

RuffaloCODY
Enrollment Management Services

Increasing Your Yield

A Case Study of an Effective Integrated Marketing Program

Background

This case study is a summary of a successful integrated marketing campaign conducted in early 1999 by the State University of New York College of Agriculture & Technology at Cobleskill (SUNY Cobleskill). Due to a number of changes that were underway at SUNY Cobleskill, from 1993 through early 1999, applications had dropped by over 35%. Clearly, SUNY Cobleskill needed to do something different.

Clayton Smith, Director of Admissions and Marketing at SUNY Cobleskill developed a quick plan to head off the spiraling decline application numbers. He contacted *RuffaloCODY* to seek their help in qualifying a portion of his inquiry pool that had not yet applied for admission. Using the qualification process as a foundation, Clayton was able to develop and implement a very effective integrated direct marketing program that satisfied his objective. The following is a summary of the program plan and results.

The Plan

The first step in the plan was to develop a comprehensive direct marketing plan that integrated the use of qualification, Telecounseling and direct mail. Because this was an experiment of sorts, Clayton decided to divide his inquiry pool in half. One half would be subjected to the new marketing plan (called the “program group”) and the other half would be considered a “control group” that would get the normal recruiting treatment. Each half consisted of 3,747 randomly selected inquiries. In the end, Clayton wanted to track the results of the control group against the program group.

Step 1 - Qualification

The first step in the process was to have the 3,741 inquiries from the Program group Qualified. Qualification is:

- A point in time survey
- Gauges the level of interest each student has in the institution allowing for a more efficient way of deploying resources
- Provides key information about what’s important to each student so a one-to-one communication plan can be developed

Because Clayton lacked the time and resources to perform the qualification task internally, he contracted the work out to a professional vendor, *RuffaloCODY*. Clayton took advantage of a special promotion that allowed him to qualify a fixed number of inquiries for a reduced price since it was late in the recruiting cycle. The promotion only allowed *RuffaloCODY* to qualify about 1,700 of the inquiries (normally, about 2,550 of the 3,747 inquiries would be qualified).

SUNY Cobleskill’s Program Group inquiries were quickly qualified by *RuffaloCODY* in January of 1999. The survey was very basic, consisting of the following questions:

1. Are you still interested in SUNY Cobleskill?
2. How interested are you in applying at SUNY Cobleskill?

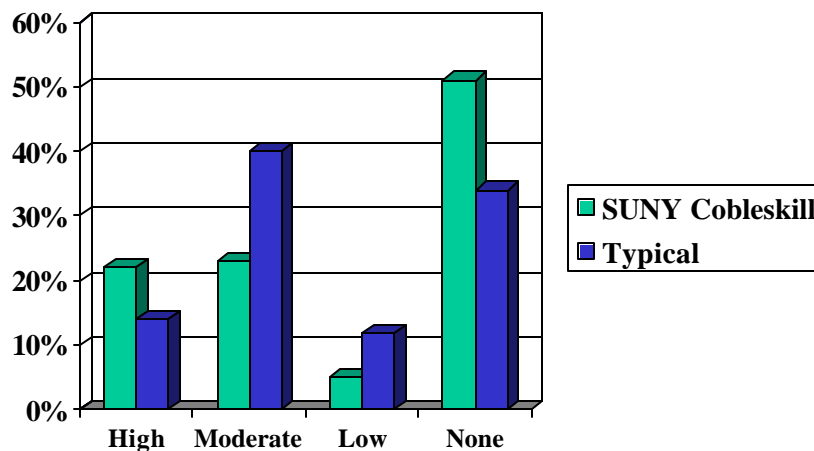
3. How would you rank SUNY Cobleskill VS. your other choices?
4. What is the primary factor you will consider when you select a college?
5. How difficult will it be for you to finance your education?
6. Are you interested in a campus visit?

Using the results of this very brief survey, the Admissions staff at SUNY Cobleskill was able to execute their direct marketing plan.

The results of the Qualification campaign were as follows. There were 1,696 surveys completed. Of those completed surveys (the typical %'s are from summer and fall programs from other institutions):

- 22% were considered “high interest” (typical = 14%)
- 23% were considered “moderate interest” (typical = 40%)
- 5% were considered “low interest” (typical = 12%)
- 51% were considered “not interested” (typical = 34%)

The interest level is determined by grading each inquiry based on how they responded to the first two questions of the survey (How interested are you and how would you rank SUNY Cobleskill VS. your other choices?)



(This chart compares the interest level breakout of SUNY Cobleskill and the typical breakout of other similar programs)

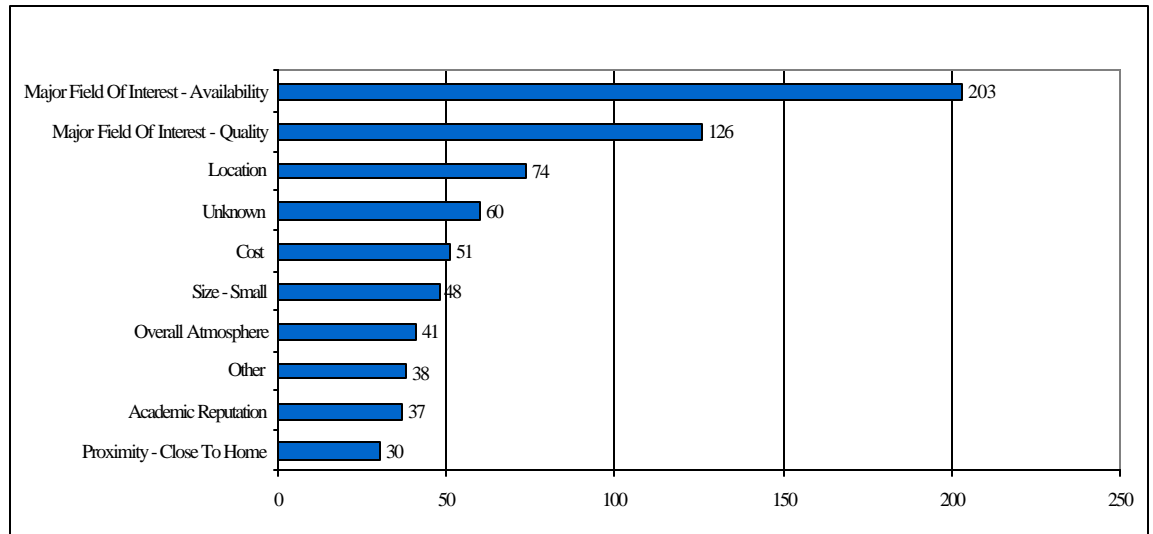
Because this qualification program was conducted relatively late in the recruiting process, the percentage of students in the “high interest” and “not interested” categories were higher than normal. Most institutions elect to perform their qualification activities either in the summer or fall so there is more time to use the data to influence behavior.

The later qualification is done in the recruiting cycle, the higher the percentages are at the extremes (high and no interest) due to students narrowing the field of their choices.

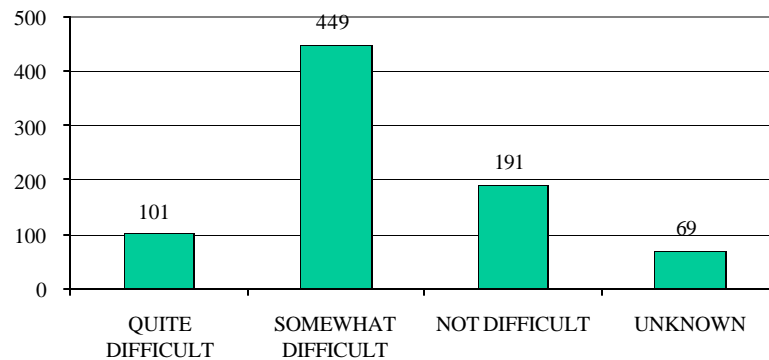
The recruiting concept resulting from qualification is to use the data to more efficiently deploy recruiting resources. Resources should be shifted away from the “low interest” and “not interested” inquiries and re-deployed against the “high” and “moderate” interest inquiries. The result is a higher overall yield.

There were three other questions asked of each inquiry that was still interested in SUNY Cobleskill:

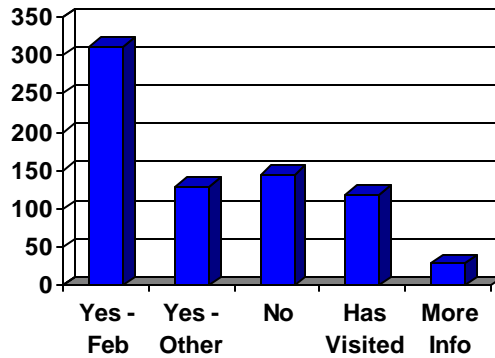
1. What is the primary factor you will consider when selecting a college?



2. How difficult will it be to finance your education?



3. Would you like to visit campus?



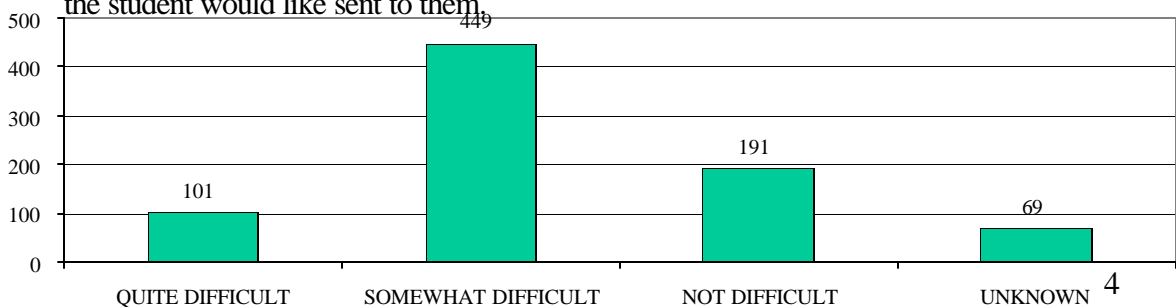
As you will see from the next steps, SUNY Cobleskill used the results of each of these questions to tailor a communication plan unique to each inquiry based on how they answered each question. For the control group (the other 3,747 names not receiving the treatment of the program group), their treatment was more generic based on the more traditional recruiting communication plan.

Step 2

Once SUNY Cobleskill received the project reports from RuffaloCODY, professional admission counselors sent a hand-written note to each inquiry still considering admission, along with the publication most appropriate to their college decision-making criteria and an invitation to attend the next campus visit day. If the student indicated difficulty in paying for college, additional enclosures on financial aid and scholarships were also inserted.

Step 3

One week after mailing this information, the admission counselors called each student to further qualify their interest in the college, to invite them to the next campus visitation day, to work through the application process and to determine what other information the student would like sent to them.



Step 5

The program was completed by February 1, 1999.

Results

The primary goal of the program was to generate more applications for the college than would have otherwise occurred using the established recruitment communication efforts. This goal was successfully attained. The program group generated 205 applicants or 5.4 percent of the students in the program group. The control group generated 165 applicants or 4.4 percent of the students in the control groups. Forty more students applied from the program group than from the control group. Moreover, of the 1,695 students in the program group who received successful telequalification calls, 12 percent applied. Table 1 presents application yield data for both the program and control groups.

Applicant Status	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Number Inquired	3747	3747	0
Number of incomplete calls	2052	-	n/a
Number of successful calls	1696	-	n/a
Number applied	205	165	+40
Inquiry to applicant yield	5.4%	4.4%	+1%

Table 1

The college also wanted to increase the numbers of applications for one of the technical majors. That goal was also met. Of the 205 program group applicants received, 181 were for technical majors and 24 were for liberal arts and sciences majors. Thirty-two more technical major applications came from the program group than from the control group. Table 2 displays application data for technical, liberal arts and sciences majors for the program and control groups.

Applicant Status	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Number applied	205	165	+40
Number of applications for technical majors	181	149	+32
Number of applications for liberal arts majors	24	16	+8

Table 2

One theory that drove the college’s participation in the program was that applications would increase in the January to May period. This goal was also met. The program group applications were received in greater numbers in all months between January and May, with the greatest difference occurring in January (+15) and April (+13). See table 3.

Applicant Status	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
January	44	29	+15
February	49	47	+2
March	64	59	+5
April	32	19	+13
May or later	16	11	+5

Table 3

Another goal was to increase deposits during the months following the program. This goal was met as well. In the first month (January), three more deposits were produced by the program group than by the control group. In the second month (February), two more deposits were received by the program group. In the third month (March), nine more deposits were generated by the program group than by the control group. In the fourth month (April), 10 more deposits were created by the program group than by the control group. The program generated three more deposits in the remainder of the enrollment period than did the control group. In short, the program group produced more deposits in each monthly time period than the control group. See table 4.

Applicant Status	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
January	23	20	+3
February	26	24	+2
March	37	28	+9
April	18	8	+10
May or later	9	6	+3

Table 4

The final goal of the program was to increase accepted student yield. This goal was also achieved. Of the 191 program group students accepted, 113 deposited and 97 enrolled, resulting in an accepted to deposit yield of 59 percent and an accepted to enrollment yield of 51 percent. Of the 158 control group students accepted, 86 deposited and 74 enrolled, resulting in an accepted to deposit yield of 54 percent and an accepted to enrollment yield of 47 percent. The program group yields out perform the control group in every category. For comparison purposes, the college-wide yield figures for technical majors in 1997-98 was 51 percent for accepted to deposited yield and 47 percent for accepted to enrolled yield. Table 5 presents accepted student yield data for the program and control student groups.

Applicant Status	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Number accepted	191	158	+33
Number deposited	113	86	+27
Accepted to deposit yield	59%	54%	+5%
Number enrolled	97	74	+23
Accepted to enrolled yield	51%	47%	+4%

Table 5

Conclusions

The entire program was completed by February 1. As the results were tracked, it was quite apparent the integrated direct marketing program was very successful. Its interesting to note, if the qualification program had not been a promotion, another 50% of the selected inquiries from the Program Group would have been surveyed. Statistically, that means the actual yield of the Program Group would be 50% higher than reported in this case study. Taking the results one step further, the yield from the Program Group could have been as much as 96% greater (or almost double) than the yield of the control group had the Qualification phase been completed to a normal volume.

Given the overall results of the performance of the Program Group VS. the Control Group, it is highly recommended that institutions employ these types of integrated direct marketing programs with Qualification providing the foundation for the strategy. This program was very affordable relative to the increased numbers of enrolled students SUNY Cobleskill was able to attract. And, now with the integration of new tools like

websites and email, there are even more ways these types of programs can be executed.