

INTRODUCTION

TOPIC AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

This document is a marketing study focusing on the student population at the Kent State University--Geauga campus that is under 26 years of age (traditional students). It is intended as a follow-up study to the study presented by the College Board in the Fall of 1994, which focused on the **non**traditional student population. As such, it is not intended to belittle or criticize the results or recommendations of that study. Rather the results and recommendations of this study should be used in conjunction with the results and recommendations of the previous study, so that KSU-Geauga's administration may decide on the best action to take in its efforts to increase enrollment.

The College Board's study includes much valuable research which is used in this study; however, the initial assumption of this study is that the needs and attitudes of nontraditional students differ from those of traditional students. While the College Board's recommendations addressing the nontraditional student population are good ones, the traditional student population has been ignored; but it should be considered before the administration of KSU--Geauga implements those recommendations.

194

While nontraditional students make up a large majority of the KSU--Geauga population (approximately 65%), it would be erroneous to eliminate the other 35% from consideration. Thus, the results and recommendations associated with this study should complement the recommendations of the College Board's study.

ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

This report begins with an identification and description of the tools used for the gathering of research data/information. This is followed by the presentation of research data and interpretation of that data. The report concludes with a summary of key points discovered in the research and, finally, recommendations. The recommendations of the College Board study are included in an appendix, for purposes of comparison and comprehensiveness, along with other secondary material/information.

RESEARCH TOOLS

Various tools were used for the gathering of information vital to assessing the needs and attitudes of traditional students at KSU-Geauga. These included computer generated enrollment data from

the past five years, as well as financial aid information, interviews with current members of the KSU-Geauga administration, data about the current traditional student market based on information concerning enrollment patterns at area colleges/universities (KSU-Geauga's competitors), a survey of the attitudes and preferences of currently enrolled traditional students at KSU-Geauga, and informal interviews with current students. Each of these tools is identified/described in each of the subsequent subsections of the report, followed by a presentation of the results associated with each tool.

The results associated with each of these tools are identified and interpreted, so that the reader may understand the method of analysis. The conclusions associated with the findings of **each** tool are **not intended** to represent **final** conclusions: rather they **are intended** to **contribute** to the final conclusions presented in the **Conclusion** of the report. The distinction is that each of the conclusions in this section, taken individually, may lead to specious final recommendations; but taken together with the others, will contribute to accurate recommendations.

ENROLLMENT DATA

Description

A computer printout showing enrollment trends at the KSU-Geauga campus was requested and received. This printout included enrollment information from 1990-1994, and the data was organized into various demographic categories and analyzed in terms of each category. Among the data included with aggregate enrollment figures were enrollment figures: by county/city, by enrollment status (full time v. part time), by age category and by major area of concentration.

Findings

Total enrollment at KSU-Geauga has dropped 44% in the past four years (1991-1994). What is more disconcerting is that the annual reduction in enrollment has been increasing over this same period. Figure one shows this decline.

7/9/94

FIGURE 1
ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE IN TOTAL ENROLLMENT
 (1990-1994)

<u>1990-1991</u>	<u>1991-'92</u>	<u>'92-'93</u>	<u>'93-'94</u>
+ .01	-3	-17	-30

In addition to this reduction in TOTAL enrollment, There has also been a reduction in the percentage of traditional students relative to the total population from 1992-1994. Figure 2 illustrates these data:

FIGURE 2
TRADITIONAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT AS
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION
 (1991-1994)

<u>1991</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>
51	56	48	40

Also interesting is the data representing the relationship between the part time student population and the full time student population. According to the printout, the proportion of PART-TIME students jumped from 65% of the total population in 1993 to 75% of the population in 1994. This suggests a trend toward more involvement of students in their career/financial pursuits, while the de-emphasize the pursuit of education. This may be due to their inability to receive financial aid, thus having to work more to earn money to pay for their education.

28
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From a **geographic** perspective, as expected, KSU-Geauga draws most of its students from Geauga county. The data also suggests some potential, however, of drawing people from Lake and Portage counties, while fewer students come from Cuyahoga, Summit and Trumbull counties. This is probably due to the convenience of location factor.

In terms of **areas of study**, the data shows that a large percentage of the student population has not yet declared a major. Possibly suggesting that they are, for the most part, taking the LER sequence and/or have not yet determined their career path. This could further suggest that better efforts to offer career guidance are necessary.

Figure 3 ranks the top 6 areas of study according to the printout:

FIGURE 3
RANKING OF MAJOR AREAS OF STUDY
BY PERCENT OF TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION

1) Undeclared	39%
2) Pre-Business	12%
3) General Studies	5%
) Business Mgmt Tech	5%
) Computer Tech.	5%
6) Pre-Education	4.5%

The three majors that tied for third are listed in order of exact number of students enrolled in those areas in 1994. Interestingly, the data show that nearly half (170) of the total student population in 1994 is enrolled in the college of Arts and Sciences, while merely one-quarter (41) is enrolled in the college of Business. The question of why are Business classes in more demand than are A&S classes should be examined. Perhaps students list themselves as members of the College of A&S before they formally declare a major.

CONCLUSION

The aggregate information above is valuable even though much of it cannot be further broken down by age group. It presents a picture of the demographic dynamics at KSU--Geauga from various perspectives. These perspectives must be considered in order to get a clear picture of the campus' student make-up and enrollment trends. For example, the campus could do more to increase career guidance and offer more courses in those major areas in which most students are enrolled. Furthermore, a schedule that allows students to work and take classes must be considered, depending on students' work schedules.

8/27/94

their Bachelors degree, but are forced to transfer to Kent or another institution. This point could be used to petition the Kent campus to permit more courses to be offered at Geauga.

The only real concern the Kent campus would have, other than competition, is that the business faculty MAY be deemed suspect by their Kent counterparts. However, both Professors Lindeman and Latimore hold the MBA degree and could be used to teach upper division business courses in areas such as Accounting, Economics, Finance and Management Information Systems. Additionally, some part timers, such as Prof. Malie, also hold the MBA and could teach Marketing and Human Resource Management courses. If the Departments in question could be persuaded that the quality of business education would not be sacrificed by offering upper division courses at Geauga, more students could be retained.

MARKET DATA

Description

The reference books **Peterson's Two-Year Colleges 1995** and **Peterson's Four-Year Colleges 1995** were consulted to get

information about enrollment at KSU-Geauga's competitors for purposes of comparison. It was assumed that the combined data from this study would help gauge the specific market for traditional students.

A comparison between KSU-Geauga's enrollment and that at other area colleges would help assess KSU-Geauga's status among the competition, as well as help understand the dynamics of the traditional student market with respect to enrollment at institutions such as Lake Erie College, Lakeland Community College, Cuyahoga Community College (East campus) and Cleveland State University and Hiram College.

Results

A comparison between KSU-Geauga's enrollment data was made with that of some area institutions so that KSU-Geauga's position in relation to these institutions could be understood. KSU-Geauga's data from 1991-1994 was compared with that of Cuyahoga Community College (both Eastern and Metro campuses), Lake Erie

32
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College and Lakeland Community College, KSU-Geauga's main competition according to the College Board's study.

Relative to these institutions KSU-Geauga fell in the middle of the pack in terms of the number of traditional students as a percentage of the total student population. Figure 4 shows this relationship:

FIGURE 4
 TRADITIONAL STUDENT POPULATION AND PART TIME ENROLLMENT
 AT AREA INSTITUTIONS
 AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION
 (1994)

<u>INSTITUTION</u>	<u>TRADITIONAL STUDENTS</u>	<u>PART-TIME STUDENTS</u>
CCC EASTERN	35	77
CCC METRO	31	63
LAKE ERIE COL.	48	40
LAKELAND COMM. COLL.	47	74
KSU-GEAUGA	45	62

As can be seen, KSU-Geauga's enrollment breakdown is typical of the market. The market currently has a large number of part-time students and a minority traditional student population.

CONCLUSION

This means that more students are both waiting to go to college and are working full time while prolonging the time required to complete their education. As such, KSU-Geauga needs to make course schedules more accommodating for students to organize around their work schedules. Students will take courses as these courses fit into their work schedule, or will adjust their work schedule around their class schedule, depending on what kind of work schedule they have. With this in mind, KSU-Geauga must be able to develop a more reliable and/or flexible registration/schedule booklet. This can be done by offering multiple sections at different times of the day and eliminating sections that do not have sufficient enrollment.

STUDENT SURVEY**Description**

A questionnaire was developed in order to understand and gauge traditional students' current behavior and preferences in terms of course offerings and scheduling (see Appendix A). This questionnaire was very similar to that developed by the College Board; with the exception that some questions were open-ended,

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whereas all the questions in the previous survey were closed-ended. The questions were similar to those of the previous study so that the nature of the data gathered would be consistent with that collected by the College Board. A few questions were opened so that students could give more precise answers and provide explanations as to the motivation for certain behavior.

The questionnaire was distributed to a contingent of faculty to be given to their traditional students at some point during class time. It was stipulated that instructors should ascertain whether any students had already completed the questionnaire in a previous class, so that each respondent would complete only one questionnaire. A sample of this questionnaire is provided in the appendix.

RESULTS

A total of forty (40) responses were gathered representing thirty-three percent (33%) of the total traditional student population, indicating a statistically significant sampling. This means that the data obtained from this sample is a fairly accurate representation of the total traditional student population. A question-by-question breakdown of the responses can be found in Appendix B. What follows is a discussion of the aggregate results

of the survey.

Based on the data gathered and tabulated, the **typical traditional student at KSU-Geauga** works 27 hours per week, develops his/her class schedule around his/her work schedule, is seeking a bachelors degree in business, is currently taking lower division courses and would prefer to take upper division courses at KSU-Geauga during the daytime hours, and takes a majority of his/her classes during the Fall semester because he/she has more time and a better course selection is offered during that semester.

A breakdown of significant information shows that fifty percent of traditional students pursuing a bachelors degree plan to continue their studies at the Kent campus upon completing studies at Geauga. However, these students would prefer to complete as much of the bachelors degree at Geauga as possible before having to go to the Kent campus. Furthermore, while fifty percent plan to go on to the Kent campus, fifty percent also plan to go elsewhere to complete their studies: the most frequently cited other institutions were CSU (15% of those planning to continue toward a bachelors degree) and BGSU (10%). While these students would prefer to continue at the Geauga campus of KSU, its relationship with the Kent campus (specifically the departments within the

36
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Business school) makes it very difficult for one to get a bachelors degree without HAVING to take almost ALL upper division classes at the Kent campus. If these students were able to take more upper division courses at the Geauga campus they would probably finish their degree at the Kent campus, if those courses transferred easily. This then would increase retention of some students as well as increase the number and percentage of students transferring to Kent to complete their degree program: this rate of transfers from the regional campuses is an issue of great interest to the Kent campus.

Additionally, many (60%) students prefer to take their classes during the day (8:45am-4:30pm), while twenty-five percent (25%) take them in the evening (after 4:30pm). This indicates that the daytime sections are required for these students, but evening sections are also needed.

Another interesting point drawn from the data is that a majority (70%) of traditional students develop their class schedule around their work schedule. Students look at their work schedule and then consider those classes offered on the registration booklet that fit into that work schedule. If a class is offered at a time when the student is scheduled to be working he/she cannot enroll in

that class. This means that KSU-Geauga must be more flexible in its course offerings. Specifically, multiple sections need to be offered for more courses so that there is one section of a given course during the day and another section of that course in the evening to accommodate students' work schedules.

One of the open-ended questions asked for students' suggestions for improving course offerings and scheduling at KSU-Geauga. The most frequently occurring suggestions are ranked in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5
RANKING OF STUDENT SUGGESTIONS

- 1) Greater variety of classes beyond Math and English.
- 2) Offer more upper division courses (offer more of these courses on Mondays and Wednesdays).
- 3) Stop dropping classes.
- 4) Have the books available on time.

This information represents a list of "straight-from-the-horse's-mouth" recommendations. These are the major changes the students would like to see at KSU-Geauga, and they are consistent with the other findings associated with the survey. One VERY interesting observation was that one student who is planning on completing his/her bachelor degree at Bowling Green State

85
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University commented that he/she would like to get his/her degree at KSU-Geauga.

Informal Discussions With Current Students

Because of the researcher's position as a part time faculty member, he was able to ask various students questions pertaining to their opinions on certain issues in an informal setting. Because the students were not aware that this person was a researcher, their answers, it is believed, were genuine and sincere; thus eliminating any "lab effect" difficulties with the information collected. This information was used to supplement the information gathered from the formal questionnaire.

Students were asked questions such as:

- 1) "Why did you choose the Geauga campus rather than go to the Kent campus?"
- 2) "What do you like most about the Geauga campus?"
- 3) "What courses would you like to be able to take at the Geauga campus that you have not been able to take?"

Every student that was asked the first question responded that he/she liked the small class size at the Geauga campus and that

instructors take a great interest in their students. The perception (though some of the students interviewed had attended classes at Kent) is that Kent's classes are considerably larger and that the instructors there are more interested in their own research and career than in teaching.

The answers to the first question provided insight into answers for the second question. Again, class size and instructor interest were the main aspects of KSU-Geauga that the students enjoyed. They also mentioned that the environment is more friendly, and they enjoy access to computers.

Because many students are studying in the business or health sciences areas these were the areas most frequently mentioned in terms of increased demand.

CONCLUSION

This survey of students' attitudes and behaviors offers considerable testimony to what the traditional "customers" think of the "product" offered by KSU-Geauga. Students want to be able to pursue and complete their undergraduate degree program at KSU without having to take most of their coursework at the Kent campus. A larger selection of course offerings in areas such as business

would dramatically increase the retention of students at KSU-Geauga as well as increase the number of students transferring to the Kent campus. Also, multiple sections of courses need to be offered to accommodate the work schedule of traditional students: one section can be offered during the day and another in the evening, depending on demand.

CONCLUSION

This study began with the assumption that traditional students have different needs and attitudes concerning their education than do nontraditional students. Because a study focusing on only nontraditional students had been completed, one focusing on traditional students also needed to be completed so that the administration at KSU-Geauga could BEST assess its options in an effort to increase enrollment and maximize operations.

KEY POINTS

The research tools used in this study brought together considerable information concerning the enrollment trends and

general attitudes and needs of traditional students at the KSU-Geauga campus. A disturbing decrease in the student enrollment is not to be considered unique to KSU-Geauga, since the campus is in line with other similar institutions with respect to a number of features.

Also, information concerning students at the campus is validated by multiple tools, specifically the combination of computer generated data and the student survey. This material suggests that more upper division courses ought to be offered in the areas of business and health sciences. Furthermore, the relationship between the regional campus and the Kent campus is such that the two must work together if the University wishes to maximize the number of students transferring from the regional campuses to the Kent campus.

This data leads to a number of important conclusions and suggests specific recommendations. The recommendations are presented in the next section.

