

Marketing Colleges to Home-Schooled Students

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ABSTRACT. One emerging but relatively untapped market of traditional age colleges students is children who have been home schooled. The National Center for Educational Statistics estimated that 1.1 million children were being home schooled in 2006 (Conlin, 2006). This non-empirical paper examines issues related to the home school movement as they apply to colleges and universities hoping to attract these students to their institutions. It explores the unique characteristics of home-schooled students who apply to colleges and universities. Recommendations are made to institutions of higher education for attracting more home-schooled students. doi:10.1300/J050v16n02_02 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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INTRODUCTION

As the competition for prospective students increases, colleges and universities continue to search for new potential target markets. One of

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the emerging markets of traditional-age students is children who have been home schooled. In the year 2003, it was estimated that between 1.7 and 2.1 million children were being home schooled in the United States (Ray, 2004). The National Center for Educational Statistics estimated the number of home schooled in students in 2006 at 1.1 million (Conlin, 2006). This nonempirical study will examine issues related to the home school movement as they apply to institutions hoping to attract these students to their institutions. It will examine the unique needs and wants of home-schooled students. Based on those needs and wants, the paper will make recommendations to institutions of higher education for attracting more home-schooled students. Limitations of the study and further research opportunities will also be discussed.

HOME SCHOOLING IN THE UNITED STATES

Until the 1980s, home schooling in the United States was largely an underground and, in most states, illegal activity. Parents were required by law to send their children to public or private schools. Since the 1980s, there has been a growing number of children who attend all or part of kindergarten through the twelfth grade at home. It is estimated that the number of home-schooled students is increasing at 8-12 percent a year and that 20 percent of those who are home schooled are in grades 9 through 12 (Ray, 2005; NCES, 2006). Children are more likely to be home schooled as they get older. Fifty-three percent of all home schoolers complete all of their primary and secondary education at home. Another 84 percent finish grades 4 through 12 at home (Ray, 2004).

While home schoolers are not the fastest-growing segment of prospective students, it may be an attractive segment for many colleges and universities. Home schoolers are more likely to attend and finish college than those who attend traditional primary and secondary schools (Ray, 2004). Based on the shifting demographics in America some may argue that there are other, more attractive market segments. For example, the fastest-growing segment of prospective college students is Hispanics. Although the population of Hispanics is growing in all parts of the United States, more than half of them still live in one of five states: California, Florida, Illinois, New York, or Texas. Hispanic students are more likely to attend college on a part-time basis and seldom go to college more than 50 miles from their families. For institutions in areas not

in close proximity to large Hispanic populations, home schoolers may be a more attractive market segment (Schmidt, 2003).

As the number of practitioners of home schooling grew in the 1980s, the laws began to change. Judges and prosecutors became more willing to accept home schooling as a legal alternative to public and private schools. In 1983, advocates of home schooling formed the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) to push the issue in state legislatures and to provide legal representation to individual home-schooling families (Archer, 2000). In 1998 more than 55,000 families belonged to the HSLDA (Lyman, 1998).

Parents can now join a number of organizations that help them educate their children at home. These parents attend home schoolers' conventions and regularly seek advice from similar families on the Internet. "Just about everybody knows someone who is home schooling. People may still think it is kind of odd, but there is not as much suspicion or hostility anymore" (Archer, 2000, p. 13).

Home schooling is now legal in all 50 states, although its regulation varies greatly. Idaho, for example, places very few restrictions on home-schooling parents, not even asking that they inform any state or local officials of their intentions. On the other hand, Oregon mandates that such families periodically have a qualified neutral person test their children. Nowhere in the United States are parents now required—as they once were in Washington state—to be licensed teachers. A few states require parents to either have some college education or follow a home-schooling qualifier course at a community college (Archer, 2000).

State laws often stipulate the number of days of instruction and the general content areas to be covered by home-schooling activities. While these provisions usually call on parents to keep records of their children's progress, they are generally not required to turn these over to a government body. "Even the most rigorously regulated states in America have some flexibility—a recognition that your child may be learning at a different pace," says Patrick Farenga, president of Hold Associates, a Cambridge Massachusetts based publisher of home schooling materials (Archer, 2000, p. 13).

REASONS FOR HOME SCHOOLING CHILDREN

Initially most of those who chose to home school children fell into one of two groups: "the Religious Right (who homeschooled primarily to teach their children fundamentalist Bible doctrine) and of the counterculture

Left (who disliked the bureaucratization of modern education)” (Lyman, 1998, p. 31). This has changed in recent years. A National Center for Education Statistics study states that nearly half of all parents who home school their children do so to provide a better quality of education for their children. Thirty-eight percent cited religious reasons, and one-quarter mentioned poor learning environments in their local schools (NCES, 1999). These are not mutually exclusive reasons as some parents. Of those home schooling for religious reasons, evangelical Christians are now joined by Jews, Muslims, Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox religions, many of whom reject what they perceive as the materialism and humanism taught in the public schools (Lyman, 1998). Some members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) home school to teach their children their nonviolent values (Littman, 2002).

A 1996 study in Florida revealed that 42 percent of home-schooling parents saw public schools as being too dangerous for their children (Lyman, 1998). Some parents say they are protecting their children from the drugs, violence, sex, and psychological abuse of traditional schools (Carper, 2000). Other parents want to be the primary teachers of their children. They do not want someone with whom they are not familiar teaching values different from those learned in the home (Gewertz, 2001). Parents of home schoolers want to understand their children’s education progress in a way that cannot be provided by reports from schools (Ray, 2000).

Older children are often home schooled because the parent is not happy with how the child is learning in the mainstream classroom. The child may have difficulty learning or have a disability that keeps him or her from learning. Parents are able to teach at their child’s own pace. Unlike a regular school day, there is a curriculum and schedule to follow that meets the child’s educational needs (Archer, 2000). Another study (Bielick et al., 2001) stated that some parents want to customize their children’s education. New technology available for parents via the Internet has made home school a more practical alternative (Lyman, 1998).

QUALITY OF HOME-SCHOOLING EDUCATION

One of the major questions raised about home schoolers is the quality of the education they receive. Several studies indicate that on average, home-schooled students score from 15 to 30 points higher on standardized achievement tests than those in traditional schools (Ray, 2000;

Rudner, 1999). Researchers admit that their studies do not account for background variables that may influence these scores and as a result are reluctant to declare that home schooling increases academic success (Ray, 2002).

Another concern is the development of social skills of home schooled children. The first case study conducted on this topic suggested that home-schooled children were not as isolated as most people initially thought (Schemmer, 1985). Another early study (Ray and Wartes, 1991) observed four home-schooling families and noted that the children who participated in activities outside the home were “able to communicate with the researcher” (p. 56). Since then, several surveys—some of them quite large—asked home-schooling parents to report their children’s activities. These surveys showed that almost all home schooled children regularly took part in extracurricular activities (i.e., Ray, 1990, 1997; Rudner, 1999; Tillman, 1995; Wartes, 1990). Delahooke (1986) found that home-schooled children actually participated in more activities than did children attending conventional schools.

The activities parents report in these surveys covered a wide range: organized sports, scouts, 4-H clubs, paid jobs, volunteer work, church activities, music, dance lessons, hobby groups, playing with friends, and more. Perhaps one of the reasons home-schooled children take part in so many different extracurricular activities is that they spend little time watching television. Rudner (1999) found that fewer than three percent of home schooled fourth graders watch more than three hours of television a day. The comparable figure for all fourth-graders nationwide is 38 percent.

In a study of social contacts, Chatham-Carpenter (1994) asked home-schooled children and children attending public schools to keep a record of all their interactions with other people for one month. To record contacts, children, age 12 to 18, kept a log of every interaction lasting more than two minutes. They also rated how accepting and understanding each person was to them and how close their relationship was with each person. Home schoolers had contact with 49 different people, compared to 56 for public school students. This difference in the number of contacts was not statistically significant. Although most of the contacts on the public school children’s lists were peers, home-schooled children often met with younger children and adults as well as peers. Home-schooled children rated the people on their lists as just as accepting and understanding as the public school children did. Public school students, however, had closer and more frequent contacts. The public school students were more willing to share their feelings with their contacts and

ask them for advice. In another study Medlin (2000) concluded that home-schooled students are doing well emotionally, psychologically, and socially.

CURRENT HOME SCHOOLING PRACTICES

There are two dramatically different approaches when it comes to home-school curricula. On one end of the spectrum are parents who are designing customized curriculum, often with input from the child. On the other end are parents who purchase prepackaged curriculum for the students.

Taking advantage of the ability to customize or use “differentiated instruction” is a major attraction to home schooling for some parents (Ray, 2002, p. 51). It is listed as one of the most significant reasons for home schooling by parents (Bielick et al., 2001). This environment provides chances to make learning more personal for the student. Based on the individual traits of the students, parents design field trips, internships, jobs, volunteer service, and college courses. This approach encourages parents to react to the differences in their children’s interests. The format allows for flexibility, small classes, and more feedback from the student not found in the traditional classroom. “Differentiating instruction to meet the individual needs of student, family, and community is the ideal kind of education” (Ray, 2000, p. 53).

Good and Brophy (1987) state that differentiated instruction is the ideal model of education as it allows for individualized curricula and personal attention for the student. Ray (2000) encourages parents who are home schooling their children to use differentiated instruction to maximize the benefits of the home-school environment. Children in smaller groups at home allow for more personal, individualized learning activities.

This more laissez-faire approach to home schooling has its critics. Parents who believe in a more structured environment for their children’s home-school experience sometimes negatively refer to those engaging in differentiated instruction as “unschoolers” (Lyman, 1998, p. 34). The critics are concerned that home-schooled children who are designing their own curriculum will create a disapproving perception of home-schooled children and their parents. Anecdotal evidence, such as low test scores from students of parents belonging to a group that promotes the use of a differentiated curriculum, has added to the fears that a negative light could be cast on all home-schooled students.

Differentiated instruction also has its critics outside of the home-schooling world. While some argue that customizing education is good for the students and their parents, others suggest it is not good for American society. Home schooling generally, and differentiated instruction more specifically, isolates students from diverse points of view. This keeps them from learning about the intricacies of a pluralistic democracy. Home schoolers may not be taught to tolerate views different from their own or views taught to them by their parents. Home-schooled students also lose their sense of citizenship. These students will not share the common school experience that helps bond citizens of a free society together (Reich, 2002).

Another argument (Lubienski, 2000) against home schooling views education as a public, not private good. It says that the home-schooling movement is removing human capital from schools. This hurts the students who attend those schools and ultimately undermines public school systems around the country.

The other approach to home-school curriculum is more structured. There are a number of organizations that provide assistance to parents who want to design a traditional curriculum for their home-schooled children (Lyman, 1998). The organizations help parents by providing counseling by telephone, message boards, fax, and e-mail. They can also provide daily lesson plans, testing services, books, software, videos, and other educational materials (Seton Home Study School, 2004).

Some parents want their home-schooled children to be allowed to participate in some traditional classroom and extracurricular activities. Some school districts are open to this idea while other administrators and parents in these districts have resisted allowing home-schooled children to pick and choose the parts of the traditional school experience in which that they want to participate. Parents of home schoolers want to take advantage of the public school activities and classes that they feel are good for their children. While most school districts think this is fine, some parents and school boards resent the home-schooled children having the ability to only choose the features that they want. Some home-schooling parents want their children to take courses in school that the parents may have a more difficult time teaching, like advanced math or science. Another group of parents want their children to have access to up-to-date computers and other technology. Others want their home schoolers to be able to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities (Hawkins, 1996).

Community colleges are another resource home schoolers are taking advantage of as part of their curriculum. Most community colleges have

open enrollment policies that allow high school age students to complete classes. The home-schooled students enjoy being in college classes with a diverse group of students. Home-schooled students tend to take math, computer science, and foreign language classes: areas parents are not comfortable teaching. The community college classes prepare students for the 4-year college experience (Taylor, 2001).

SENDING THE HOME-SCHOOLED CHILD TO COLLEGE

Increased competition for students by colleges and universities has these institutions searching for new market segments. With its size and relative success in achievement tests, the home-schooled student market is an attractive segment for colleges. However, the unique circumstances under which these children have been educated lead to a number of questions about their ability to matriculate and succeed at the collegiate level.

Home schoolers are more likely to attend college than students attending traditional high schools. A total of 72.4 percent of students in the 18-24 age group who were home schooled have taken some college courses. This compares to the 46.2 percent of the rest of the population in that age group that has completed some college (Ray, 2004). Earlier research (Ray, 1997a) indicated that home-schooled students matriculate to postsecondary institutions at approximately the same rate as public high school graduates.

Colleges and universities have been concerned about their ability to measure the level of preparedness of home-schooled students who want to attend college. As a result many schools require students to obtain the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) before applying for admission. At one point the Federal government required the GED to be eligible for federal financial aid to be granted to home-schooled college applicants. This GED requirement was repealed in 1998 when The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) drafted federal legislation that placed home-schooled college applicants for admissions and financial aid on the same footing as traditionally schooled applicants. Parents of home-schooled children contended that there was a stigma attached to having to earn a GED before attending college. These parents feared that college admissions representatives may misinterpret the GED to mean the student dropped out of high school as opposed to a student

who completed her or his secondary education in the home-school environment (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003).

Language eliminating the need for home-schooled students to attain the GED was included in the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998. The changes were not communicated quickly to postsecondary institutions and many of them continue to require the GED of home-schooled applicants. Another reason for financial aid offices being slow to implement the changes was the inaccurate information in the 1999 Federal Student Aid Handbook. The Handbook stated that institutions would lose their access to Federal financial aid if they admitted home-schooled students who had not earned the GED (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003).

In addition to doing away with the need to earn a GED, The Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 eliminated the requirement of home-schooled students to pass an ability to benefit from postsecondary education test before being eligible for financial aid. The law now states that a student is eligible for financial aid if he or she was home schooled. Students may still need to obtain a secondary school completion credential as provided by the state in which the student resides. The Act encourages colleges and universities receiving federal funding to discontinue discrimination against home schoolers. In addition, it specifically recommends that colleges and universities change any admissions policies which force home-schooled students to take additional tests beyond what is required of any other students, including the GED and the SAT II exams (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003).

As noted above one problem for many home-schooled students was that the Federal Student Aid Handbook incorrectly informed admissions and financial aid officers that their acceptance of home-schooled students could endanger their ability to offer Federal financial aid. This problem was corrected in the 2002-2003 Federal Student Aid Handbook. This publication amended the language that discriminated between home-schooled applicants and those who graduated from traditional schools and asks colleges and universities to remove any requirements of home-schooled applicants not required of nonhome-school applicants (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003).

Despite these actions, there are still colleges and universities that are reluctant to admit home-schooled students on the same basis as other applicants. Some colleges believe there is some ambiguity in the way the law is written. Other states have laws that conflict with the 1998 ruling. These exist even though no institution has ever lost its Federal funding by providing aid to a home-schooled student. In April of 2002

the Federal Education Department reiterated that schools should not require additional tests of home-schooled applicants. Officials from colleges that are hesitant to accept home-schooled applicants have complained of the lack of accountability in the home-schooling process. This is especially problematic for financial aid administrators who are trained to look for scams that can create problems for the school (Morgan, 2003). While not all colleges and universities are as inviting to home-schooled applicants, most are up front about informing home-schooled students of any additional requirements (Cohen, 1998).

The HSLDA has recommended guidelines for colleges regarding admitting home-schooled students. In addition to not requiring a student to earn a GED, it suggests that colleges provide home schoolers with a Home School Credit Evaluation form. Home schooled applicants submit the completed Home School Credit Evaluation form to the college instead of providing traditional high school transcripts. The HSLDA also states that colleges should not require an evaluation beyond that of the parents to certify the legitimacy of students' high school accomplishments. Finally the HSLDA recommends that postsecondary institutions rely more heavily on SAT and ACT scores and interviews than they would when evaluating traditional high school applicants (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003).

Because institutions cannot require students to complete the GED they need to find a way to assess their potential success in college. In 1999 a study showed that home-schooled students scored slightly above the national average on SAT and ACT tests. These results for the home schoolers were slightly higher than their scores in 1997 and 1998, where they scored higher than the average but not by as much as in 1999 (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003a). Another study (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004) reported that during their first year of college, home-schooled students had significantly higher grade points, course loads, and retention rates. These same students also had higher ACT and SAT scores coming into college.

Anecdotal evidence reported by a number of studies compiled by the HSLDA (2003a) suggests home-schooled students are succeeding in public and private colleges and universities across the country. This includes studies conducted at institutions as large as public institutions like Penn State to more exclusive private schools such as Brown University. Many colleges accept home-schooled students who present portfolios of their work instead of transcripts. Each year Harvard University takes up to ten applicants who have had some home schooling. "In general, those kids do just fine," says David Illingsworth, senior

admissions officer at Harvard. He adds that the number of applications and inquiries from home schoolers is “definitely increasing” (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003a).

A study (Prue, 1997) of college admissions personnel showed that home-schooled students were doing well in college. “Home schoolers are academically, emotionally and socially prepared to succeed at college” (p. 62). The problems associated with attempting to evaluate incoming home-schooled applicants are difficult but not impossible. As schools deal with more home-schooled applicants, admissions personnel are adapting to the challenges presented by these applicants. This same study also found that parents tend to be more involved in the application process of the home-schooled student. Interestingly a small number of admissions workers showed outright hostility towards home-schooled children. The study did not explain the reason for this hostility.

College admissions offices do not seem to differentiate between home-schooled students who used a prepackaged curriculum or learned from a more customized curriculum. The issue appears to be more of how to document what the student did as opposed to how it was done. To this end ACT and SAT tests scores are of more importance for home-schooled students. Also students want to make their transcript as standard as possible, regardless of how the credits were earned. Some, but not all, colleges accept a portfolio instead of a transcript (Moring, 1998).

The National Center for Home Education (2004) has created a rating system for schools based on how friendly the institution’s admissions policy is to home-schooled students. Tier I schools are the most receptive to home-schooled students, followed by Tier II and III in that order. Tier I schools have admission policies that are similar to National Center for Home Education’s Recommended College Admission Policies. “These colleges typically required a parent’s transcript, general standardized achievement testing, and/or the review of a portfolio of the potential student’s materials in place of an accredited diploma” (p. 1).

At Tier II institutions a GED is added to the Tier I requirements, even though the right to ask for the GED was repealed by the Higher Education Act of 1998. Tier III schools demand that home-schooled students meet the Tier II requirements, plus achieve a higher score on standardized achievement test scores and/or may require home-schooled students to take additional tests such as the SAT II. As already mentioned, a lack of communication to college admissions offices about the home-schooling provisions in the Higher Education Act of 1998 appears to be why Tier II and III institutions still appear to be discriminating against

home-schooled applicants. The National Center for Home Education (2004) publishes a list of schools in each state that are in each of the three tiers. This list also includes schools that will not accept home-schooled students at all.

The list was created by the HSLDA to assist home-schooled students in finding more home-school-friendly institutions. Colleges and universities are invited to complete a survey found on its Web site. The school's responses to the survey determines at which of the three tiers the school is listed (Blair, 2000). In addition to questions about the specific requirements the school requires of home-schooled applicants, questions are asked about the number of home-schooled students currently attending the institution. There is a question that asks, "How have home schooled students performed at your university?" The original rating of the first 513 public and private colleges and universities was conducted in 1999 (Home School Legal Defense Fund, 2005).

RECRUITING HOME SCHOOLERS TO COLLEGE

While there are limited data in the academic and popular literature as to how postsecondary institutions are attempting to recruit home-schooled students to colleges, the HSLDA lists a number of activities in which institutions are engaging to reaching home-schooled students:

- Attending state home school conventions.
- Developing college preparatory programs targeted at home schoolers.
- Sponsoring on-campus recruitment activities and visitation opportunities.
- Communicating regularly with statewide home school organizations.
- Joining home school radio network broadcasts.
- Conducting workshops for home schoolers and their parents to help them plan for college admissions (like Pennsylvania's Home-Schooling High Schoolers Conference).
- Offering special scholarships and grants.
- Advertising in brochures and home school publications like *Teaching Home*, *Practical Home Schooling*, *Home Schooling Today*, and other magazines (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003a).

As might be expected based on the origins of the movement, church-related colleges appear to be the first to have actively recruited home-schooled students. They were the first to recognize the unique characteristics that home-schooled student can bring to an institution (Morgan, 1998).

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the number of home-schooled students matriculating to college grows, postsecondary institutions need to determine what they can do to earn their piece of this new market segment. First, colleges and universities should make it clear that home-schooled students are welcome on their campuses. As noted in much of the literature cited in this study, there is still a perception that many colleges are not as interested in attracting home-schooled students as they are students from traditional education backgrounds. This perception needs to be changed.

First, colleges and universities need to determine the size of the home school market for students in their areas. While specific national statistics are difficult to find, there is a growing number of regional associations of parents who meet periodically to discuss issues concerning the home schooling of their children (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003a). Colleges need to use the Internet and other sources such as the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) to help connect with these groups and, ultimately, the parents of home schoolers in their market area.

Institutions of higher education interested in recruiting more home-schooled candidates also need to communicate with The National Center for Home Education. This is the group that ranks the colleges and universities in tiers based on how friendly they are to home-schooled applicants. Admissions departments need to let this group know they are following The Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 that does not subject home-schooled students to testing beyond what is required of other applicants.

Based on the data collected for the home school market segment in their areas, colleges also need to decide what media can best reach home-schooled students. Schools that are trying to reach this segment are using a wide variety of media to reach potential home-schooled applicants. The Internet has become a popular place for all prospective students to shop for colleges (Parmar, 2004). Most home schooled students have access to the Internet as it is a resource often used in the

home-schooling process, so it seems like a logical first place to provide home-schooled application information (McDowell & Ray, 2000).

Wheaton College provides a specific packet of application materials to home-schooled students and has a special section on its web site aimed at home schoolers (Crabtree, 2002). Oral Roberts University provides a sample of a home-school transcript for students to see how to prepare this document as part of its application process (Bostwick, 2004). Admissions offices should help home-schooled students create a portfolio that represents the student's learning. This portfolio should include book lists, writing samples, recommendations, honors, and awards, as well as documentation of extracurricular activities such as travel and hobbies. Home-school students should contact the admissions office of the schools they are interested in attending early so the school has enough time to evaluate students' academic achievements (Henry, 1999).

Commercial mailing houses sell lists of home-schooled students. Colleges interested in actively recruiting home schoolers should create a series of newsletters and other publications that address the specific issues this group of students faces when applying to postsecondary institutions. Colleges implementing this type of mail campaign should consider starting it early in the students' high school career, as students are shopping for and making decisions about where they want to attend college earlier than ever (Hossler & Bean, 1999).

Colleges interested in recruiting more home-schooled students should consider open houses or special visit days aimed specifically at this market segment. The students who are home schooled feel special about themselves (Remmerde, 1997) and these events hopefully will communicate that the institution hosting the event also thinks home schoolers are special. The open houses and visit days are also good opportunities to explain to home schoolers and their parents how to construct an application portfolio. The invitation to learn about the college application process may work to attract students to the campus for these events.

To create a more home-school-friendly environment, postsecondary schools should be sure that their admissions staffs are aware of The Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 that repealed additional admissions tests for home-schooled applicants. Admissions staffs also need to be made aware of the unique nature of home schoolers' backgrounds. They need to be educated on how to evaluate the educational experience of these home-schooled applicants. Training should be provided to admissions representatives so they know what questions to ask and what to look for when discussing college opportunities with home-

schooled candidates. Even more than with other applicants, the admissions representative needs to determine what interests the student may have that could be a good match for one of the programs at that representative's institution.

Home schoolers feel they are at an advantage when applying to college. They are different from the fellow applicants who attended private or public school. They feel they are more prepared for college even though they bring a different social experience to college (Remmerde, 1997). Admissions representatives and others at the college need to recognize this in this market segment and make them feel special when being courted to attend the school. The more welcomed the student feels the more confident they will be in choosing the college to attend for furthering their education.

Along with training the admissions staff, academic advisors should be trained on the nuances of dealing with home-schooled students. Understanding the home-school experience hopefully will enable advisors to take home schoolers' unique backgrounds into consideration when planning their academic careers and scheduling their specific classes. Colleges and universities that offer the home schooled student more control over his or her curriculum may have an advantage in the home-school market. Many of these home schoolers have been actively involved in designing their course of study before attending college (Ray, 2002). A college that gives the home-schooled student some of that same freedom may have an advantage in recruiting home schoolers to that campus.

Support groups that already exist at many colleges could be attractive to the student who was home schooled. Organizations such as academic clubs, campus ministries, sororities, and fraternities may be attractive to the home-schooled student. Some home-schooled students take longer to adjust to the group environment (Crabtree, 2002) and smaller groups may help them adjust. Residence life staffs at these institutions should be encouraged to help home schoolers adjust to campus life. The residence life staff can capitalize on the interpersonal skills, leadership skills, and tolerance of others that many home-schooled students bring to the college experience. Institutions of higher learning could encourage home-schooled students to live in residence halls so they will be exposed to the entire college experience.

Another possible attraction would be a home-schooled student working as an intern in conjunction with the recruiting office to recruit other home schoolers. This person would be available to advise home-school

parents and children enrolling at the college and assist with completing the appropriate paperwork.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Hopefully this introductory article on home-schooled students as a viable target market will begin a stream of empirical studies that will create more specific recommendations for colleges and universities to reach them. Up to this point limited research has been done in this area. Also, much of the information concerning the home schooler included in this study has come from groups like the Home School Legal Defense Association and the National Home Education Research Institute—both of which are advocacy groups for the home school movement.

Future research needs to be done to examine the motives of home-schooled students to determine if their reasons for choosing a specific college differ from those of students who have been educated in public or private schools. The role that parents play in the home-schooled applicant's choice of a college or university also needs to be explored. More research needs to be conducted to determine what colleges are attracting more home-schooled students and what those institutions are doing to reach this segment.

While there is some anecdotal and potentially biased evidence (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003a) that home-schooled students are doing well in college, more research needs to be done in this area. The studies conducted so far examine the inputs (ACT scores, interpersonal skills developed in high school, etc.) relating to home schooled students. Nothing was found to document the success of these students beyond the first year of college. As the number of home-schooled students in college increases, studies need to be conducted to track college graduation and placement rates of home schoolers to see how they compare with their college classmates who attended traditional high schools.

The market for home-schooled high school graduates matriculating to colleges and universities is growing. As parents take the responsibility of teaching their children, they will also want their children to further their education, find a job, and become and become independent adults. Most of these students are as qualified or more qualified as other students who attended a regular school curriculum before matriculating to

college. There is a market for attracting home schoolers; colleges and universities need to find ways to appeal to this segment.

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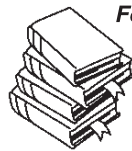
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