% and 72% of students rely of their parents as a source of funding in 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively. These percentages are in keeping with the national average of 71%. Educational grants are another key source of funding with 71%, 76% and 81% of students declaring their reliance on grants to fund their education in 2000, 2001 and 2002. These percentages are approximately 40% higher than the national average of 43%. Other key sources of funding include scholarships, student loans and employment while attending college. The percentages of our entering students who fund their education through scholarships and student loans substantially exceed the national

averages. It should be noted a majority of our students finance their education through educational grants, scholarships and student loans. The percentages of our students who fund their education using these sources far surpass the percentages of students at other schools based on national averages.

Educational Plans and Preferences

This series of questions addresses reasons students choose to continue their education beyond high school, their reasons for attending TSU and their preferences for various class times and different course delivery methods.

On the reasons students choose to attend college, approximately 98% of entering students choose to attend college to become better educated people, for each of the years sampled (Table 5). Students also choose to attend college to meet educational requirements for their planned occupation, to increase their earning potential, to qualify for a high-level occupation, and to develop their minds and intellectual abilities. Other reasons for attending college are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Reasons for Continuing Education^{1, 2}

Top Ten Reasons for Continuing Education	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>To meet educational requirements for occupation</u>	96%	96%	97%	94%
<u>To become a better-educated person</u>	99%	99%	99%	97%
<u>To increase my earning power</u>	97%	97%	97%	94%
<u>To qualify for a high-level occupation</u>	98%	96%	96%	94%
<u>To develop independence for parents</u>	76%	76%	80%	64%
<u>To develop my mind and intellectual abilities</u>	97%	96%	98%	95%
<u>To study new and different subjects</u>	92%	91%	90%	87%
<u>To develop personal maturity</u>	86%	84%	83%	77%
<u>To meet new and interesting people</u>	77%	72%	77%	77%
<u>To become a more cultured person</u>	78%	68%	68%	71%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges. ²Original responses “Major Source” and “Minor Source” were combined to calculate percentages.

It appears that our students are primarily motivated to attend college to enhance their personal growth, professional development and marketability.

Reasons for Enrolling at TSU

Approximately 45% of entering students report that they choose to attend TSU for the purpose of obtaining a baccalaureate degree (Table 6). This exceeds the national average of 35%. Approximately 5% of entering students attend TSU to complete courses that may be transferred to other colleges and universities. This is substantially less than the national average of 15%. Noteworthy is the proportion of entering students who enroll at TSU with no definitive purpose in mind. In accordance with national averages, approximately 13% of entering students choose to attend TSU with no particular goal or purpose in mind.

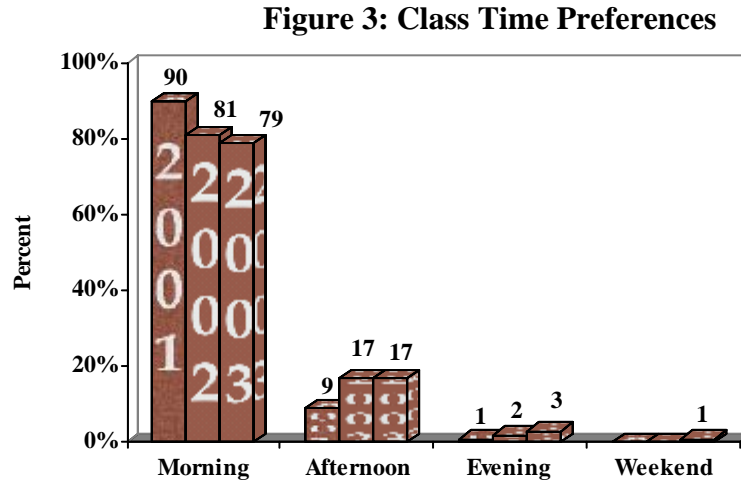
Table 6: Reasons for Enrolling at TSU¹

Purpose for enrolling at TSU	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>No Definite Purpose in Mind</u>	13%	13%	16%	13%
<u>To Take a Few Job-related Courses</u>	1%	1%	2%	2%
<u>To Take a Few Courses for Self Improvement</u>	1%	1%	1%	1%
<u>To Take Needed Courses to Transfer</u>	6%	5%	9%	15%
<u>To Obtain Certification</u>	1%	3%	3%	3%
<u>To Complete a Vocational/Technical Program</u>	<1%	<1%	<1%	2%
<u>To Obtain an Associate Degree</u>	2%	2%	2%	16%
<u>To Obtain a Bachelor’s Degree</u>	48%	45%	34%	37%
<u>To Obtain a Master’s Degree</u>	14%	15%	19%	8%
<u>To Obtain a Doctorate or Professional Degree</u>	14%	15%	13%	3%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges.

Student Preferences

Entering students are also surveyed on their preferences for various class times and different delivery formats. In 2000, 90% of the sample indicates a preference for morning classes. This percentage decreased to 81% in 2001 and to 79% in 2002 (Figure 3).



Students also seem to prefer courses that are offered in small-group formats (Table7). Approximately 34% of entering students prefer courses offered in small-group formats, for each of the years sampled. The second most preferred course delivery format is the “lecture format” as indicated by 22% of entering students in 2000 and 2001, and 26% in 2002.

Table 7: Preferred Course Delivery Format

	2001	2002	2003
Lecture	22%	26%	24%
Small-group	38%	32%	32%
Independent study	6%	5%	7%
Lab. or Shop	10%	11%	11%
Private tutor format	5%	4%	4%
Correspondence course	2%	3%	2%
Other	4%	5%	1%
No preference	13%	14%	19%

Another section of the survey attempts to elicit specific need areas in which entering students may require assistance to successfully complete their education. In excess of 76% of students indicate a need for assistance in improving their math skills, for each of the sampled years (Table 8). This exceeds the national average of 58%. Approximately 75% express a need for assistance in developing better study skills. This exceeds the national average of 54%. Other areas of need are displayed in Table 8. An improving trend of fewer students requiring assistance exists in reading speed, reading comprehension, and test-taking skills. Of interest is the large percentage of our entering students requiring academic assistance when compared to students from other public colleges.

Table 8: Areas of Special Needs¹

Will Need Special Help in This Area	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>Expressing Ideas in Writing</u>	50%	51%	44%	34%
<u>Increasing Reading Speed</u>	39%	33%	35%	33%
<u>Improving Reading Comprehension</u>	42%	41%	40%	36%
<u>Improving Math Skills</u>	78%	76%	79%	59%
<u>Develop Better Study Skills and Habits</u>	77%	73%	80%	55%
<u>Improving Test-taking Skills</u>	73%	70%	76%	54%
<u>Improving Public Speaking Skills</u>	64%	57%	56%	51%
<u>Identifying a Major Area of Study</u>	43%	36%	39%	34%
<u>Selecting an Appropriate Career</u>	41%	35%	35%	37%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges.

Entering students are also surveyed on the types of extracurricular activities in which they may participate while at TSU (Table 9). Approximately 60% of entering students express an interest in becoming members of a fraternity or sorority compared to the national average of 27%. Other areas of interest include varsity athletics, student radio or television and community service organizations.

Table 9: Extracurricular Activities¹

Would Like to Participate In...	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>Student Government</u>	29%	32%	28%	17%
<u>Student Publications</u>	33%	28%	31%	21%
<u>Instrumental Music</u>	19%	19%	17%	13%
<u>Vocal Music</u>	28%	22%	23%	14%
<u>Debate</u>	28%	26%	23%	11%
<u>Dramatics, Theater</u>	36%	35%	30%	20%
<u>Departmental Clubs</u>	38%	35%	31%	29%
<u>Religious Organizations</u>	35%	35%	30%	20%
<u>Racial or Ethnic Organizations</u>	30%	29%	19%	13%
<u>Varsity Athletics</u>	43%	40%	38%	25%
<u>Intramural Athletics</u>	25%	25%	19%	32%
<u>Cheerleaders</u>	13%	14%	14%	8%
<u>Political Organizations</u>	19%	17%	14%	9%
<u>Student Radio or T.V.</u>	43%	39%	39%	23%
<u>Fraternity or Sorority</u>	59%	60%	58%	29%
<u>Special Interest Groups</u>	33%	31%	31%	32%
<u>Campus or Community Service Organizations</u>	46%	46%	44%	32%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges.

Student Impressions of TSU

This portion of the survey assesses the importance of various factors in a student's choice to attend TSU. The most important factor in choosing to attend TSU appears to be the availability of financial aid. Approximately 75% of entering students report that the availability of financial aid is the primary reason they choose to attend TSU, compared to the national average of 42% (Table 10). Approximately 65% of entering students indicate that the cost of attending TSU is a significant determinant in their choice of colleges. Economic need and costs are the key determinants in choosing to attend TSU. Other important factors are the location of the University, availability of particular programs of study, the academic reputation of the University and entrance requirements of the University.

Table 10: Factors Affecting Choice to Attend TSU¹

Factors that were very important in the decision to attend TSU	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>Academic reputation of the college</u>	48%	51%	45%	30%
<u>Availability of a Particular Program of Study</u>	55%	58%	49%	47%
<u>Variety of Courses Offered</u>	50%	51%	44%	32%
<u>Location of College</u>	57%	51%	60%	52%
<u>Size of the College</u>	30%	28%	26%	23%
<u>Entrance Requirements of College</u>	51%	50%	46%	21%
<u>Cost of attending the College</u>	64%	69%	69%	47%
<u>Type of Community in which the College is Located</u>	27%	32%	27%	21%
<u>Availability of Financial aid or Scholarship</u>	77%	79%	78%	43%
<u>Opportunity for Part-time Work</u>	38%	40%	41%	20%
<u>Sports Opportunities</u>	38%	31%	40%	12%
<u>Social Climate & Activities at College</u>	22%	23%	20%	9%
<u>Ethnic makeup of College</u>	28%	34%	30%	6%
<u>Gender ratio of Student Body</u>	23%	23%	24%	6%
<u>Religious Affiliation of the College</u>	17%	22%	18%	3%
<u>Type of Housing Availability</u>	40%	36%	40%	10%
<u>Facilities Available: Labs Classrooms</u>	37%	46%	39%	17%
<u>Extracurricular Activities Available</u>	34%	32%	30%	14%
<u>Friends Attend the College</u>	17%	15%	15%	7%
<u>Advice of Parents or Relatives</u>	30%	33%	35%	14%
<u>Advice of High School Counselors or Teachers</u>	24%	25%	25%	9%
<u>Advice of someone who has attended the College</u>	31%	33%	32%	14%
<u>Contact with College Representatives</u>	28%	34%	30%	10%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges.

Agreement with Statements About TSU

Entering students are most in agreement that TSU has a large number of activities and organizations that are available to them. Eighty-two percent of the entering students sampled agree with this statement in 2000, seventy-four percent in 2001, and 67% in 2002 (Table 11). A large majority of the students also agreed that the University offers a wide variety of courses as well as quality programs in their chosen fields of study. Specific percentages and additional statements are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Agreement with Statements about TSU^{1, 2}

Strongly Agree/Agree to the item	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>College has high-quality academic programs</u>	64%	56%	58%	65%
<u>Cost of attending this college is reasonable</u>	71%	59%	56%	75%
<u>College personnel care about individual students</u>	51%	41%	40%	57%
<u>It is difficult to earn good grades at this college</u>	14%	12%	13%	9%
<u>College has high-quality program in the subject area I am pursuing</u>	65%	62%	58%	58%
<u>College has many activities and organizations for students</u>	74%	67%	81%	60%
<u>College has a strong Inter-collegiate Athletic Program</u>	52%	41%	54%	31%
<u>There are large number & variety of course offered at this college</u>	68%	60%	69%	68%
<u>Students at this college are friendly</u>	52%	37%	40%	54%
<u>This college has too many required courses</u>	19%	23%	20%	11%
<u>Excellent recreational facilities for individual students</u>	44%	35%	62%	42%
<u>Many students at this college use drugs and/ or alcohol</u>	40%	42%	46%	13%
<u>There are comfortable residence halls at this college</u>	35%	25%	37%	30%
<u>Students from various ethnic backgrounds get along well</u>	59%	47%	51%	37%
<u>Many students at this college hold extreme political views</u>	39%	35%	35%	10%
<u>Students at this college are more interested in having fun than studying</u>	43%	44%	50%	14%
<u>This college offers many cultural events and programs</u>	54%	44%	58%	30%
<u>Students must be above average to be admitted into this college</u>	17%	15%	13%	11%
<u>There are too many rules and regulations at this college</u>	13%	11%	11%	7%
<u>The college has high quality classroom and lab facilities</u>	38%	22%	33%	38%
<u>This college provides sufficient financial aid for students who need assistance</u>	62%	56%	49%	48%
<u>The foreign language requirement at this college is too strict</u>	19%	16%	16%	8%
<u>This college offers many job related courses</u>	49%	48%	50%	46%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges. ²Original responses “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” were combined to calculate percentages.

Decision to Attend TSU and Rating of TSU

A majority of students make the decision to attend TSU after completing high school or during their last year of high school. Approximately forty-three percent of entering students make the decision to attend TSU after completing high school (Table 12). In 2000 and 2001, thirty six percent of students make the decision to attend TSU while in the 12th grade. This percentage decreases to 31% in 2002. On the national level, 45%

make the decision to attend their respective colleges while in the 12th grade while 38% did not finalize their decision until graduating high school.

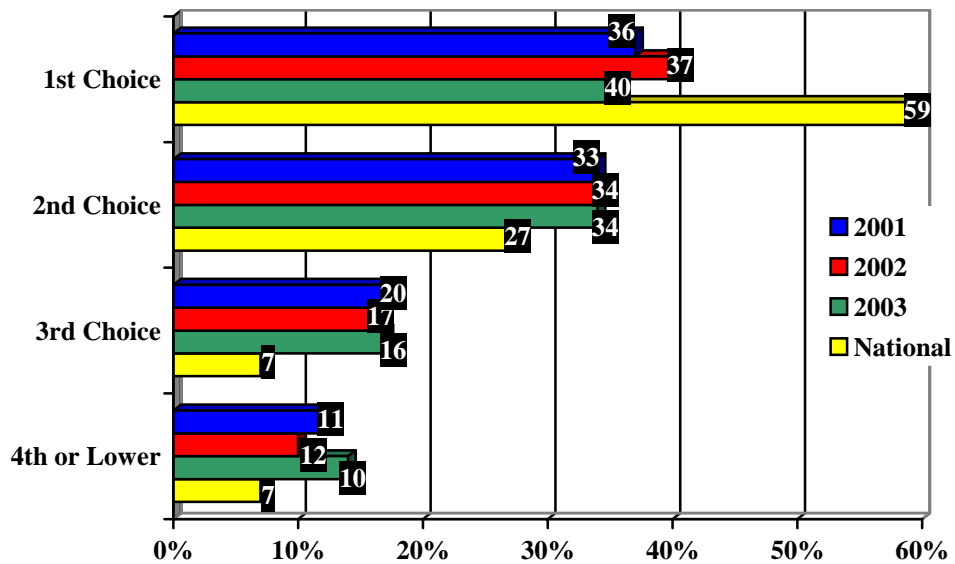
Table 12: Timing of Decision to Attend TSU¹

Grade Level	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>Before 9th grade</u>	7%	8%	8%	4%
<u>During 9th grade</u>	1%	3%	3%	1%
<u>During 10th grade</u>	4%	3%	3%	3%
<u>During 11th grade</u>	8%	11%	12%	11%
<u>During 12th grade</u>	36%	31%	39%	47%
<u>After Completing High School</u>	45%	43%	35%	34%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges.

In regard to TSU being their preferred college, a large majority of entering students report TSU as their first or second choice of colleges to attend. The results are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4: TSU as the Preferred Choice¹



¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges

Major Sources of Information About TSU

Approximately 75% of entering students report that they obtain information about TSU from their parents or relatives compared to the national average of 65% (Table 13). Approximately 62% of entering freshman receive information about TSU from brochures or pamphlets. Other key sources of information about TSU include visits to campus, TSU alumni, high school teachers, counselors and classmates.

Table 13: Source of Information about TSU^{1, 2}

Source of Information About College	2001	2002	2003	National
<u>Friends at the College</u>	55%	53%	57%	53%
<u>High School Teachers</u>	37%	40%	43%	45%
<u>High school Counselors</u>	40%	43%	45%	47%
<u>High School Administrators</u>	31%	34%	32%	26%
<u>Parents or Relatives</u>	72%	75%	75%	69%
<u>High School Classmates</u>	54%	51%	57%	48%
<u>College Catalog</u>	56%	59%	57%	56%
<u>College Brochure or Pamphlet</u>	59%	62%	62%	59%
<u>College Alumni</u>	44%	45%	42%	31%
<u>Visit to Campus</u>	57%	56%	58%	61%
<u>College Representative's Visit to High School</u>	44%	38%	40%	31%
<u>Announcements on Radio or Television</u>	25%	25%	26%	15%
<u>Articles in Newspapers or Magazines</u>	23%	27%	22%	17%
<u>High School Library Materials</u>	24%	23%	21%	15%

¹National Comparison is based on other Public Colleges. ²Original responses "Major Source" and "Minor Source" were combined to calculate percentages.

The information in Tables 12 and 13 suggests that most students make the decision to attend TSU in their last year of high school or after obtaining their diplomas and they became more aware of TSU and its programs from family members or relatives. This information may be used to modify our current recruitment strategies.

Summary

The average student entering TSU appears to be adequately prepared academically to pursue college studies. Approximately 50% of the students sampled are enrolled in college preparatory programs in a high school that is located in an urban environment in the state of Texas. More than half of these students report that they are in the top or second quarter of their classes.

A majority of the students enroll in the University to receive a degree. It should be noted that approximately 14% of entering students enroll with no definite purpose in mind. This information highlights to enrollment managers the need for a greater degree of advising of these students and for systematic monitoring of their progress so as to provide appropriate intervention strategies as needed.

Approximately 85% of entering students assert that they expect their college experiences to assist them in their personal growth. They expect their college experiences to provide them with a learning environment full of opportunities to interact with others academically, culturally, and socially.

Entering students are in need of financial support to pursue their college education. In excess of 70% of students indicate that the availability of financial aid is a key determinant in their decision to enroll at TSU. Over 60% place some level of importance on the cost of tuition when compared to tuition costs at other universities. The desire to adequately fund their education seems to encourage many entering students to pursue employment during their first semester. A majority of students also declare that their parents and relatives would be a key source of funding for their college education.

A large percentage of entering students select TSU as their first or second choice of colleges to attend. However, many students do not make the choice until graduating from

high school. Others decide during their senior year. It may be inferred from this information that high school students often do not receive firm advisement on the importance of developing and implementing plans for pursuing their college education. Such information offers Enrollment Management a window of opportunity to further explore high school advisement practices on preparing students for continuing their education, to develop stronger ties with high school advisers and counselors, and for modifying its recruitment strategies.

The profile of an entering student at TSU includes the following characteristics:

- the student attends an urban high school located in Texas,
- the student is prepared academically by participating in a college preparatory program in high school,
- the student is goal oriented and desires to pursue a baccalaureate degree initially,
- the student expects TSU to provide a learning environment that fosters educational, cultural, social, and personal growth,
- the student needs, in most instances, financial assistance and support services and
- the student intends to be employed part-time or full-time while enrolled at TSU.

Entering students are somewhat more prepared for their college studies than generally assumed given that the University has an open enrollment policy. Many students entering TSU complete college preparatory programs and are ranked in the top two quarters of

their high schools graduating classes. Considering these issues one may assume that factors other than lack of ability contribute to the low retention rate and to the extended time required for students to graduate.