

AC 2008-1352: HIGH SCHOOL RECRUITING THAT WORKS: THE “DAY IN COLLEGE”

Ralph Schaffer, Purdue College of Technology

Dr. R. Andy Schaffer is the Director of Purdue University's College of Technology statewide locations at New Albany, Columbus, Greensburg and Vincennes and Associate Professor of Industrial Technology. He earned his Baccalaureate degree in Organizational Leadership and Supervision “with highest distinction” at Purdue University, West Lafayette. He completed his Master of Business Administration degree “with distinction” at the University of Louisville and earned his Ph.D. in Business Administration at The Ohio State University. His Doctoral program emphases were in Organization Theory and International Business.

Before joining Purdue, Dr. Schaffer was Associate Professor of Management and Assistant Department Head at the School of Business at North Georgia State University, north of Atlanta. Prior to the North Georgia assignment he was Assistant Professor of Organizational Leadership and Supervision at IUPUI in Indianapolis.

Before embarking on his teaching career, Dr. Schaffer was Manager of US Production Operations Development for United Distillers, the American whiskey subsidiary of Guinness, PLC, in Louisville. He also served six years in the US Air Force on active duty as a computer maintenance technician and maintenance supervisor.

Dr. Schaffer has received numerous awards and recognitions in his academic career including Rookie of the Year and Faculty of the Year awards at North Georgia State University and the Trustee’s Teaching Award, the Outstanding Teacher Award, and the Faculty Colloquium on Excellence in Teaching at the Purdue School of Engineering and Technology at IUPUI. He is published in a variety of outlets including the Journal of Engineering Technology, Journal of Business and Management, and Journal of Management Education.

Joseph Dues, Purdue University-New Albany

Timothy Cooley, Purdue University-New Albany

Damon Sisk, Purdue University-New Albany

High School Recruiting that Works: The “Day in College”

Introduction

Many engineering technology programs conduct open houses and other, similar recruiting events for high school students. These events attempt to showcase the college’s academic programs and laboratories to potential applicants and their parents. However, these open house type events typically fail to fully engage the audience they seek to impress and the yield for these events – the number of matriculates compared to the number of attendees – is typically low.

In contrast, “Day in College” is a by-nomination program designed as a focused high school recruiting tool. Day in College exposes nominated high school seniors and juniors to engineering technology degree programs. It allows high school students and their parents to interact with faculty in a classroom setting. Day in College does not seek large numbers of potential students like an open house. Instead, it is a by-nomination event; students must be nominated by a high school advisor or teacher. Students and their parents are personally invited to attend, and the program is conducted by faculty in the college’s laboratories and classrooms.

The Day in College event is structured to replicate a typical day for a freshman. These potential students and their parents attend a one-hour “class” in each of the engineering technology degree programs offered. By the end of the Day in College, attendees will have met all of the engineering technology faculty members and staff, toured all of the engineering technology classrooms and laboratories, completed hands-on activities in every engineering technology laboratory, received a short briefing on each degree’s job prospects, and completed a workshop on admissions and financial aid procedures.

This paper describes in detail the entire Day in College program and the processes related to it. Readers will be presented with enough detail to replicate the program at their own institutions, if desired. Specifically, this paper: 1) begins with a brief outline of procedures necessary to conduct a Day in College event, 2) outlines the recruiting presentation made to high school advisors and teachers, 3) explains the nomination package and processes, 4) describes the documentation and process used to recruit students and their parents to the event, 5) presents a sample of activities for a selected degree program, and 6) summarizes attendance, application, and matriculation statistics that, anecdotally, demonstrate the effectiveness of Day in College.

Outline of Day in College from Preparation to Follow Up

The actual Day in College event is relatively easy to conduct with limited faculty preparation necessary. The more difficult and time consuming task is getting the high school students nominated and to the event. A brief outline of the eleven major tasks involved is now presented, with details presented later in the paper:

1. Appointments are set with high school advisors at targeted high schools in the college’s service area or targeted recruiting area. Thirty minutes is sufficient to explain Day in College and the nomination process, but more time may be needed if other college programs and services are

to be presented during the visit. These appointments should be scheduled two to three months before the Day in College event.

2. The college's best recruiter(s) should be selected and sent on these appointments.
3. College recruiter meets with the high school advisor and outlines the purpose and target audience for Day in College. Next, the nomination process is explained by focusing on the simplicity of the process for the high school advisor. College recruiter also suggests that teachers in science, technology, engineering, and math departments may have students they wish to nominate.
4. High school advisors and teachers nominate students by completing and sending to the college a simple nomination form in a self-addressed, stamped envelope, or via Fax. The nomination deadline should be set no later than three weeks before the Day in College event.
5. College immediately mails to advisors and teachers who submit nominations an acknowledgement and personalized thank you for the nomination(s).
6. College administrative officer sends an invitation letter to the nominee and a separate invitation letter to the nominee's parents; all are invited and encouraged to attend. These letters should be mailed as soon as the nomination is received and no later than two weeks before the Day in College event.
7. Parents are asked to RSVP for the student and themselves. However, do not be surprised when many students and parents arrive who have not submitted an RSVP. Plan accordingly.
8. The Day in College event takes place. At the event students and their parents attend a one-hour "class" (customized and very "hands-on" for a high school audience) in each of the engineering technology degree programs offered. There is also a summary session on admissions and financial aid. Lunch is provided.
9. Attendees receive follow up mailings and college information tailored to their expressed interests.
10. Nominees who do not attend receive follow up mailings and general college information.
11. Admissions and matriculation data are recorded and tracked.

Recruiting Presentation for High School Advisors and Teachers

The most time consuming component of Day in College is making the appointments and meeting with the high school advisors. The most challenging aspect of Day in College is convincing the advisors to nominate students. Although a canned sales pitch is not recommended, a suggested "script" to follow when speaking with high school advisors follows. The script you use for your college also should be written in letter form and included in a nomination package. A sample script/letter:

“I invite you to nominate one or more of your seniors and juniors for the “Day in College” program. The event is scheduled for (date and time) at (place).

It often is difficult for high school students to grasp the difference between high school and college. This college recruiting program provides students first-hand experience in an engineering technology classroom with the ultimate objective of increasing college participation rates in engineering technology degree programs. We need your help to target high school seniors and juniors who have potential for college success.

As you contemplate potential nominees, please consider your seniors and juniors who ...

- have the potential to succeed in college, but have not yet made a commitment,
- express an interest in engineering technology related careers,
- are completing college preparatory coursework and are prepared for college math,
- may believe that college is not for them,
- may believe that a college degree is unattainable due to financial constraints, and/or
- other factors the college may wish to include.

Our goals for this program include...

- improve parent and student understanding of what is learned in engineering technology and how those topics are taught,
- increase college participation rates by allowing high school seniors to experience a “day in college”,
- improve parent understanding of the need for their children to attend college,
- explain ways to finance a college education and the return on that investment,
- excite high school seniors about the college’s programs and related careers, and
- publicize the availability of engineering technology degree programs.

This program will not succeed without your support. I encourage you to nominate as many college-prepared students as you think would benefit from this program.”

After completing your customized “sales pitch” be sure to provide a nomination package (described in the next section) and a brochure or two about the college’s engineering technology degree programs. Close by asking for questions and presenting a deadline for nominations. The deadline for nominations should be no later than three weeks before the event.

Nomination Package and Process

When the college recruiter visits high school advisors at target schools, it is important to leave behind a very professional nomination package. In many cases the high school advisor will take the information and pass it along to teachers in science, technology, engineering and/or math. Ideally the college recruiter would directly present to these teachers, but the teachers are harder to contact. At some high schools the advising office serves as gatekeeper for college visitors and it is difficult to meet the teachers. The college recruiter always should take several nomination packages and ask the high school advisor to pass along nomination packets to the appropriate teachers.

Student's mailing address

Student's signature

Date

Student's phone number

The recruiting presentation and nomination form should be prominently displayed in the front of the nomination package. The nomination package also should include self-addressed, stamped envelopes and carefully selected information about the college's academic programs. Be careful to not stuff the folder with too many pamphlets and brochures. High school personnel are overwhelmed with college literature and a couple of carefully selected brochures about your college's engineering technology programs are more likely to be read than pages and pages of detailed information. Remember the goal is to receive nominations for students who are likely candidates to matriculate to your engineering technology programs.

If you have enthusiastic recruiters and a professional and an easy-to-use nomination package, then you will receive nominations. Because the ongoing relationship between your college and the high schools is crucial, a college administrative officer should immediately mail a personal thank you to each high school advisor and teacher who sends a nomination.

Documentation and Process to Recruit Students and Parents to the Event

Although the nomination form asks the nominated student to provide an email address and phone number, many students leave these lines blank. Several students have indicated that they do not want to be contacted via email or telephone, but they don't mind contact via regular mail.

Upon receipt of the nomination form, the college should send a letter to the nominated student and the parent/guardian of the nominated student. Suggested formats for these letters follow:

Letter to Nominated Student

Congratulations, (Student)!

You have been selected for the (College's) "Day in College" on (date). This free program will be held in the (name) building on the campus of (College). As an official college visit, this should be an excused high school absence. Please make sure your parents inform the high school of your absence.

(Student), you should be proud of your accomplishments at (Name) High School. We hope that this "Day in College" experience will assist you in determining your future plans after graduation.

You and your parent/guardian will experience a "typical" day in college by attending five, short "college classes" that will let you experience first-hand what goes on in a (College) engineering technology class. But don't worry, there won't be any exams!

And don't think that you'll be sitting through five boring lectures because (College) engineering technology classes are *all* very hands-on and applied. Here is the class schedule:

8:30 AM	Registration opens
9:00 to 9:50	(Degree program #1)
10:00 to 10:50	(Degree program #2)
11:00 to 11:50	(Degree program #3)
Noon to 12:30	Lunch (provided free of charge)
12:30 to 1:20	(Degree program #4)
1:30 to 2:20	(Degree program #5)
2:30 to 3:30	Admissions and Financial Aid

We look forward to meeting you! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at (phone and email) or stop by (place). Also, be sure to check out our website at (website).

Sincerely,
(College Officer)

Letter to Parent/Guardian of Nominated Student

Congratulations!

(Student) has been selected to participate in the College's "Day in College" on (date). (Student) was nominated by (teacher/advisor name) at (Name) High School. This free program will be held in the (name) building on the campus of (College). As an official college visit, this should be an excused absence for (Student). Please contact the high school office to inform them of (Student's) absence. You also are invited and encouraged to attend.

You should be proud of (Student's) accomplishments at (Name) High School. We hope that this "Day in College" experience will assist you in determining (Name's) future plans after high school graduation. We also hope that you are considering (College) in your planning.

(Student) and you will experience a "typical" day in college by attending five, short "college classes" that will let you experience first-hand what goes on in a (College) engineering technology class. You will see the hands-on approach to learning that distinguishes our engineering technology programs.

We think you will also appreciate the small class sizes and individualized attention provided by (College's) Faculty.

"Day in College" registration opens at 8:00 AM and the program runs from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM. The program will allow you to preview the five (College) degree programs offered.
(List degrees)

We also will discuss admissions and financial aid and, if you and (Student) are ready, you can apply for fall 2007 admission.

We look forward to meeting you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at (phone and email) or stop by (place). Also, be sure to check out our website at (website).

Sincerely,
(College Officer)

These letters should be mailed as soon as the nomination is received and no later than two weeks before the Day in College event. Experience shows us that many parents call to inquire about the nomination. Make sure the receptionists who answer your phone are well-equipped to answer specific questions about Day in College. Also, prepare for an RSVP rate of only about 50%.

Summary of a Hands-On Activity for Selected Degree Program

Three Mechanical Engineering Technology faculty members designed and presented the following session at the fall 2007 Day in College event. The nine steps were designed to highlight the progression of MET coursework and demonstrate how the degree leads to a career in applied engineering.

Step 1: What is MET and how is it different than ME? Faculty members explain that not only do METs design and analyze, they also build, test, destroy, and improve as they go. Faculty present the level of math required, and where and why the student needs it. They explain that a good foundation in math is needed, starting with computational tools, then more math knowledge is necessary including applied calculus.

Step 2: At this point the experiential exercise begins. The scenario is presented that students work for a company building a new bridge. So, what would they do? First they would have to know about CAD, Statics, and finite elements, so those courses are described to show how students learn to design and analyze structures.

Step 3: Students then are told that theory and CAD design are nice, but what really goes on in the real world? Students next actually test some designs using equipment that they would use in Materials and Strengths courses. Students see how some bridge design mock ups behave in a test environment.

Step 4: Students are then presented some current job openings in the local economy. For example, in our area it is more likely that students will work for a company making trusses for houses and buildings. So, how would they mass produce a design and make sure it is a product that builders would want to buy? Students get an overview of courses in manufacturing and quality.

Step 5: Students now move into teams to design a manufacturing process. Design of a process is presented to introduce the concept of maximizing production rate while maintaining quality. Faculty members demonstrate a couple of processes.

Step 6: Student teams then produce “roofing trusses” manufactured from Popsicle sticks. Faculty members provide materials and coaching suggestions so all teams are functional and productive.

Step 7: Student production stops and team output is assessed. Discussion centers on quality and productivity. For example; are all trusses the same, are they all as strong, are they made as well, what materials were wasted, how did the teams do comparatively?

Step 8: Each team then picks its best truss and destructive testing is demonstrated with an award presented for the strongest truss.

Step 9: Discussion centers on what makes a good product and how products and processes are designed.

Step 10: Faculty members then summarize MET: design a product, analyze it, build examples, and test them. Design a process to mass produce them, improve and analyze quality. Students see that as MET majors they will be doing all of these things, and more, in the MET program.

Summary Statistics

Our institution has held the Day in College event only two times but the response has been very positive. Summary statistics for the two events follows:

Spring 2007 inaugural/pilot event:

Total high schools visited: 12

Total high schools submitting nominations: 9 (75% of high schools visited)

Total number of high school students nominated: 16

Total number of high school students attending: 15 (94% of students nominated)

Applications for fall 2007: 83% of seniors who attended Day in College applied

Matriculates in fall 2007: 70% of seniors who applied are now attending

Fall 2007 event:

Total high schools visited: 36

Total high schools submitting nominations: 16 (44% of schools visited)

Total number of high school students nominated: 43

Total number of high school students attending: 27 (63% of students nominated)

Applications for fall 2008: TBD

Matriculates in fall 2008: TBD

Conclusion

The timing, processes, documentation, and sequence of events described in this paper have proven successful in our recruiting efforts. The key is to focus the recruiting event on students who are more likely to apply and matriculate to engineering technology programs and to give them hands-on activities so they can meet the faculty, actually use the laboratories, and experience what engineering technology is about. Open houses are a great way to get many

potential students into your laboratories. An event like Day in College can serve as an excellent, focused complement to open houses and other recruiting activities.