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**Carter, Charles Mills**

**ADAPTIVE AND INTERPRETIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES OF FIVE  
SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES**

*The University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

**Ed.D. 1985**

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ADAPTIVE AND INTERPRETIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES  
OF FIVE SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

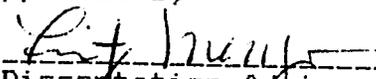
by

Charles M. Carter

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The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
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Approved by

  
-----  
Dissertation Advisor

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Advisor

*Prof. Wayne Joseph E. Simpson*

Committee Members

*Prof. Wayne Joseph E. Simpson*  
*Dr. Bill Simpson*  
*Paul V. Mitchell*

*May 7, 1985*

Date of Acceptance by Committee

*May 7, 1985*

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The purpose of this study was to investigate current perceptions of Directors of Admissions and Academic Deans at five small, independent, liberal arts institutions in the Piedmont Triad area of North Carolina. The objective was to interpret qualitatively how they defined the current challenges facing their institutions and their liberal arts mission, why they felt they were experiencing these challenges, and how they were responding to them.

E. E. Chaffee's models of strategic management were used as a guide to determine whether the institutions in the study were incorporating adaptive or interpretive strategies, or a combination of the two, in an effort to respond to the challenges facing them in the 1980s.

The study was done using a series of in-depth interviews with selected administrators from each institution. In addition, direct observations were made on each campus and included random conversations with passing students. The impressions of individuals in the community were also solicited at random on an informal basis in order to gain an idea of public perceptions of the schools in the study. Additional sources included institutional catalogs, bulletins, viewbooks, and pamphlets.

The results of the study suggested that small, independent, liberal arts colleges have found it necessary to utilize

adaptive strategies in order to remain viable. Interpretive strategies appeared to be practiced more in schools which were experiencing greater degrees of success. Because of this success, they appeared to have a greater margin of freedom to continue to use interpretive methods, and were more likely to remain faithful to their liberal arts mission.

Conversely, those schools which practiced a preponderance of adaptive measures, including a compromise to their liberal arts mission and philosophy if necessary, found themselves unable to initiate interpretive strategies successfully. Their public image and academic credibility had been affected to the point where legitimacy was difficult to reestablish.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation was a qualitative inquiry into the responses of small, independent, liberal arts colleges to the challenges facing them in the 1980s and beyond. The ways in which these institutions have reacted to economic and demographic changes have raised many questions. Have their reactions to the challenges been the result of an eagerness to rush into a variety of "trendy", adaptive schemes, in order to remain solvent? Have they concentrated on purely marketing strategies that deal exclusively with numbers, without careful regard to the consequences to their liberal arts focus? Or, have they been fully cognizant of the directions they are taking, in systematically reorienting their curricula and compromising their liberal arts values? Do they believe that with today's conditions, they have no other alternative?

Perhaps various strategies have enabled these institutions to survive for the time being. But in doing so, have they evolved into self-serving types of institutions, which package, specialize, and limit, instead of educate, free, and expand the knowledge and understanding of individuals, as was the original purpose of a liberal arts education?

This study has examined some of the ways in which small educational institutions have adjusted their priorities to a changing environment.

### Historical Background for This Study

Many have felt that the assignment of social status in a capitalistic country is justified because of the overall scarcity of resources. Colonial America was characterized by an abundance of land and by scarce supplies of labor, but the settling of the West and the transformation to a wage-labor system, coupled with the existence of growing numbers of blacks and immigrants as abundant sources of cheap labor, marked the beginning of an economic hierarchy of power (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Because resources are scarce and because American capitalism encourages competition for the procurement of these resources, some groups are, as a consequence, more likely to end up with more, at the expense of others who subsequently end up with less. Who gets what is determined by a very complicated selection and sorting process, which serves to maintain social control.

Schools have operated for more than fifty years as "the great selector"--the agency that sorts and trains young people for their appropriate manpower roles in society. By awarding or withholding diplomas, degrees, and certificates, schools sort out the young for future job placement; college graduates are directed into one type of training, high school graduates are tracked into another, school dropouts into a third (Perkinson, 1971; Pincus, 1980).

In order to justify this selection and sorting process,

and at the same time present the notion of equality and democracy, many feel that a meritocratic arrangement must be established and accepted as the means of identifying those individuals who "deserve" to succeed. A meritocratic system of beliefs is based on the notion that success is the reward that results from individual demonstration of achievement, ambition, and hard work. In a democratic society, this system is felt to be fair, because each person supposedly has an equal chance at success.

There are too many obvious factors that contradict the validity of the belief that this country is truly meritocratic. Wealth has a significant influence on politics, economics, and social mobility. Race and ethnic background have historically played a major role in limiting the opportunities for many minority groups. The Educational Testing Service, whose standardized tests have typically favored certain segments of the society, have an almost monopolistic influence over college admissions and entrance into professional schools (Spring, 1976).

Not very long ago, the most prestigious institutions were respected because they limited access to all but a very few. In an attempt to imitate similar ostensibly high standards, many institutions followed suit and began to carefully select from large numbers of applicants. During the late 1950s, colleges and universities began to establish admissions offices to carry out this selection and sorting

process. Since the 1970s, however, declines in the number of 18- to 22-year-olds, escalating operational costs, inflation, and increasing unemployment have resulted in fewer students attending college. The admissions emphasis evolved from preferential selection to strategic recruiting.

According to Perkinson (1971), in recent years, educational technicians have developed systems that have been established to control, direct, and manipulate students more scientifically. Marcuse felt that this technical rationality was concerned only with means and not ends; the ends were accepted without debate. In effect, the ends became the means (Schoolman, 1980). Problems confronting higher education such as declining enrollments and the concurrent financial ramifications and the changing philosophy of the need for liberal education have been approached through more emphasis on the means--marketing techniques to attract students, fund-raising and developmental strategies for the purpose of increasing institutional endowments, and the inclusion of a greater number of practical, world-of-work-oriented courses of study--with less emphasis on the ends--offering a broad liberal education to prepare young people for their lives as citizens, family members, and creatively thinking human beings.

Management and marketing techniques have become the dominant elements in the survival plans of many small, independent, liberal arts institutions. This emphasis on

merchandising colleges has encouraged students to look at packaging rather than content--"packaged ideas, packaged skills, packaged self" (Perkinson, 1971, p. 93).

Neither admissions approach--preferential selection of the 1950s and 60s, nor strategic recruiting of the 1970s and 80s--has considered the student to be much more than a means to an end--the end being the institution's continued survival and success.

#### Need for the Study

Higher education, in the formal institutional design, came into existence in the United States with the establishment of Harvard College more than 350 years ago. Other independent colleges were soon established and followed a similar framework. Higher education remained virtually unchanged until the beginning of the early 1800s.

The first challenge to independent colleges arose in the early nineteenth century. At that time, many towns attempted to establish local colleges as evidence of community stature and importance. The mortality rate of these schools was high, because they lacked sound organizational structure and planning, and the nature and purpose of a college education at this time was uncertain (Pfnister, 1984). The next challenge came at the turn of this century, with the establishment of the land-grant colleges. Their purpose, as described by the Morrill Act of 1862, was the liberal and practical education of the industrial and agricultural classes (Rees, 1976). The

practical component, however, implicitly questioned the utilitarian value of liberal arts education, although vocational training at public expense did not evolve until much later. The third challenge to independent colleges, beginning in the 1970s, was the increased emphasis on vocational preparation, and the overall assumption of this responsibility by public-supported comprehensive colleges and universities (Pfnister, 1984). In summary, there has been a long-term decline in the value accorded by many Americans to a liberal education, and a concomitant shift from private to public support of higher education.

Economic conditions since 1970 have had an additional disruptive effect on higher education. These conditions have been especially devastating to small colleges. Small institutions have experienced rising costs, enrollment declines, and reduced revenues, simultaneously. Most have found it difficult to ease the cost-revenue pressure. Floundering schools have had to find new sources of revenue, improve productivity, and reduce programs--or face institutional dissolution. Along with rising costs and shrinking revenues, most small colleges have also faced declining applicant pools of 18- to 22-year-olds (Astin & Lee, 1972; Jencks & Reisman, 1977; Mayhew, 1979).

Still, most of these small, independent, liberal arts institutions have continued to survive. According to conventional wisdom, they have done so because they have:

- introduced major new marketing strategies in order to attract applicants;
- added additional "top-heavy" administrative specialists as fund raisers, efficiency experts, and recruitment and retention experts;
- reduced expenditures in areas such as full-time faculty, physical plant upkeep, and student services;
- altered substantially their liberal arts mission in response to a perceived demand for increasingly professional, vocational, and technical education.

According to Jonsen (1984, p. 181), discussions about internal and external environmental factors regarding institutional survival would only be "academic exercises" unless they helped the institution to respond and adapt to these trends without compromise of basic liberal arts values. Instead, more attention has been paid to the process of assessment and adjustment, usually under the heading of strategic planning.

#### Adaptive and Interpretive Models Used in the Study

Chaffee (1984, pp. 212-213) described two models of strategic management, and referred to them respectively as the "adaptive" strategy model and the "interpretive" strategy model. She used them in her research in an effort to determine the extent to which recovery from financial decline in small, independent colleges could be explained.

According to Chaffee, the adaptive model was popular during the early research on strategic management, but the interpretive model, although noted during the same period, has become more acceptable since 1980.

[In the adaptive model] the organization is assumed to aim for its own survival and for the resources that will ensure survival. The organization faces a changing and uncertain environment and it must adapt to changing environmental demands in order to elicit sufficient resources. The strategic problem is to anticipate the future, monitor key factors in the environment, recognize opportunities and threats, and maintain enough flexibility and slack resources to allow the organization to capitalize on opportunities and evade threats (p. 219).

Using the adaptive model, the organization was viewed as a single entity with a variety of operational parts that interact with the many aspects of a changing environment. The immediate goal was the accumulation of limited resources and the survival of the organization. The basic issue that the organization sought to answer was "What are we doing?" so that resources can be maximized. This strategy was structured to deal with changing environmental demands, especially the decline or the termination of incoming resources. Typical reactions to this type of fluctuation by the organization included changes in products or services, diversifications or additions, modifications, or deletions that would appeal to the market, and attempts toward improving efficiency. "The ultimate goal of strategic adaptation is for the organization to acquire more resources." (Chaffee, 1984, p. 221).

Many small, independent, liberal arts colleges that are experiencing socioeconomic and environmental difficulties have attempted to develop strategies for survival by relying primarily on an adaptive model of strategic management. These institutions have attempted to maintain their solvency by developing new academic programs, hiring marketing consultants, establishing more career-oriented programs to make up for declining liberal arts, establishing branch facilities, adding new programs with only minor changes within the curriculum, using faculty to teach subjects outside their area of expertise, and pursuing an all-out admissions program without a similar effort to improve retention (Chaffee, 1984).

On the other hand, the interpretive model of strategic management has pursued a somewhat different administrative direction.

Generally speaking, the interpretive model depicts strategy as disjointed, unintegrated, and multi-faceted. Such characteristics are inevitable in a system that exists only because participants have consented to act together as long as their individual interests are satisfied...Symbols and communication are the tools with which organizational participants create, reiterate, alter, circumscribe, and interpret their interactions and their sense of satisfaction. (Chaffee, 1984, p. 220)

Using the interpretive model of strategic management required social and collegial organizational arrangements. The primary issue to be addressed was the organization's legitimacy, and this was determined by the participants answering the question, "Why are we together?" Changes were effected not by

environmental demands or market forces, but by those participants who were dissatisfied with various perceptions which involved the organization's credibility and legitimacy. The integration and orientation of the participants rested on the nature of concepts and symbols, which were communicated both within and outside of the organization. The interpretive model, in terms of strategic action, would always be in perpetual motion with the participants, who were also changing and interacting (Chaffee, 1984).

Some strategies used by small liberal arts institutions, which incorporate an interpretive paradigm, were done in an effort to improve the public's perception of the institution. In this model, the aim of those in leadership roles was to inspire the active participation and concern of the academic community, to encourage greater involvement and financial support among the college trustees, and to project a more positive image within the public sector. Table 1 summarizes the major points of the adaptive and interpretive models.

Although both models offered actions which could be used effectively by institutions in their efforts to bring about changes or improvements, no one model was used exclusively. There were times when institutions may have used adaptations of each model based on their individual needs; however, Chaffee made the point that those institutions which experienced a variety of serious economic and environmental problems were those most likely to utilize more exclusively the

Table 1

## Adaptive vs. Interpretive Models of Strategic Management

Organization	Adaptive	Interpretive
Nature of the organization	Entity, organismic	Social contract
Nature of organizational action	Substantive	Symbolic
Fundamental requirement of the organization	Resources	Legitimacy
Fundamental organizational issue	What are we doing?	Why are we together?
<b>Strategy</b>		
Trigger for change of strategy	Resource crisis	Credibility crisis
	Change in external demand	Change is constant and marginal
Nature of strategic action	Change products & services: diversify, anticipate market; Create organizational slack	Develop concepts Communicate: with outsiders, with insiders
Aims of strategic action	Resource acquisition	Credibility improvement

(Chaffee, 1984, p. 222)

adaptive model in their strategies for survival. Schools that were more resilient tended to use both models, but were more likely to take actions that reflected the interpretive mode (Chaffee, 1984).

#### Purpose of the Study

According to Pfnister and Finkelstein (1984, p. 117), the distinctive aspect regarding liberal arts colleges in the past ten years has been less the questions being raised or the pessimistic predictions being offered regarding their survival, than the evidence provided by many observers that there has been "a new and disturbing response on the part of the institutions themselves." It appeared that the response has been primarily to the demands of the market, rather than to the necessity of evaluating the special needs that were unique to the institution's liberal arts philosophy. Stadtman (1980) related the trend toward increasing comprehensiveness among historically undergraduate liberal arts institutions. In an all-out effort to provide a broader spectrum of academic offerings for the purpose of attracting a larger and more diverse applicant pool, these liberal arts institutions have added graduate programs and have expanded into professional and vocational preparation, at a substantial loss to the liberal arts mission. The major threat to independent liberal arts colleges would seem, then, to be not the economic conditions nor the demographic trends, but rather, as Pfnister and Finkelstein (1984) believed, the institutions

themselves--in their loss of a sense of their historic mission, in the process of attempting to accommodate the current demands of the market.

The diminishing emphasis that liberal arts institutions have placed on a liberal arts education has had a profound effect on how today's students view education. The current dilemma that students have been facing is one of selection: whether to embrace the idea of a broad-based, liberal educational experience, or to succumb to the pressures of the competitive world of work, and specialize in a professional or vocational area. The ways in which individual liberal arts colleges define and deal with the challenges facing them during critical periods will determine, to a great degree, not whether the institution will survive as an entity, but whether it will survive with its liberal arts mission uncompromised.

The purpose of this study was to investigate current perceptions of directors of admissions and academic deans at five small, independent, liberal arts institutions in the Piedmont Triad area of North Carolina, to interpret qualitatively how they defined the current challenges facing their institutions and their liberal arts mission, why they felt they were experiencing these challenges, and how they were responding to them.

Chaffee's (1984) models of strategic management were used as a guide to determine whether the institutions in the study

were incorporating adaptive or interpretive strategies, or a combination of the two, in an effort to respond to the challenges facing them in the 1980s.

#### Limitations of the Study

It was recognized that this study represented the perceptions of a limited number of administrators at five small, independent, liberal arts institutions, located within a specific geographical area of the state of North Carolina. The results did not yield generalized conclusions, which a larger sampling might have shown. The majority of the conclusions were interpretive and dealt with qualitative analysis, representing a personal perspective by the interviewees.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### The State of Small, Independent, Liberal Arts Colleges

There has been much concern and significant research in the past few years regarding the ability of independent institutions, especially small liberal arts colleges, to withstand the pressures brought on by economic conditions, enrollment declines, and demographic swings. The focus of most of the research has been on identifying the basic difficulties facing these institutions and prescribing a variety of strategies, in an effort to overcome the perceived decline.

Astin and Lee (1972) selected the term "invisible colleges" to describe the relative obscurity and lack of community concern for these small, private institutions. They felt it was possible to define the visibility of an institution in terms of its academic selectivity of students and its relative enrollment size. Their profile of the typical invisible college was one that is private, which receives limited state and federal support, and whose financial resources are minimal. Unlike elite private colleges, whose popularity and saga sanction high tuition, and public institutions, whose tuition is low, the invisible colleges are caught between the two and constantly struggle to compete.

To this profile of institutions facing difficulties, Jencks and Reisman (1977) added small, church-related colleges whose traditionally lower-middle-class clientele have found the increasing cost of attendance a financial burden, and black institutions whose traditional, first-generation, lower-income constituency increasingly selected publicly subsidized commuter colleges to attend. Astin and Lee (1972) stated that about half of all black institutions in the United States are private colleges, and of these, all but the two largest (with over 2,500 students) also characterize invisible colleges.

Lupton, Augenblick, and Heyison (1976, p. 23) concluded that there was a significant difference between the financial health of public institutions and private institutions. In their study, almost 78% of the 1,053 private schools which provided financial information fell into the "relatively unhealthy" category (59.5%) or the "unhealthy" category (27.1%). In comparison, 82% of the 1,110 public schools participating in the study were categorized as either "relatively healthy" (34.4%) or "healthy" (48.1%). (See Table 2.) These institutions were ranked on a scale of relative health, generated from 16 primary financial variables that the researchers felt were among the most reliable indicators. The results of this study illustrated the situation of the majority of private colleges and universities. As in the previously cited studies, Lupton et al.

TABLE 2

a

Financial Condition of Institutions by Control

---

private = xxx (n = 1,053)

public = ooo (n = 1,110)

				59.5%			
				xxxx			
				xxxx			
				xxxx			
				xxxx			
				xxxx			
				xxxx			
48.1%				xxxx			
oooo				xxxx			
oooo				xxxx			
oooo				xxxx			
oooo				xxxx			
oooo	34.4%			xxxx			
oooo	oooo			xxxx			
oooo	oooo			xxxx			
oooo	oooo			xxxx			27.1%
oooo	oooo			xxxx			xxxx
oooo	oooo			xxxx			xxxx
oooo	oooo			xxxx			xxxx
oooo	oooo			xxxx	11.1%		xxxx
oooo	oooo		10%	xxxx	oooo		xxxx
oooo	oooo		xxxx	xxxx	oooo		xxxx
oooo	oooo		xxxx	4%	oooo		xxxx
oooo	2.4%	oooo	xxxx	oooo	oooo		xxxx
1%	oooo	xxxx	oooo	xxxx	oooo		xxxx
xxxx	oooo	xxxx	oooo	xxxx	oooo		oooo
				xxxx	oooo		oooo

----- healthy institutions	----- relatively healthy institutions	----- stable institutions	----- relatively unhealthy institutions	----- unhealthy institutions
----------------------------------	--	---------------------------------	--	------------------------------------

When compared with the publicly supported institutions, the condition of most private colleges and universities has dramatically worsened.

a  
Adapted from Lupton, Augenblick, and Heyison (1976, p. 24).

concluded that a heavy dependence on tuition revenues placed private institutions in a precarious position, one that was made even more uncertain because of the inability to attract a sufficient number of students who were able to attend without substantial amounts of financial assistance. As William Jellema (1973, p. xi) pointed out:

As tuition increases, so must direct student aid; and since tuition is a major source of student aid funds, as student aid increases, so must tuition. This spiral is an outstanding reason for the deficit in the current accounts of many private institutions. At many of these private colleges and universities, the difference between income and expenditure in the student aid account is precisely the deficit in the operating budget.

Mayhew (1979), in Surviving the Eighties, described four types of institutions that are the most likely to face serious difficulties during the next decade. He based these assumptions on declining enrollment figures, increased operation and tuition costs, and subsequently reduced revenues. The four types of institutions least likely to withstand these challenging conditions, according to Mayhew, are (1) the small, little-known liberal arts college with an enrollment of under 1,000 students and little or no endowment and whose financial aid is provided out of the school's operating budget; (2) the private, single-sex, two-year institution, especially women's finishing schools and all-male military academies; (3) the small, recently created private institution, established to serve a unique clientele or promote a special concentration such as business, secretarial, or cos-

metology; and (4) the middle level, private, urban university, typically the inner-city commuter type of institution.

While the preceding studies present a somewhat premonitory outlook for small independent institutions, a number of authors have envisioned a more optimistic perspective. West (1982) believed that there were three reasons why small independent colleges tended to be singled out as those institutions least likely to succeed during the 1980s. First, he felt that those educators who typically published articles relating to the survival of small institutions tended to be associated with large research universities, and for this reason found it "easier to point to jeopardy and to predict decline" for institutions other than their own (p. 15). Second, he felt that small institutions have a lower status within the higher educational hierarchy, and the overall quality of these institutions was implicitly questioned. Third, because of their small size, independent colleges are more vulnerable than larger public institutions to economic forces, mismanagement, and changes in federal and state funding. While admitting that small colleges do face many problems, West believed, as did Bowen and Minter (1975, p. 78), that small private colleges, "even though not highly prosperous," are still surviving, regardless of the dire predictions to the contrary.

A 1982 study by the Council of Independent Colleges found that approximately 500 small, independent colleges,

which were included in the research, were addressing their problems in a realistic fashion, and were developing creative uses of their assets (Quehl, 1982). West (1982) and Caffrey (1985) pointed to many positive aspects of small independent colleges not generally considered among the quantifiable measures used by many educational researchers to study the problem. For example, West directed attention to the sense of community pride and loyalty which provides many small colleges with a strong support base not generally observable by outsiders. Caffrey felt that because these independent schools are autonomous and appoint their trustees with minimal political involvement, this lends a stabilizing influence to the institution and avoids the standardization of policy, which is more typically found in larger state colleges and institutions. Further, because of their degree of independence, these small schools are in a position to be more flexible and adaptable to educational trends than those in the public sector, another factor favoring their survival.

#### Forces of Change Affecting Small, Liberal Arts Colleges

The changes under way in higher education have arisen fundamentally from changes in society that have been great in number and imposing in scope. Universities and colleges have been faced with a broad spectrum of economic, educational, social, and political problems. These appeared more formidable than those experienced in the past, and even greater

challenges are being predicted for the future. Small, independent, liberal arts institutions seemed to be among the most vulnerable in terms of general unfavorable conditions.

Possibly the first, and one of the most important, trends to be felt by small institutions is the declining number of traditionally aged (18-to 22-year-old) students. According to Kerr and Gade (1981), because of declining birth rates since 1960, the number of young people in this age group will drop about 23% between 1978 and 1993. Further, differential birth rates among minority groups mean that blacks and Hispanics are an increasing proportion of this traditional age group, which has in the past represented only a small percentage of students who have attended college (Kerr & Gade, 1981; Heger, 1982).

During the 1970s, Sidney Marland, as U. S. Commissioner of Education, became a strong and articulate voice for career education. Formal enrollment was diverted from liberal arts programs and shifted significantly toward community colleges, preprofessional schools, and vocational/technical schools, as an increasing number of young people, faced with escalating unemployment, sought short-term education for job preparation (Gardner, 1976; Stadtman, 1981).

The change in the Selective Service law in 1973, which ended the draft, has necessitated a greater recruitment effort by the military, and has further depleted the number of eligible college-aged students. Kerr and Gade (1981) also

pointed out that women and older students, groups which are increasingly pursuing higher education, tend to enroll in college on a part-time basis and are generally attracted to community colleges and comprehensive universities, rather than four-year liberal arts institutions. Because of the increasing diversity of the clientele of higher education--greater disparity of aptitudes, abilities, motivations, and expectations--schools will be forced to provide a greater variety of student services to meet these contrasting needs. Only a few years ago, institutions operated under the assumption that educational opportunities for the poor, the educationally disadvantaged, and ethnic minorities could be satisfied simply by offering them the same programs, resources, and services that had been offered in previous years to the average, middle-class student. This assumption has proved to be false, and those institutions that are unable or unwilling to provide for these special needs find themselves on the losing end in terms of attracting and retaining students (Gardner, 1976). Many small, independent institutions find themselves unable to provide the programs and services for atypical groups because of their preoccupation with budgetary constraints and limited operating capital.

According to Jellema (1973, p. ix), private higher education has experienced a financial crisis of great magnitude. These institutions have had special problems--income, student financial aid, operating capital from

tuition--which did not affect public institutions as adversely. "The fiscal problems of private institutions are more acute and their consequences more stark and immediate."

The Reagan Administration's policies have directly contributed to the financial problems facing many independent colleges. During his first term in office, President Reagan urged that student benefits of dependent children on social security be phased out, along with veterans' educational benefits. As a part of the President's 1986 budget proposal, loans to dependent students from families earning less than \$32,500 would be restricted; no student would be allowed to receive more than \$4,000 annually in federal loans and grants; Pell Grants, which provided students with up to \$1,900 annually, would be limited to students from families with an income of \$25,000 or less. According to some sources, more than 460,000 students may be affected by income limits on such guaranteed loans. An American Council of Education analysis further stated that 41% of dependent undergraduate students attending private colleges, who received guaranteed student loans in fiscal 1983-84, came from families with incomes above \$30,000, and most will not be eligible for loans under the new proposal (Engelgau, 1985). William Friday (1985), president of the University of North Carolina system, stated that if this proposal to cut financial aid were successful, it would deny many students a college education.

If Reagan succeeds...many students will no longer be able to meet the high cost of attending private colleges. Lower-cost public colleges, already at or near their enrollment limits, will not be able to accept these students without displacing others. ...The net effect would be to deny a college education to some students and to threaten the survival of some private colleges (p. B2).

It appeared that Jellema (1973) was correct when he stated that the student aid deficit would be, to a certain degree, a consequence of the response of private higher education to meet the needs of the disadvantaged. Conversely, many independent institutions have been unable to meet the financial needs of the middle class, which has been their major constituency. The trend suggests that only the very wealthy or the very poor may be able to attend a private college or university in the future.

Jellema (1973) further stated that as tuition increases, direct student aid must also increase; and because tuition has been a primary source of student aid funds, as financial aid decreases, so must tuition. However, small, independent institutions have been unable to reduce tuition. A considerable portion of their operating costs has been fixed and does not vary directly with the number of students enrolled. Maintenance of the physical plant, administrative costs, and certain services continue to be ongoing expenses (Kerr & Gade, 1981). In a study by Millett (1979), it was estimated that only one-fourth to one-third of the average institution's operational cost could be considered to be variable; the remainder is fixed or semi-variable. Small institutions,

specifically those with enrollments of less than 500 students, have a high fixed cost per student, and as a result, are vulnerable to enrollment declines. A decrease in enrollment means that the cost per remaining student rises more precipitously than in larger institutions (Jellema, 1973).

Other factors that are related to enrollment such as the number of faculty are difficult to decrease in the short term because of the need to staff most programs on at least a minimal basis. Contractual or tenure agreements with faculty and administrators make reductions difficult (Kerr & Gade, 1981).

#### Changing Liberal Arts

Originally, liberal arts was defined by its exclusive emphasis on those areas of knowledge which were believed to possess intrinsic and not merely instrumental value (Smythe, 1979). Aristotle felt that instrumental or "mechanical" subjects, especially those associated with "all wage-earning occupations," were "illiberal." He stated that "they allow the mind no leisure; they drag it down to a lower level." Liberal studies, on the other hand, "form part of education solely with a view to the right employment of leisure." (Burnett, 1903, p. 108). Kimball (1981), however, argued that Aristotle believed that some "useful" studies could also be liberal, and vice versa, depending on the actual intentions involved; that as long as one focused on "unseen ends" rather

than on specific ends, and could answer affirmatively to the question, "Do they prepare the mind for further reflection, for higher contemplation of truth?", then the studies could be determined to be "liberal" (pp. 289-290).

Benezet (1970) gave a definition of liberal arts that many people ascribe to: one that was primarily concerned with liberating the individual from fear of himself, fear of others, and from fear and ignorance of his world. It was concerned with the breadth and depth of ideas, with a variety of interests, and with adjusting to a universe of ever-increasing complexity. A liberal arts college is concerned with achieving growth inside the mind and spirit of each student--"less concerned with the right answers in life than with the right questions." (p. 54).

Peters (1978) believed that there were at least two alternative interpretations of "liberal education" in widespread use. One of these used the phrase "liberal education" as an equivalent to general education, suggesting that the liberal arts were those disciplines which developed the "well-rounded person." The other interpretation was that the word "liberal" suggested that a curriculum would be "freeing" or "liberating."

McGrath (1959) identified what he considered to be the prime purposes of a liberal education: (1) to provide a comprehensive body of knowledge in the major branches of learning: in physical sciences, social sciences, and humani-

ties, including the fine arts; (2) to cultivate the skills of reasoning and communication; and (3) to nurture the traits of mind and spirit which characterize those who understand themselves and the roles they play in the complex physical and social environment in which they live. The value of this type of education rests in its intrinsic nature.

The philosophy of this country has been based on a pragmatic perspective; generally, individuals determine the value of things by their utility. Possibly, this orientation emanated from early settlers, for whom practical solutions to problems were crucial to their survival. According to Kimball (1981, pp. 288-289), Benjamin Franklin very early clearly made a distinction between "ornamental studies" (the "classicks") and "useful studies," the latter of which he attempted to elevate, even though they were less emphasized in the curriculum at that time.

The standardized curriculum of liberal arts underwent little change until after the Civil War, when about 1875, increasing numbers of professional courses of study were added. At first, new studies consisted of individual courses, such as accounting or newswriting; as time passed, courses developed into whole curricula, with degree programs in business administration or journalism (McGrath, 1958).

After the turn of the century, a basic change began in most liberal arts institutions. Increasingly, they became preoccupied with more specialized knowledge, and gave less

and less attention to the broader purposes of understanding, cultivating the skills of reasoning, and nurturing a "reasoned philosophy of life essential to effective living." (McGrath, 1959, pp. 7-8). As McGrath and Russell (1958, p. 12) succinctly pointed out,

The arresting fact is that the programs of even the most conservative liberal arts colleges have been revolutionized in the past several decades through the addition of programs with specific vocational objectives.

According to Morgan (1968, p. 8), there appeared to be a pervasive tendency to apply scientific tools and techniques to almost any subject, on the assumption that scientific and rational modes of understanding were more valid than "pure rationalism" and the attempt to gain knowledge by thought alone. O'Kane (1983) viewed these directions being taken by many liberal arts institutions as being less liberating and more "enthraling" for both the teacher and the learner, and listed four dangers associated with the tendency of institutions to move away from liberal education: (1) the increased emphasis on specialized disciplines brings about a decrease in interdependence, which is at the very core of a holistic approach to education; (2) disciplines which are expected to respond to short-term, pragmatic, and utilitarian purposes begin to supersede the more intellectual, reflective aspects of knowledge for a lifetime; (3) the increased tendency toward "summarily and systematically" packaged disciplines ignores the broader understanding that is essential in a

liberal arts curriculum; and (4) those who possess the specific disciplines might use them to "capture, inhibit, and limit" their audiences, because their specialized and proprietary interests fail to distinguish knowledge from understanding.

Blocher and Rapoza (1981) believed that part of the present crisis in higher education emanates precisely from O'Kane's caveats listed above. The goals of personal and intellectual development, which many institutions claim they are advocating, are generally not foremost in most students' minds. According to Fenske and Scott (1973), despite the protest of institutions to the contrary, most students and their families continue to perceive a college education as a means to status and financial security.

The decision to attend college most often represents a desire to obtain the benefits of membership in the professional and managerial occupations of our industrial and technological society (p. 102).

With the present economic conditions and high unemployment rates, many doubts have been raised regarding the capacity of the economy to meet the professional and vocational aspirations of most college students. In the eyes of many students, the Great American Dream promised by society that higher education would produce, has turned into a nightmare. Zerhing (1975, pp 34-35) called this reaction "rejection shock" and characterized it as "the major psychological theme of contemporary college life." Blocher and Rapoza

(1981, p. 222) felt that the best way to counteract this "rejection shock" was with a "healthier, more realistic, more intellectually honest approach to vocational development," rather than the very limited vocational and professional perspectives that attracted so many students to colleges in the first place.

The position taken by O'Kane (1983) was not totally against the notion of specialization in a vocational or professional discipline, itself. What he believed to be significant was a concern and commitment with the whole, which was the justification for the examination of the parts.

#### Adaptations to Forces of Change

The previous sections of this chapter have dealt with an array of challenges facing small, independent, liberal arts colleges. This section will focus on the perceptions of institutional administrators regarding the critical problem of increasing enrollment, and where upward expectations have been met, how to maintain income and expenditures.

According to Mayhew (1979), enrollment is related to the institution's broad mission, but not necessarily to its specific statement of purpose and goals. Most small schools have a particular clientele which they have traditionally served, but because of a variety of environmental and economic factors, many of these institutions have been forced to compromise their purposes or goals to varying degrees in order to remain solvent.

Williams (1980) offered 102 suggestions for enrollment success at the college or university level, based on practical schemes which he found effective enough to result in a tripling of enrollment under his direction at a Virginia college from 1974-79. Examples of the adaptive types of tactics he proposed are the following:

- advise adjunct faculty members that the promotion of their courses was to be a part of their academic responsibilities;

- establish a tourist information center on the college campus to promote the school and to develop public relations;

- enroll prospective students at the time of the admissions interview.

The inclusion of the personal interests and needs of students within his enrollment strategy was conspicuously absent, as it was in a similar study on enrollment management by Kreutner and Godfrey (1980).

Druesne, Harvey, and Zavoda (1980) concentrated on college mailing techniques, which can assist admissions offices in shaping their applicant pool and influencing who applies to their institution. The key strategies dealt with how to campaign most effectively to attract better candidates through specific manipulation, sorting, and selection techniques, such as the following:

- mailings targeted to specific geographical areas;

- ideas for preparing the most effective literature in

order to "sell" the school to both students and parents;

- suggestions for effective timing in the correspondence with students and parents;

- follow-up correspondence by means of designated letters from faculty members, athletic representatives, and other key college officials.

The article presented the author's suggestions in a purely business-like manner, again making no reference to the individual or personal needs of students.

A similar approach by Merante (1980) dealt with the ways in which direct marketing techniques in admissions can help to alleviate drastic cost-cutting and cancellation of academic programs, which many institutions, especially small colleges, have experienced in the last few years. The key to Merante's suggestions included careful planning and budgeting, tight control of resources, and thorough evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The primary goal of this marketing technique was to identify and reach the appropriate students who best matched the needs of the institution.

Ripple (1979) made a number of suggestions as to how small institutions might join in a consortium effort for the purpose of developing a more efficient system of operations to

- train admissions counselors in effective interview techniques and other methods of staff development;

- pool institutional resources in a joint effort to host

programs for high school counselors in order that they may gain information about each institution;

- develop a common admissions application for the purpose of reducing individual institutional costs. Ripple felt that if small schools would join together, they would have a better chance of exploring the many solutions to common problems.

Murphy and McGarrity (1978) believed that because visits to high schools by institutional admissions representatives are expensive, time-consuming activities, the cost could be made more effective if special attention were paid to the criteria of past recruiting success such as geographical location, academic reputation, established personal ties, and size of the high school.

Mayhew (1979) felt that the most important recruiting concept was institutional positioning. This was a plan whereby an institution sets itself apart from other institutions by emphasizing a special characteristic that would appeal to at least one segment of eligible college students. Kotler (1976) described four steps involved in college positioning: (1) The administration should be aware of how the institution is being perceived by the public. (2) Alternative positions should be studied. (3) The most promising long-term position should be selected. (4) A strategy to accomplish the selected position should be put into force.

Mayhew (1979) offered 319 suggestions that institutions

may choose from to increase income and decrease expenditures.

A sampling of these suggestions are listed below:

- invest part of endowment in operating businesses and oil properties for a higher return;

- charge students full cost for psychiatric or psychological services;

- initiate door-to-door canvassing by students to raise large sums of money;

- replace faculty who leave or retire with lower-ranked staff or teaching assistants;

- employ more part-time evening faculty who are not entitled to fringe benefits;

- reduce campus health care staff by using community hospitals, clinics, and physicians;

- convert some scholarships to long-term loans;

- replace flower beds with grass or bushes;

- buy cheaper equipment;

- allow a department to create a new course only by dropping an old course;

- reduce the hours of library service; close the library on Friday and Saturday nights.

Stadtman (1981) suggested that institutions, in an effort to seek out new types of students, engage in some of the following activities:

- add more professional departments or schools, the most frequent being in business, engineering, nursing, and other

health-related fields;

- reduce educational programs because of the decreasing job market for teachers;

- offer high-level degrees for short-term specialized and professional programs in occupational fields;

- experiment with new curricula, new calendars, and new academic technologies, in order to match the needs of new types of students;

- hire more parttime instructors, drawn from practitioners employed by local business and industry in nearby communities.

It seemed apparent that the majority of approaches taken by institutions of higher education to meet environmental and economic challenges primarily utilized the adaptive model of strategic management as posited by Chaffee (1984). Institutions experiencing many difficulties appeared to focus their attention mainly toward pragmatic, "quick fix" types of solutions. Interpretive strategies were substantially less represented in the current literature.

Willingham (1980) presented one of the few articles which dealt primarily with the personal concerns of students. Rather than evaluating prospective students solely on traditional competency-based methods, the author called for an increased use of personal, humanistic methods of evaluation. More attention would be paid to the following:

- special qualities and talents that may be evidenced in

nonacademic activities, otherwise not reflected in general academic measures such as scientific or technical skills, bilingualism, and music abilities;

- students who evidence the drive and initiative that special programs often require;

- students whose extracurricular skills can serve special roles within the institution such as the recruitment of quarterbacks for the football team or piccolo players for the orchestra;

- students who are likely to experience effective personal development because their stated goals and expectations correspond with the university's overall environment and programs.

Willingham felt that these personal qualities represented a variety of factors which could be considered by institutions which were willing to look broadly at the admissions function.

Some recruiting practices presently being used by a number of institutions were difficult to categorize as either adaptive or interpretive strategies of management. An example of this is the policy of open admissions. Rees (1976) adopted a humanistic philosophy regarding open admissions, and felt that this procedure offered a number of students from low socioeconomic groups and ethnic minorities an opportunity to experience the type of higher education that has historically favored young, academically prepared students from upper- and middle-income groups. An institution

that encouraged an exploration of the needs and potentials of young people, regardless of their background, would probably be viewed as one which incorporates the essential elements of Chaffee's interpretive model. However, another institution, using a similar open admissions policy, may have another goal in mind than the democratic ideal of helping deserving students, regardless of their backgrounds. If their primary motive was to increase revenue by enrolling students, regardless of their academic credentials or potential, then it would appear that this approach would more closely resemble an adaptive model of management.

Whatever methods small institutions used to adapt to change, a reliance on totally adaptive strategies would, in all probability, result in temporary, superficial solutions to complex problems (Jonsen, 1984). Such problems require more in-depth, profound answers in order that each institution may, as Rees (1976) stated, assess where its best contributions would lie in view of its history, its resources, its commitments, and the community it served. According to Keller (1983), the future of small, liberal arts colleges depends on their recognizing that their survivability rests with their willingness to evaluate their individual circumstances realistically, and to incorporate rational strategic planning based on both adaptive and interpretive behavior.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Selection of the Sample

The criteria for selecting the five colleges for this study were based on a number of similarities between these schools:

- All the institutions are small, four-year, independent, church-affiliated, liberal arts colleges, with a full time enrollment of less than 1,300 students.
- The institutions selected for this study are located in the Piedmont Triad of North Carolina, within close proximity to each other, and, in many ways, are competing for an increasingly limited applicant pool.
- As small educational institutions, all are more likely than most state-supported institutions to be adversely affected by major federal reductions in financial aid and special support programs.
- All institutions have made adjustments and changes in admissions strategies, beginning in the 1970's, brought about by a declining traditionally aged applicant pool and increasing operational expenditures.
- All institutions are well-established, having been in existence for more than 60 years.
- All institutions have been affected by financial aid reductions brought about by the economic and fiscal

- policies of the Reagan administration.
- All offer preprofessional and vocational programs of study and have cooperative programs with graduate and professional institutions.
  - All of the institutions have varying degrees of state and regional recognition; however, none is nationally well-known.

#### Definition of Terms

Academic Dean: Chief academic officer, responsible for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of all employees of educational programs; supervisor of curriculum development; in small schools, may also be responsible for preparing, recommending, and administering budgets for educational programs.

Director of Admissions: Chief administrative officer in the Office of Admissions, responsible for recruiting, interviewing, evaluating, and selecting prospective students for enrollment into the institution; works in conjunction with faculty and administrators for the purpose of maintaining strong cohesiveness within the college community; in many institutions, the Admissions Office is also concerned with student retention.

Liberal arts: Studies in a college or university, intended to provide general knowledge (e.g., language, philosophy, history, literature, abstract science), and to develop

general intellectual capacities such as reason and judgment as opposed to specialized professional or vocational skills.

Liberal arts core: A specific number of required liberal arts courses within the institutional curriculum.

Liberal arts school: An institution which specifically sets as its main philosophy a commitment to the liberal arts. A non-liberal arts school would refer to an institution which focuses on professional and/or vocational areas. These institutions are either comprehensive, and offer a broad selection of courses and majors such as found in community colleges or large universities or are very specific and cater to a narrow specialization such as a school of business or a school of cosmetology.

Minority students: In this dissertation, racial minorities, rather than other minority groups such as women or handicapped.

Preprofessional studies: Fields of endeavor leading to the pursuit of a professional area of study, and requiring additional schooling beyond the undergraduate degree (e.g., prelaw, premedicine, predentistry, etc.)

Professional studies: Fields of endeavor leading to the pursuit of a particular specialization for the purpose of earning a livelihood (e.g., nursing, engineering, business administration, accounting).

Saga: Refers to a special kind of feeling or sentiment, historical or otherwise, which has over the years become

embodied within the character of an institution. An institution can have either a positive or a negative saga.

#### Description of the Sample

The following profiles were based on information from each institution's college bulletin and from personal interviews and observations. The names of the institutions were not used for several reasons. First, it was not the intention of this study to point out any shortcomings of either the administrators or the colleges by publicizing their personal beliefs and opinions. Second, the objective of the study was not to expose specific inadequacies in any one institution or to be judgmental regarding their operational procedures or policies. The five colleges used in the study, in many ways, typify other small institutions that face similar problems, and for that reason, the names were irrelevant.

#### College "A"

College "A", founded in 1837 by a religious organization, is located several miles west of a large Piedmont city. The 300-acre campus is attractively reminiscent of a rural setting, with many trees and spacious grounds, offset by buildings designed in the Georgian Colonial tradition. All of the buildings have been restored or renovated in the past fifteen years. Its full time enrollment is 1,050 students, with about 900 living on campus. About 54% of the total

student body is male and 46% is female. Only 40% of the students who attend College "A" are from North Carolina; the rest represent students from 30 other states and 31 foreign countries. Even though College "A" is associated with a specific religious group, only 9% of the total enrollment is of College "A"'s denomination. In many ways, College "A" represents the typical, small, independent, liberal arts college.

The Director of Admissions at College "A" identified two aspects which distinguish it from all other liberal arts colleges. One aspect of College "A"'s saga is the deliberate diversity on the campus, the result of the concerted effort to attract students from a variety of different cultures and geographical locations. Another distinguishing feature is the unique administrative tradition of the institution's religious body, which gives students an opportunity to participate in academic life and in the governance of the college. The size of the institution, with 83 full-time faculty members and a faculty/student ratio of 1 to 16, further offers a good academic setting for students interested in close, individualized attention.

College "A" offers financial aid to about 65% of its students; this includes the North Carolina Legislative Tuition Grant, which is available to all in-state residents attending private institutions. Further, the college offers

a publicized endowed scholarship to "academically talented" students.

#### College "B"

College "B" was founded over 200 years ago by a religious group, exclusively for the education of females. Located on 57 acres in a large urban community, the immaculate grounds and village atmosphere convey the wholesome traditional values which the founding fathers revered.

The all-female student body of 708 students represents 24 states and 8 foreign countries; approximately 336 are from out of state.

College "B"'s saga dates back to its founding in 1772, as one of the few schools for women. Continuing in that tradition, College "B" today represents to many the idea of an elite finishing school for women.

Approximately 50% of College "B"'s students receive financial assistance, with an average award of \$4,400 per student.

#### College "C"

College "C", founded in 1924, and affiliated with the United Methodist Church, is located in a residential area of a city of approximately 75,000. Situated on 75 acres of land, 50 acres of which were donated by the city, the campus consists of both old and new structures in a closely knit, clustered setting. Typical of many small, independent

colleges throughout the country, the architecture and setting are sturdy and utilitarian, but unremarkable.

College "C" has no distinctive saga, but attempts to capitalize on its family atmosphere and Christian values. The student body consists of 603 men and 663 women from 30 states and 10 foreign countries.

Recently beset by high-level administrative problems and the subsequent turn over of a number of faculty members and administrators, College "C" has been seeking greater institutional stability through new leadership.

Approximately two-thirds of College "C"'s students receive some type of financial assistance. Scholarships of \$4,000 to \$6,000 are awarded annually to incoming freshmen who exhibit outstanding scholarship, leadership, and citizenship.

#### College "D"

College "D" was founded in 1873 by the Methodist Episcopal Church as a co-educational institution, through the inspiration of newly emancipated slaves. The college was re-organized in 1926, when it became a senior college for women. Separated from the downtown area of a major North Carolina city by the Norfolk and Southern railroad tracks, College "D" is a small, isolated, private college, occupying 38 acres of land. All of the buildings on campus are externally well-kept; however, there are a number of remodeling needs ap-

parent inside many of the buildings. The general atmosphere at College "D" is reminiscent of the dignity for which the college was noted during the 1940's and 50's.

The current enrollment is 555 full-time students; 90% are dormitory residents. Approximately 55% of the students are from out of state, primarily from South Carolina, the Delaware Valley, Philadelphia, Delaware, New York, Washington D. C., New Jersey, and Maryland. North Carolina students are primarily from Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and cities in the eastern part of the state.

According to the Director of Admissions, College "D" in the past was recognized as the "Vassar of the South" for black women, preparing young women for professional careers, as well as developing women who could articulate on different levels and were endowed with the "proper manners" in different situations. Even though times and students change, College "D" still capitalizes on the past image of the black "Southern Belle." In maintaining this tradition, the institution still requires its students to observe a curfew and to comport themselves in a manner befitting the image of the college.

Eighty-five percent of the students at College "D" receive financial aid, and 25 scholarships, based on academic merit, are offered to new students annually.

#### College "E"

College "E", a four-year liberal arts college, was

founded by Methodists in 1838 specifically for women, and is the second oldest Methodist college in the South. It has been co-educational since 1953, with 40% men and 60% women. The campus presents an attractive, closely knit atmosphere. Located in a major Piedmont city in North Carolina, the campus nevertheless gives one the feeling of seclusion, largely due to the thoughtful utilization of available space. The student body of 550 students is comprised of 525 full-time students, 80% of whom live on campus. Approximately 40% of the student body are from out of state, primarily from Virginia, the New York metropolitan area, New Jersey, south and west Florida, Maryland, and other states on the Eastern seaboard.

The perceived saga of College "E" is somewhat nebulous; the Director of Admissions felt that the closest she could come to describing the present saga was the personal attention that the institution gives to its students. She admitted that this is not a unique characteristic among small, liberal arts colleges, primarily because most indicate the same concern. One of the foremost selling points is the fact that College "E" is located "in the number one city in the United States." It is stressed at all times that the philosophy of the institution is not to train students for jobs, but rather to educate and prepare them for lifetime experiences.

About 73% of the students at College "E" receive financial assistance. The school offers two academic

scholarships, valued at \$2,000 each per year, renewable for the four years, based on Scholastic Aptitude Tests, grade point average, and class rank. Approximately 40 other scholarships up to \$2,000 are awarded annually, as well.

(See Appendices A, B, C, and D for further data.)

#### Data Collection

Data were collected through a series of in-depth interviews with the directors of admissions and academic deans of each institution in the study. The interviews focused on the perceptions of each administrator regarding problems and challenges related to the liberal arts mission and philosophy of each school, why they felt they were experiencing these challenges, and how they were responding to them. The study limited the interviews to admissions directors and academic deans for the following reasons:

- In a small institution, admissions directors and academic deans are the two administrators most directly concerned with recruitment and retention efforts.
- As the chief academician, the academic dean represents the academic community's philosophy of education, a philosophy which the director of admissions must understand and reflect when representing the institution to prospective students and their parents.
- The academic dean of a small institution must be cognizant of admissions trends more than any other adminis-

trator, except the director of admissions, and must be prepared to reflect these trends in the curriculum.

- There must be close cooperation between the admissions office and the academic dean's office regarding the type of students that the admissions office is recruiting and the type of students the academic community desires to teach.

The following questions and topics for discussion were used as guidelines and were not intended to represent a structured, quantitative approach to the issues. The purpose of the interviews was to solicit open, unstructured dialogues based on each subject's opinions and philosophies. According to Rist (1982, p. 440), the most powerful way to understand any situation is to "watch, talk, listen, and participate" with people in their own environment. The personal reactions of the subjects to their experiences enables the reader to develop a perspective of the challenges facing them as small college administrators.

Direct observations were made on each campus, and included occasional random conversations with passing students. The impressions of individuals in the community were also solicited regarding their perceptions of the five schools.

Additional sources consulted included each institution's informational literature such as catalogs, bulletins, view-books, and pamphlets.

The following questions were used to promote open

discussion with the subjects of the interviews. They were intended to be unstructured and were sometimes asked differently than they are stated below, in an effort to draw out personal opinions and viewpoints:

1. Would you briefly state your philosophy of education as it relates to your position as director of admissions/academic dean?
2. How do you feel this philosophy ties in with the liberal arts mission of your institution?
3. What is your definition of liberal arts?
4. In your opinion, what does it mean to this institution to be liberal arts?
5. Have you had to compromise your liberal arts philosophy in any way in order to maintain your enrollment? If so, explain.
6. In your opinion, what are the most serious challenges facing your school in terms of recruiting students? What do you think are the causes of these challenges? What role does a liberal arts focus play?
7. What is your office doing to meet these challenges?
8. In your opinion, what kind of educational programs are students looking for when they enroll in your institution?
9. How do you justify your liberal arts focus to a prospective student who is looking for practical preparation for the world of work? (Have you made any concessions in course or program offerings to satisfy these practical

concerns?)

10. What do you feel is happening to liberal arts today?

Do you think it is attractive to students? Why/why not?

11. Do you see any current trends in higher education that are now affecting or may soon affect the liberal arts mission of your institution?

In addition, all or some of the following background questions were asked in order to gain further insight into the characteristics of the institutions in the study.

1. What changes have you noticed in your applicant pool in the past five years?
2. Do you feel your institution has a special characteristic or quality, historical or otherwise, which may play a role in attracting students?
3. What services, if any, has your school established to maintain or improve retention?
4. Have you established special or alternative programs for atypical groups (e.g., learning disabilities, remedial programs, tutorial programs)?
5. How flexible are you regarding admissions standards?
6. How significant are transfer students with regard to your overall admissions efforts?
7. Do you experience any difficulty in attracting or enrolling minority students? If so, why do you think this is so?
8. What kind of students do you seek to attract to

your institution?

9. Are there academic majors not offered at your school that you feel would assist you in attracting additional students?

## CHAPTER IV

### INTERVIEWS

#### Introduction

Ten interviews with selected administrators from five small, independent, liberal arts institutions were included for this study. Directors of admissions and academic deans were selected from each institution, because those two administrators have, in the past, been most directly concerned with recruitment and retention efforts in a small college setting. The selection of directors of admissions was an obvious choice, but it was believed that academic deans, by virtue of their role as chief academic officers and spokesmen for the academic community's philosophy of education, represented an essential aspect of an institution's reaction to fluctuating trends. It was felt that the goals of the academic dean were most closely associated with that of the admissions office. The stability of the institution depends, in part, on the close coordination between those two administrators. If the admissions office promises programs or services which the academic community cannot deliver, or if the admissions staff represents an educational philosophy which is inconsistent with the philosophy that is in practice, the credibility of the college may be seriously jeopardized.

Conversations with the administrators focused on three major issues, already identified in the Review of the Litera-

ture:

1. What did they perceive to be the major challenges to their institutions?

2. What forces did they feel were contributing to these challenges?

3. How did they feel they were dealing with these challenges?

All ten administrators presented different philosophical perspectives; however, they all shared many administrative and academic experiences and concerns similar to those of the author of this study. For this reason, a rapport was easily established between them and the researcher, and conversations flowed smoothly, as one colleague to another. They appeared to feel that the researcher, for this reason, was empathetic to their concerns.

The setting for the interviews was in each administrator's office at his or her institution. It was felt that by meeting them in familiar surroundings, they would be relaxed and more willing to share their experiences. The collegiality was demonstrated in every case by virtue of their voluntarily sitting next to the researcher, rather than talking from behind their desks. This also helped the interviewer to relax and participate in the conversations.

The Director of Admissions at College "D" and the Academic Dean at College "E" were initially uncomfortable about being recorded, not knowing exactly how the interviews

would progress. Even though all administrators were given an overview of some of the questions to be discussed several weeks prior to the actual interview, the open-ended and topical nature of the questions, as well as other questions that were added as the conversations progressed, required a considerable amount of contemplation. However, the longer the conversations progressed, the more comfortable and at ease they all appeared to become.

The experience of the interviewer with the Director of Admissions at College "E" was unique. The interviews took place several weeks apart. During the first interview, she presented the perspective that gave the impression that College "E" was facing problems not atypical to other institutions of that size. However, between the first and the second interviews, she tendered her resignation, and the perspectives she presented during the second interview were expressed with greater candor. Because of the contrast between the two interviews, it was necessary to reexamine many of her statements on the first transcript. This experience necessitated a closer examination of some of the responses made by the other administrators.

The initial impressions of College "C" were changed considerably during visits and interviews with the administrators. From recent adverse publicity regarding leadership changes at the school, it was expected that both the Director of Admissions and the Academic Dean would be defensive and

evasive, possibly to the point of refusing to respond to the questions. What was found, instead, was a most pleasant atmosphere and complete cooperation and sincerity on the part of both administrators.

The order in which the interviews are presented was based on an interpretation of the degree of success that each institution was experiencing, the physical appearance of each institution, their publications, and the ways in which the general public perceived them. A more detailed comparison analysis will follow in Chapter V.

Interview with the Director of Admissions, College "A"

College "A"'s Director of Admissions appeared to be a well-informed, articulate administrator. Her comments were timely and to the point. She indicated that the most important of the challenges facing the institution were the in-state perceptions of the school's academic prestige. Outside of North Carolina, she believed that the liberal arts image of the college was viewed as being very strong; locally, however, there was a feeling that students selected College "A" when they were not accepted into other institutions. Currently, only 30% of the student body are in-state residents.

Alumni, particularly, think of us as a North Carolina College, and they ask all the time if we're doing what we should be doing with North Carolinians.

She felt that this was the result of their less stringent admissions standards, and not because of the quality of

education which students received at College "A".

A second important challenge, she felt, was to continue to attract academically talented students, who were seeking the kind of environment that was traditionally associated with College "A". This, in her opinion, would result only from making information about the institution easily available, so that prospective students would be familiar with what the school had to offer. In order to improve the image of the school, the admissions office has made an effort to refocus the slant of their publications.

I think [the publications] define the institution...You can see that it's very different from some [of our competitors]. They're all much bolder, colors--in fact, the only real color that we use is in the middle spread. But you can tell it's [College "A"]. You'd make no mistake. It's a real important thing for us.

A second strategy involved the personal contact that the school was attempting to make with certain segments of their constituency.

We've gone in and really looked at the schools in terms of what they produce for us...We ran lists and lists of high schools, to see which ones kept turning up, and then put our money into that. Then we looked at the whole map and said, "Ok, there'll be some decline over the next five years in our own state, in the number of high school graduates, but there will be some increases in other places, and where ought we to be going?" So we've started to go in those directions.

She felt that the procedure has been effective, because it had produced a 28% increase in the number of applications received in 1984. She also expected a 10% increase for 1985.

The Director of Admissions believed that College "A" possessed at least two special characteristics that play a significant role in attracting students to its campus. One is the deliberate effort to maintain diversity on campus. Students of different ethnic backgrounds, from varied geographical locations, and with different talents and interests, are recruited to meet this objective. The other characteristic she mentioned was the unique consensus of governance for which the institution's religious affiliation is known. Students play a significant role in the decision-making process, and this appeals to a certain segment of the eligible college-aged population.

Regarding the attitudes of the admissions office, the Director of Admissions indicated that her role was primarily to develop the proper "blend" between the students and the college--not only to maintain the kind of community that the college wants, but also to clarify that College "A" is the kind of community that the student wants. She believed that the meshing of the ideals of the students with those of the institution was a very important aspect of the liberal arts mission.

Her definition of liberal arts was very broad in scope: "The liberal arts mission is to help the student pull together information from a variety of sources and apply it to specific problems." Because her definition was so broad, she had no difficulty including, within the liberal

arts philosophy, programs of study not traditionally associated with a liberal education, such as accounting, administration of justice, and management. She pointed to the fact that since continuing education had been a part of the institution's programs for such a long time, their inclusion did not seem incongruent.

We emphasize the importance of a double major, or at least a strong minor, so that they might study management and economics, or management and psychology, or management and art, any number of things. The idea behind that, you really need other types of experience in order to grow in your own job. You're an accountant, you still need to know about other things. I don't [feel that there has been any compromise to liberal arts]. They still are also required to take quite a number of courses toward the degree that are liberal arts related.

Convincing students of the value of a liberal arts education has not been a major concern for the Director of Admissions. Because the majority of students, at the time of enrollment, indicates a preference for a business, technical, or professional specialty, College "A" assures them that those programs of study are available, but that they also include a substantial number of required core liberal arts disciplines. It was assumed that in due time, students would realize the value of a broad educational experience, and embrace the liberal arts philosophy.

Part of what we expect is that they will look around, that they will expose themselves to other things, and, in fact, more than half change. So that's something we know that they don't know, and they don't want to know that. . . . A decision is real important to a seventeen-year-old, or to any person, for that matter, and

so you don't want to jeopardize it too much, but you also want to say, "Well, the great thing here is if you decide to reach out in this direction, it probably won't mean changing colleges."

She had no difficulty in justifying a liberal arts focus to career-minded students and indicated that, basically, the decision was a matter of long-term versus short-term priorities. She gave as an example, a comparison of two people, one of whom pursues a purely technical program, and the other of whom combines the technical preparation with a broad-based liberal foundation. Although the former person, with the technical degree, may get a head start in terms of salary and position, his or her career "peaks earlier and then begins to plateau." Eventually, he must return to school for further preparation. On the other hand, the person who pursues the liberal arts/technical degree, would be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances, and would be capable of dealing with career changes.

An argument that I use is that we can train you and get you a job, but that may be the only job you'll have in your lifetime, because you don't have the flexibility of change. That usually brings them up short. It does make them think about it.

Although the Director of Admissions strongly supported the liberal arts mission of the school, she did not hesitate to admit that at this time, College "A" found it somewhat difficult to "market" liberal arts, and nearly impossible to sell prospective students on the idea without at least some career-oriented programs to "sweeten the pot."

You really have to be out there, way ahead of the game, persuading them that a small, liberal arts college is still viable and affordable, so that by the time they get to their junior year, they haven't ruled out the whole set of options. It's not just [College "A"], it's this whole thing of liberal arts . . . If the federal legislature decides that they aren't going to fund educational opportunities to students anymore, then we find another way to skin the cat.

The Director of Admissions felt confident that, regardless of the forces that might challenge an institution, College "A", with its strong liberal arts ideology, would be able to put its liberal intellect into practice and adapt to whatever changes would be necessary.

Interview with the Academic Dean, College "A"

The Academic Dean at College "A" seemed well-prepared for the interview, having recently re-read the school's statements of purpose in preparation for a meeting with the Board of Trustees. He felt confident that the institution's present purposes were very similar to those of the founding fathers 148 years ago, although he recognized a need for flexibility, as well.

On the one hand, a good, stable, strong institution is always going to feel a need to remain responsive to the core of beliefs which have characterized itself throughout its history. On the other hand, it's going to be concerned if it's really alive, with translating that immutable core of beliefs and values and aspirations into terms applicable to an ever-changing and developing and very mutable society.

The Academic Dean felt that in College "A", as well as

in many other institutions, demographic pressures represented the most serious challenge. In addition, the gap between what it costs to attend private institutions such as College "A" and an academically comparable public institution, has increased every year. In order to narrow this gap, the institution has been forced to contribute increasing amounts to financial aid, which, at a certain point, become virtually impossible to increase further. He stated that the policies of the Reagan administration further exacerbated the problem by making financial aid unavailable to many middle-class Americans.

Private liberal arts education is becoming more and more the province of the very rich and the very poor. Middle class people can't afford it, and the latest round of presidential suggestions is going to make that much worse. It cuts off the middle class even more. That's a big problem.

A third major challenge for College "A", one which seemed to be of particular concern to the Academic Dean, was the difficulty the institution experiences in attracting American blacks. Believing that one of the primary objectives of the institution's mission is its commitment to diversity, he felt that the absence of a proportionate number of blacks on campus was all too noticeable.

The primary reason why we have not done very well in recruiting minority students is a historical reason. [College "A"] was shamefully slow to integrate itself in terms of American black students. It was the mid-60s before we admitted an American black, although we had been admitting African blacks for a long time. It's a curious, one of those odd kind of

ironic twists of fate, that American blacks who re-immigrated to Liberia after the Civil War, their descendants could go to [College "A"] long before those who stayed in North Carolina could. And, as a consequence, we were known regionally, certainly not as one of the leaders in the move to integrate private, higher educational institutions. And we're still paying for that laggardness.

The Academic Dean stated that the need for diversity among students and faculty was an integral part of the liberal arts philosophy of the school. In addition, he related that his definition of a liberal arts education would include both a common core of generalized knowledge, which is necessary for the preservation of the culture, and a focus on methodology, which he considered to be the strategies of seeking the truth, applicable to a variety of lifetime experiences. He stated that he favored the latter premise more than of the former, and felt that his job as Academic Dean was to inculcate this way of thinking into the minds of students, faculty members, and administrators.

The end, it seems to me, of both, is as the name implies, liberation--freeing the mind or moving in the direction of freedom, the mind of the student of the liberal arts. And I think that that movement towards liberation is based upon the notion that it is enslaving to only know your own time, your own place, and your own way of seeking the truth.

He saw his definition of liberal arts and that of the institution's to be in total accord, and as he stated earlier, this has remained virtually unchanged in spirit since the college was founded. Regardless of the evolution in the liberal arts curriculum in recent years, he firmly

believed that there had been no compromise to the liberal arts philosophy of the school. Because the core of the liberal arts value assumptions remained intact, regardless of the professional or vocational implications of an area of study, he felt that this would in no way affect the spirit of the philosophy.

I think [it] is not illegitimate for courses in areas such as accounting, public affairs and administration . . . in a way that I think remains true to the way I define liberal arts . . . That is to say, we are not in an accounting course just teaching people the mechanics of bookkeeping, but we're also teaching them, in a very real and self-conscious way, the value assumptions, the implications of the American corporate system, the way in which our economy tries to define what is and what is not important, etc. In other words, we're teaching accounting as a liberal art, which I think is very much a possibility, just as I think it's a possibility to teach English Renaissance drama or philosophy as a vocational subject. If all you're going to teach in a philosophy course is training people to become future generations of teachers of philosophy, then that is the most blatant of vocationalism. If what you're doing in an accounting course is teaching people to look with an enlightened discipline and perspective, then that's a liberal arts course.

The Academic Dean has stood firmly behind his beliefs by refusing to give in to pressures by some administrators to add certain "trendy", specialized programs of study such as computer science. Although he admitted that these are the types of programs that students say they want, encouraged as they are by career-minded parents and high school counselors, he was not convinced that computer science per se was a legitimate academic major.

We think that computers are academic tools that are useful in a whole variety of majors, but to me, offering a major in computer science at an undergraduate college is exactly the equivalent of offering a major in book science. It's confusing the subject matter for the tool. And so we aren't going to do it.

He stated that, fortunately, College "A" was not in a position that necessitated the addition of such programs in order to increase a sagging enrollment, although he admitted that if the school were experiencing enrollment difficulties, the institution would probably think more seriously about adding them.

He also indicated that by virtue of its method of governance, College "A" was not likely to make hasty decisions regarding changes in the liberal arts curriculum. Since policy-making on matters of curriculum depended on a consensus among the faculty, it was virtually impossible to initiate change without much consideration and lengthy debate. Although this process is often slow and tedious, the Academic Dean pointed out that it has worked to the school's advantage in many ways.

It is impossible to respond in an unthinking way, given that mode of decision-making, where virtually everyone has to be persuaded that a change is the right change to make before it's made. It's very unlikely to respond unthinkingly to the pressures of the moment. And a lot of the changes of the 60s and 70s were, in fact, responses to a kind of over night lightning, highly emotionally-charged student pressure . . . At [College "A"], those pressures were felt, but because we moved so slowly and so thoughtfully and self-consciously, that kind of pressure is something we are very good at smoothing out and waiting to see [if] it's

lasting or of the moment.

The Academic Dean at College "A" was very much aware of the enviable position in which the school finds itself. It experiences no great enrollment or financial difficulties, and can afford to be steadfast in its liberal arts direction.

Interview with the Director of Admissions, College "B"

The Director of Admissions at College "B" presented an outgoing, friendly, and relaxed disposition, and was very willing to converse about the college. Although only in her second year as Admissions Director, she previously held the position of Director of Financial Aid, and prior to that, completed four years of undergraduate education at College "B". Her impressions of the institution, then, originate from several different perspectives.

If one walked across the campus of College "B" and was familiar with the school's history, one might conclude that College "B" is a school that faces few difficulties. However, like many small, independent, single-sex institutions, a number of which have been forced to merge with other institutions, become co-educational, or close, College "B" also finds itself being challenged by current environmental and socioeconomic circumstances.

We have very much felt the pressures of the declining population of 18-year-olds. Those pressures, I suppose, have been developing for a number of years, but certainly felt quite a lot in the last two or three years . . . In addition to that, there's been a decline in the number of young women who will apply to women's colleges.

It used to be 10 years ago that 7-8% of those high school women going off to college looked at a woman's college. Now it's down to 3%. And my hunch is that it's going to decrease a tad more.

She also indicated that an additional challenge facing College "B" is the outdated image that much of the public sector has of women's colleges. She also related that the small size of the institution was as much a liability as it was an asset. The negative aspect of being small, she felt, was that "society loves big, bigger, and better," and that the "hustle and bustle and noise" of a larger institution is perceived to be indicative of an actively involved student environment. On the other hand, she believed that while being small and intimate was not something many students initially understand, it was the role of the college community to convey the significance of personal contact and individualized attention, and the feeling of being part of a closely knit family type of academic environment.

We're not in a high numbers game. We're in an institution and a market, and we must know our prospects and applicants and treat them in the most personalized and individualized way. There is no room for error, and we must make as few as possible...We are not selling vacuum cleaners. We are selling education, and we're selling those to human beings. I think this place can give young women something that they might not find somewhere else. I guess I've created a practical approach [to admissions] which matches with my view of the nature of man.

She expressed the belief that this dual philosophical perspective, combining a practical marketing approach with a humanistic ideology, was the focus that was the most appro-

priate for College "B", considering today's challenges to liberal arts colleges.

The Director of Admissions defined liberal arts as an educational experience which fostered within the individual a greater understanding of people, of human nature, and of events that have occurred in the past. Her philosophy of liberal arts adhered quite closely to the college's stated liberal arts mission:

To understand what the human race has thought and done, to become more literate and artistic, to assume greater intellectual independence, to develop new competencies, and to explore new ideas freely. (1984-85 College Viewbook)

The practical side of the Admissions Director, however, took on a strong, business-oriented marketing approach to recruitment, which she felt was necessary in order to deal with day-to-day realities. In a sense, the liberal arts philosophy of the school was also shaped by practical concerns: "[College 'A'] is shaped by the conviction that liberal learning matters for what it is as well as for what it does." She viewed this duality as a compromise of the basic liberal arts philosophy of the school.

She felt that the compromise to the liberal arts mission had occurred during the 1960s, but that the academic integrity at College "B" never completely acquiesced to what she termed "cafeteria style education."

We still then and we do now require students to study in each of the disciplines...but in attempt to respond to the 60s, we did change. We have

had to respond to the needs of young women. That has driven us to what I call some pre-professional kinds of programs that you don't find in a purely liberal arts college. Those are the pressures of the marketplace, and particularly because our marketplace is women, and their lives have been changing over the last 10, 15, 20 years. But because of some things that have happened in the last 20 years, we kinda have tinkered and diddled with [liberal arts] a little bit. And it looks a little different.

Liberal arts looks quite different when one considers some of the programs of study at College "B".

We've added certain kinds of academic programs, like combining studying foreign language with studying management, to have a Foreign Language Management major. Combining the study of economics with the study of management for an Economics Management major. Same thing in the arts, Archeology, Anthropology, a variety of academic programs, basically aimed at attracting and retaining students. Computer Science we added last year. Communications we added two years ago.

Although she seemed somewhat apologetic about the dilution of liberal arts at College "B", the Director of Admissions found it to be an acceptable change because of the prevailing environment. Nevertheless, she seemed optimistic that liberal arts would experience a renewed interest, given the conservative trends evolving in this country.

The pendulum is starting to swing back. I think we see many students and families who want to know they will get a quality education that will help them over a lifetime. They talk about that in terms of liberal arts. For that reason alone, we're in the right place for the next decade. Students and parents and society are becoming more conservative, and liberal arts happens to be a part of that. There's a swing back to excellence and discipline, and liberal arts are somehow associated with that.

She indicated that if she were to make immediate

recommendations to the Board of Trustees for changes that College "B" should consider for the future, she would recommend the possibility of co-education ("we won't, but we should"), more vocational and preprofessional programs ("we shouldn't, but we might"), and a more in-depth study of the importance of liberal arts and sciences.

Interview with the Academic Dean, College "E"

The Academic Dean at College "B" presented a philosophical and ideological viewpoint that complemented that of the Director of Admissions. Her cordial, self-assured manner reflected a similar administrative quality, and she seemed sincerely interested in discussing the issues surrounding the topics of the interview. Although she has not had the close affiliation with College "B" that the Director of Admissions has had, she nevertheless appeared to have the perceptivity for a small, liberal arts college setting.

The Academic Dean agreed with the Director of Admissions that the most serious challenge facing College "B" was its status as a private, single-sex college. She indicated that in the past several years, the percentage of academically eligible young women expressing an interest in attending an all-women's college had declined from 5% to 3%. She felt that this was partly due to the general perceptions that many people have of women's colleges.

Some people do still think of us as cloistered convents, in the middle of the secular world, isolating students and preparing them for traditional roles, and that has not been true for 15 years. But there is still this perception, I think, that a woman's college is a protected, cloistered environment where we place more emphasis on the development of social skills than we do on academic skills. That has really not been true, but dispelling that image is something that takes a long time. There is still a "finishing school" image out there, even though that's no semblance to reality.

Although no longer trading on the finishing-school image, the institution nonetheless encourages, to some degree, an impression of elitism, in the way it presents itself in the college viewbook and in the high tuition it requires.

Unlike the Director of Admissions, the Academic Dean expressed the belief that the widening gap between the cost of attending public versus private institutions also presents a formidable challenge, not only to College "B", but to other small, independent, liberal arts institutions.

I think people are starting to ask hard questions. What is the value-added component of private education that is not available in the state system? Is the cost-differential worth what the private colleges claim they are about? And I think we will be under increasing pressure to demonstrate that, in fact, there is a so-called value-added component, because the public does not generally value small classes and personal attention, increased effectiveness, as measured against a disparity in cost.

To the Academic Dean, liberal arts represents a broad, general education and in-depth study of those traditional liberal arts areas such as music, art, mathematics, history and literature.

That philosophy has been consistent for 100 years . . . [however], we have made accommodations, in particular, to the changing interests of young women. . . and have added programs that I guess one might call career-related, although not very vocational in orientation. Basically, I would say that we are a liberal arts institution, although not in the pure sense of the word.

Although the Academic Dean admitted that the liberal arts program was not "pure" in the sense of the exclusion of all other non-liberal arts programs, she had a difficult time acknowledging the fact that a definite compromise had been made to the liberal arts philosophy. She attempted to justify her position by pointing out that except for Music, Nutrition, and until recently, Art Therapy, the school does not offer preprofessional or professional programs of study. Because she defined "professional" programs to mean those which are certified by an outside agency, she neglected to consider those areas of study typically defined as career-oriented, which College "B" also offers: Art Management, Economics Management, Foreign Language Management, Medical Technology, and Computer Science.

Academic planning at College "B" is based on close coordination with the admissions office, as well as studies done on comparable programs at other women's institutions.

The things that we have added in the last three years we have added for several reasons. One is that they are consistent with our mission; two, they are designed to capitalize on existing strengths of both facilities and location; third, they are programs that we should have as a distinguished liberal arts institution for women. In some cases, our competitors had them, and we

didn't.

It appeared that because of College "B"'s strong commitment to and predominant course offerings in the liberal arts, that the addition of non-liberal arts programs did not equate to a compromise, in the viewpoints of both the Academic Dean and the mission and goals statement in the college bulletin. The impact of what students and parents say they want was an extremely significant factor in determining which programs would or would not be added.

[Our students] come [to College "A"] because it's small, personal, friendly, has a good academic reputation. They want to get a good liberal arts education. They also are interested in preparing for some kind of career . . . I think that students are more interested in learning things that they think will help them be more competitive in the job market. What we have worked long and hard to try to convince them of is that by taking courses in traditional liberal arts disciplines you develop certain kinds of skills, and that those skills are transferable to the job world.

The Academic Dean felt that liberal arts was facing an increasing challenge today because it involved "a value system not strongly endorsed by a large proportion of students and their parents." She did believe, however, that the emphasis in secondary schools on "the return to basics," with more emphasis on reading and on college preparatory programs, would over time help the liberal arts colleges make their case clearly and effectively.

You get a pendulum, a period of experimentation and innovation, because education is responsive to social change, just as any other kind of institution is, and so you experiment for a while,

and start looking at the results, and meanwhile, the environment has changed. You don't like the results, and now let's go back and tinker with it.

It appeared that the Academic Dean and College "B" did not mind doing a little "tinkering" as needed in their liberal arts programs.

Interview with the Director of Admissions, College "C"

The Director of Admissions at College "C" has served in that position only since 1982. His graduation from another small liberal arts college has given him an understanding and appreciation of what a liberal arts experience should be; however, his major concerns for College "C" did not center around the liberal arts mission. Because of the changing demographics and federal reductions in financial aid, he saw as his basic responsibility the management of enrollment: the recruitment of sufficient numbers of students that would insure that the institution remained stable. It was of equal importance to him, however, to enroll students who would be able to succeed academically. He felt that the school's integrity would remain intact so long as the students who were admitted had a chance of success, and were content with a small college, liberal arts environment.

Although he expressed the fact that it was personally difficult for him to define liberal arts, he summarized the idea as follows:

A liberal arts education is one that will expose a student to a maximum amount of viewpoints and academic disciplines. It should be something

that takes into account the arts, literature, the study of man's existence, something to do with the biological and physical sciences, and I think it's even becoming more important to consider the use of languages. I think the whole liberal arts education answers the question, "What does it mean to be an educated person?"

However, he added that the definition of liberal arts had expanded to include education, accounting, and business.

I think we have really broadened, maybe watered down the term of liberal arts, and now really have a very broad definition of liberal arts. I think the liberal arts now really means an opportunity to expose people to ideas in an environment that will help students' ideas to grow and mature.

Feeling that institutions have had to answer the public sector's charge that the liberal arts experience alone is not practical, he stated that College "C" has responded to that challenge by adding a number of career-oriented programs to its traditional curriculum. Even with a professional and vocational orientation, he felt that as long as liberal arts courses remained as the core of all programs of study, there was no threat to the school's basic liberal arts mission. If liberal arts was good, he felt, then liberal arts combined with the practical application to the world of work was even better. He believed that was what students and their parents expected of a liberal arts education today.

They're looking for some courses that are real popular, that I think are kind of "flashy." Popular being defined as courses that they've seen friends and relatives and people on TV take . . . People say it's real. It's there. Generally speaking, they're looking for things that they are already familiar with.

At College "C", the most popular academic major is business administration; nearly one-third of the institution's enrollment pursues this program. Communications is second in popularity and growing steadily. The Director of Admissions expressed concern about the short-sightedness of today's students in selecting these majors. He found himself struggling with the paradox between his position as a recruiter and selector of students who pursue these programs, and his belief that a basic liberal education better prepares the student for the ever-changing complexities of life.

I question the value of some of these majors. Not what we're giving in terms of education, but just the whole program. Is it necessary to learn how to run a camera when you haven't read Moby Dick? I question it, but I'm supportive. I'm not questioning the institution, I'm questioning more, I guess--what we've done in liberal arts colleges in order to keep solvent and attract students.

Being at the middle-management level, the Director of Admissions was not involved in the formulation of the institution's curriculum policy. His responsibilities were primarily to support the established dictums, and he found it to be increasingly difficult to justify the liberal arts approach to career-oriented students. To date, he has found very little support within the professional and business community for a liberal foundation of education. Although some business leaders understand the value of a liberal arts experience, he felt that they, too, experienced great diffi-

culty in justifying the hiring of people without specialized skills or technical backgrounds:

I went to our national ACAC convention this year in Boston. The president of Reynolds Aluminum was there. And he made the claim to people, "I would rather hire a liberal arts graduate than hire someone out of a technical writing background, or even an engineering graduate." And people just oo-ed and ah-ed, they could hardly believe it. Somebody's rebuttal to him was, "Sir, who does the hiring at your company, you or the personnel manager?" He said, "Well, the personnel manager, now, would rather hire an engineer."

Because he has accepted the fact that College "C" has compromised its liberal arts mission out of sheer necessity, he has resigned himself to concentrate on those aspects of the admissions program that will keep the institution operating. His office follows marketing strategies typical of other small independent institutions, including mass mailings to targeted geographical areas during students' junior year of high school, and greater emphasis on improving college publications. As it stands, there is very little that College "C" could say to distinguish itself from other similarly sized liberal arts institutions. According to the Director of Admissions, the quality of the teaching faculty is the school's strong point, although he admitted that this characteristic was very difficult to promote. In all other ways, College "C" typifies the average small, independent, liberal arts college, and as such, finds itself in competition with many other institutions in the state that are better known, and offer the same type of personalized

attention and quality teaching. The Director of Admissions felt that his office has been forced to compromise liberal arts, but recognized the realities that dictated this change.

Interview with the Academic Dean, College "C"

The Academic Dean, who came to College "C" in 1983, a year after the Director of Admissions was hired, was more outspoken and less compromising in his feelings about the direction the school has taken. In his position as head of the faculty and chief administrator of the curriculum, he appeared to have greater freedom to state his unbiased opinions regarding the present position of the institution, more than the Director of Admissions was willing to do. As an administrator with more experience, he seemed to be less affected by the current state of affairs.

The Academic Dean concurred with the assessment of the Director of Admissions that the most serious challenge to College "C" is the decreasing number of college-aged students, which he indicated represent between 60-70% of the school's total enrollment. But he was equally concerned about the declining educational preparation of entering college freshmen. He agreed with the goal of the admissions office to attract more academically talented students, although he admitted that realistically, it would be erroneous to assume that the school would be totally successful in attracting sizeable numbers of this type of student at the present time. He felt that much of the difficulty lay with

the attitudes of high school guidance counselors, who tend to steer students into one of three postsecondary directions:

The guidance counselors in [our city] say to any good student, "You really should go to Chapel Hill." They say to any mediocre student, "You really should go to Appalachian." And they say to any weak student, "You really should go to [a technical school]." It assumes that all the other institutions are not worth even considering.

However, he felt that College "C", on the whole, offered essentially an equivalent liberal arts educational experience.

The Academic Dean defined liberal arts in terms of what he felt education ought to be.

Education, it seems to me, ought to be liberating for people, that is, liberating them from the narrowness that we are normally equipped with as human beings. Narrowness of perspective. Narrowness of understanding. Narrowness in our abilities to deal with other human beings, and so on. And what I have in mind and in the long run, is that people would be prepared for a career, but would fundamentally be prepared to live in a world which is increasingly complex and uncertain, and invariable.

He candidly stated that College "C" not only did not have a liberal arts mission, but that it did not have a mission at all. In a tongue-in-cheek manner, he noted that this lack of meaning was obvious in the college catalog:

We've got some stuff in our catalog that you probably can't understand what it means. I don't know what it means. It's garbage . . . Tell me what this means: (reading from the catalog) "To facilitate critical reflection on values, College "C" proposes to insert an institutional commitment to the Christian faith through a program of worship and social involvement . . ." What does that mean? We also propose to assert a commitment to private education that's necessary and beneficial to our society. Well, yeah.

I believe we ought to do that. I believe we're private and we are beneficial and we are necessary. But I still don't know what that means in terms of what we do with students. We really don't have a vision. We need to, formally, and we're in the process of trying to do that. And I think we'll come up with something over the next year or two.

For now, he has adjusted to the present situation, which is one that openly embraces a career-oriented approach to education with a liberal arts base. With approximately 40% of the student body majoring in business, plus a substantial number of others interested in careers related to medicine, education, and communications, he felt that College "C" could not afford not to concede to world-of-work demands. As long as there was a liberating aspect, at least rhetorically, to these programs of study, he believed that a compromise to pure liberal arts was still an acceptable approach to education, as long as professional and vocational programs did not become the all-encompassing objective of education at College "C".

People don't talk about ends. All they talk about is means. That's the basic problem politically in our country, it's the basic problem educationally. It's easier to talk about means, I guess. Americans like to do things. Action. There is plenty of place in the educational system for those kinds of things, but I don't think that they are the key to the success or failure of the educational enterprise. I think the educational enterprise succeeds or fails on the basis of some of these other things.

The Academic Dean felt that career-oriented programs certainly had a place in the educational scheme of things, but that too much of a reliance on this type of specialization would result in a narrow, superficial educational pre-

paration. Without a basic liberal experience to include a broader focus of life, a student's knowledge and understanding would be severely limited.

Very few colleges that I know consciously try to set their students in their cultural context in terms of where they are and how they got there from a historical sense, in a sociological sense. What we end up with is what we get on television, in bits and pieces that rarely are more than three sentences long. And what the hell kind of an understanding can you have with that? It's the root problem, as far as I'm concerned, for American culture today. Nobody knows anything significant about the cultural context. It's going to get worse. We never have known very much. But we know nothing now.

Despite his strong views on what he considered to be a valuable educational experience, there has been no move in that direction on the part of the school or the faculty to incorporate them into realities. The Board of Trustees, he felt, was comfortable with the written goals and mission of the school, and the students, he believed, had no idea as to what the mission and goals statements mean. The outcome has been a continued focus on those marketing schemes that have proven to be effective in attracting students. Although fully cognizant of the fact that various marketing techniques have been successfully used by most small institutions, he nevertheless warned that an over-dependence on such approaches, could be self-defeating in the end. In the long run, he felt that a more personal approach might be the most effective means of recruitment.

We need to reach the churches in this area with the message of what kind of a place College "C" is. And not through ministers, but through women's groups and other kinds of things . . . we need to get to [guidance counselors] in some way to ask their students what are THEY interested in? What kind of environment do THEY think would be appropriate for them? What do THEY really hope to get out of college? That's hard work. It takes time.

Because the Academic Dean seemed to understand and support the notion of a liberal arts education, perhaps in the future College "C" will better reflect this type of ideal.

Interview with the Director of Admissions, College "D"

The Director of Admissions at College "D" did not appear to feel comfortable dealing with the subject matter of the interview, until she had had some time to prepare her responses. After that, she seemed most willing to offer her opinions and ideas. As a graduate of a large, state institution, she has had to undergo a period of readjustment during her three years as Director of Admissions. It has taken time for her to comprehend the many problems that confront small, single-sex, predominantly black colleges. She indicated that the single-sex factor was probably the most serious challenge she has had to deal with during her tenure. It seemed to her that the challenge came, not from the lack of eligible 18- to 22-year-old women, but from the public's negative perception of the merits of attending a single-sex institution.

We find that a lot of youngsters believe that if they have to live in a society that is composed of both men and women, that they need to be

educated in that kind of environment, because they would have the exposure of the competitiveness between their male counterparts. But even though there are myths and preconceived notions about single-sex education, we just have to present the other side to that, and present the advantages that we feel are very important that they should consider.

Because 85% of the students who attend College "D" receive financial aid, another serious concern of hers was the escalating cost of education and strong possibility that financial aid would be dramatically reduced in the near future. She felt that an added responsibility to her admissions duties has been to work with parents of pre-college students in creative planning and budgeting, so that they would be in a better position to finance their children's college education. Bridging the gap between the operational costs of the institution, and the cost of a student to attend, she felt was always a major consideration.

Other peripheral concerns that she felt challenged College "D" included the trends toward student consumerism and technical orientation, and the increasing enrollment of adult students, both of which have required the school to revise its overall curriculum. The changes in the curriculum have reflected what she felt to be the demands of the market for more professionally and technically oriented programs of study. She did not, however, feel that these additions have had an impact on the college's liberal arts mission. To her, liberal arts meant being exposed to all disciplines, to have competencies in a number of basic skill areas--communication,

mathematics, reasoning, and their interrelationships. However, liberal arts at College "D" has been extended to include exposure to specialized areas.

We have gotten involved in some of the technical programs, such as engineering. I would say the newest program we have is computer science. And that's basically because of the demands of society at this point, in terms of high-tech and computerization. And in order for our students to be prepared for that, we felt that we had to make that offering available for them. And we have not had to sacrifice our liberal arts as a result of that. We just include the liberal arts offering that we have, because that's just another dimension of their exposure.

It appeared that the dilemma facing College "D" was its attempt to preserve the traditional liberal arts philosophy, while at the same time serving the special needs of a changing clientele.

The role of [College "D"] at this point, is to offer quality liberal arts education to all of its students. But we'll find that with the adult population, they have immediate needs . . . They're not concerned necessarily with a liberal arts orientation. They're concerned with getting that job and equipping themselves with the tools to do it. However, we have to decide from the college's standpoint whether we're going into continuing education or retraining or retooling the adult, and I think with that, we'll find that our curriculum will take a different complexion in trying to merge that with the overall curriculum that the college has and its philosophy. It may be a little touchy.

Although the Director of Admissions stated that College "D" was not trying to be "all things to all people" in terms of its curriculum development, it would appear that it was, at least, trying to do "more things for more people," and

was moving away from a traditional liberal arts focus. In fact, she felt that a key facet of her job was to serve as an "information processor," a surveyor of consumer demands, to be related to the various constituencies in the school, in order that they might be able to make the appropriate adjustments to the curriculum.

We do have the contact with the various markets that we cater to. We are able to determine the various demands that that population would have and place on us, and to articulate that to the people who have the authority to make the change, to make the decisions. I see that as our role.

Regardless of the programs added or revised to accommodate a particular specialization, the Director of Admissions believed that as long as there was a core of required liberal arts courses, and provided students were made aware of that fact when they were recruited, then there was no unacceptable compromise to liberal arts.

The Director of Admissions has never been called upon to justify the dilution of liberal arts at College "D", because she felt that students did not truly understand the meaning or significance of liberal arts in the first place. However, she believed that even if they did understand, it probably would not matter.

There's a rush to get a specialty, there's a rush to get equipped with the skills so [they] can get employed, because [of] the societal or economic demands that are placed upon them. So we're finding that a lot of people want to shorten that duration of their education. If we extend the time it will take a student to complete their degree, then that's more money

that they would have to pay to do that. I know a lot of people out here with liberal arts educations that are unemployed, so that kind of defeats the whole purpose in that sense.

By the end of the interview, the Director of Admissions indicated that a liberal arts degree, by itself, was not liberating enough to help students to deal with the realities and challenges of their lives, without their also taking on a specialty area.

Interview with the Academic Dean, College "D"

The Academic Dean, with eleven years of experience, appeared to have a great deal of information at his disposal and significant knowledge about the general academic climate at College "D". He offered a direct, thoughtful perspective on the numerous challenges facing the institution. He stated that the most serious of these challenges related to the institution's ability to retain students and to collect tuition and fees from low income families.

According to the Academic Dean, the competition for qualified black students has been fierce in the past ten years, and College "D" has keenly felt the repercussions of the mandate that state-supported institutions enroll significant numbers of minority students. At the same time, he felt that private, predominantly white, elite institutions, in order to satisfy affirmative action and equal opportunity directives, have adversely affected College "D's" recruiting potential by actively pursuing the most academically quali-

fied black applicants.

We're looking at the mandates placed on the state institutions to improve their racial mix, and the mandate placed on the big, prestigious universities to improve their racial mix, and the only way they can improve their racial mix is to make a greater effort to attract minorities into their institutions. In 1966, 95% of black students who elected to go to college went to predominantly black institutions. In 1984, only 20% of the black students who elect to go to college go to the black colleges. Therefore, that 20% which we have tracked is necessarily a lower or a more poorly prepared student. Now, to make it even worse for [College "D"], you don't get to track from that entire 20%. You're only attracting that little part which is called "females."

He felt that the quality of students that the institution enrolled was directly related to the problem of retention. Even though the school attempts to provide remedial and tutorial services for academically less well prepared students, he believed that interest and motivation are often weak with these students, and that the result is that they tend to experience a higher attrition rate.

Even though we have 550 students, our probation list this year is the largest it has been in ten years . . . Students who are poorly prepared have less motivation. We believe this is true because success breeds interest. When you are successful, your motivation level seems to be higher. The higher your probational list, the more drop-outs you have.

Closely related to the problem of attrition with these poorly prepared and low-income students is College "D's" inability to collect unpaid tuition and fees after students have left the institution. According to the Academic Dean, over the past three years this problem has resulted in the

school's failure to collect almost one million dollars.

Due to the nature of his position as a determiner of student academic status and in deciding which students may remain at or must leave the institution, he was also fully aware of the financial repercussions to the college because of the resulting student attrition. In that respect, he felt that it was his primary responsibility to provide the kind of educational environment and curriculum programs which would interest and motivate students enough for them to remain enrolled at the institution. In his opinion, a liberal arts background would provide a broad educational spectrum which the individual could apply to a number of lifetime experiences. He took this idea one step further, by relating the special liberal arts responsibility to black students.

We believe that their performance is lowered by things that they can't do anything about-- economics, racism, [integration] problems that have impacted negatively on the black student. We feel that we should take up that as a part of our [mission] and try to rekindle and motivate them . . . maybe they'll get [their academic performance] going once we give them the aid and support services.

Regardless of his strong professed beliefs in a broad liberal arts education, the Academic Dean admitted that College "D" was not as much a liberal arts institution as it once was. The science program, for example, is specifically designed for the purpose of preparing students to enter medical school. The English program also is structured to prepare students for a career in law. In addition, one

quarter of the total enrollment are business majors. In his opinion, however, the strong focus toward specialized programs at College "D" does not constitute a compromise to its liberal arts philosophy.

I don't think it's a compromise. It's a flexible alternative. And so, also, we find that as we have put in flexibility toward the specialized areas, we are able to attract a different kind of student than we were before we put those programs in.

He concurred with the Director of Admissions that College "D" was justified in designating itself as a liberal arts institution, regardless of the "flexible alternatives" in the curriculum. The justification was centered around the 44-46 hours of liberal arts courses required of all students, regardless of their major. The Academic Dean felt that students then would have the security of a specialty field, plus the flexibility that a broad educational experience would permit.

The Academic Dean of College "D" expressed the opinion that all current signs seemed to point to a "back to basics" trend, which he felt closely supported the liberal arts tradition. He believed that this trend would place College "D" in an excellent position for the future.

We have not moved with the trends. We're slow to move with the trends, for fear that they might be short-lived. So our liberal arts have been in place almost as much as they were twenty years ago, except for a few specialized courses that we have. And so I don't think that's going to have a major impact on [College "D"].

Interview with the Director of Admissions, College "E"

The Director of Admissions at College "E", who submitted her resignation only a few weeks prior to the interview, offered a candid, straightforward perspective on the many challenges facing the institution. She identified the most critical problem as being the failure of the college to offer sufficient numbers of academic programs which the large majority of students want. The difficulty, she felt, lay in convincing a career-oriented student that a basic liberal arts background was the best long-term preparation for a career.

We try to tell them that they need a basic education and a specialization after two years, so that they can get a job and also can change careers and be a well-rounded person. Companies more and more want a liberal arts graduate and will train them in the technology.

The result of the failure to successfully convince students of this concept has been the school's capitulation to adding academic programs outside of the liberal arts tradition.

Basically, the Director of Admissions defined the liberal arts philosophy as one in which individuals obtained a good educational background, one which would serve as a framework throughout their lives. Rather than pursuing a special vocational interest in order to prepare for a job, she felt that liberal arts offers a student a broader perspective, one which prepares the student to face a variety of challenges. She felt that College "E" was responding to the liberal arts philosophy in a number of ways. First, College

"E" was ideally attempting to attract average to above-average students, interested not only in pursuing academics, but were also in sports and social activities. Second, she felt that the school's dedication to the very personal, face-to-face involvement with students was an important aspect of the liberal arts tradition.

The Director of Admissions admitted from the outset that although she was fully cognizant of and sympathetic to the college's stated liberal arts mission and goals, she nonetheless felt that because of the tenuous position of the school, subscribing to a purely liberal arts focus might not be the most expedient direction to take. Although she felt that the Admissions Office had made every attempt to work within the framework of the school's liberal arts philosophy, she conceded that over a period of time, the school was forced to compromise this philosophy in order to maintain enrollment. She lamented the fact that despite this deviation from the stated goals and philosophy, the school's problems still had not been resolved.

Along with the concessions for adding non-liberal arts courses and programs, the Director of Admissions felt that an equally harmful compromise of the liberal arts philosophy has been the practice in the past few years of admitting students whose chances for success are questionable.

We have to have a certain number of students, and they have to be of a certain quality, or they're not going to last. My philosophy is don't accept

a student you know won't be successful. That's difficult when enrollment is down. I have tried to get as many good students as possible, that we know have a chance of being successful. I think we have taken students we know are not going to be successful. We're taking them without having the support systems to aid them so that they can be successful. We're accepting students we know are going to want to transfer to schools with technology programs or computer science that we don't have. That is against what I believe in.

It appeared that the compromise made by College "E" regarding the admission of marginal students disturbed her more than the dilution of the liberal arts program. She was able to rationalize the necessity for further changing the liberal arts program to include additional preprofessional and vocationally related programs, but could not justify the admission of students who were not likely to succeed.

We are going to have to compromise and offer practical courses, like computer literacy. There is no other way. You won't lose your liberal arts structure by including that. You can have liberal arts and computers, and that's what College "E" will have to do.

From the perspective of the Director of Admissions, College "E" would have to do more than just include additional programs and continue to admit marginal students, if it were to remain a viable institution. In her words, the college has no visible saga nor unique characteristics which differentiate it from any other small, independent, liberal arts, church-affiliated college.

The thing that we try to market the most is our location in the number one city in the United States with a variety of liberal arts majors . . . but the fact that we were a woman's college until thirty years ago is a drawback in that a former

woman's college has a very hard time attracting male students. Graduates want their sons to go to a male-oriented college. We still, even today, are perceived as a woman's college.

Even though the Director felt that she had made every effort to effectively deal with the multitudinous challenges facing College "E" during her ten years at the institution, she believed that at this time, recommendations for more vocational courses have been made based on various research studies, and it was now up to the chief administrators to make those important decisions that would affect the future of the college.

#### Interview with Academic Dean, College "E"

The comments of the Academic Dean at College "E", provided a striking contrast to that of the Director of Admissions. Throughout the interview, he appeared to be somewhat cautious in his responses, although he became more relaxed as the interview progressed.

He stated his philosophy of liberal arts by reading selected passages from the college bulletin. His ideas centered around the liberation of individuals, through their awareness of history, politics, social realities, physical soundness, the arts, literature, mathematics, language, and science. He felt that College "E" promoted this philosophy through both curricular and extracurricular activities, which included the varied dimensions of life on campus. He also indicated that because College "E" recognized that indi-

viduals must not only learn how to live, but how to make a living, the school included, as a part of its academic program selection, professional and preprofessional programs.

Liberal arts would free Individuals from ignorance and intolerance and enable them to think critically and clearly . . . A liberal education should result in a view of life that includes, but also goes beyond, particular vocational skills, and should provide the basic communicative and intellectual abilities. This enables a student to deal with the changing demands of a lifetime of career and personal experiences.

He identified the most serious challenges facing College "E" today as being the demographic shift, small student applicant pool, the widening tuition gap between the public and private sector, and the increasing public perception of excellence in state institutions which detracts from the quality education formerly exclusive to private schools. Although he felt that College "E" had a long, outstanding history as one of the first schools opened for women, he emphasized that today's student was not interested in a sense of history or saga, and that a sense of history played a minimal role in the institution's efforts to attract students.

Students today are not aware of the significance of an institution's history or of the importance of a school's heritage. They don't care. If they did, it would be much easier for us to attract students. They tend to be more concerned with the public's current perceptions, and [College "E"], in that sense, is really no different than any other small, private, church-related school. We realize that this is a challenge.

Unlike the Director of Admissions, he did not feel that the current changes within the academic framework had affected the liberal arts philosophy of the college. The Dean believed that any compromises made in the liberal arts mission were made at or about the turn of the century, when more vocational programs were added. Since that time, however, he believed that the school has remained firmly within the guidelines of the liberal arts philosophy, despite the fact that the college now offers majors in areas such as accounting, legal administration, allied health, business administration, and special, early childhood, and intermediate education, which comprise nearly half of the academic majors offered. Because students must enroll in a basic liberal arts core the first two years before being allowed to pursue a specialized area, he felt that this justified his belief that the liberal arts mission was not being compromised.

As long as liberal arts remains an important element of each student's academic program . . . then there is no contradiction between a liberal arts philosophy and a professional or vocational emphasis. We can't ignore the market demands; however, we can make sure that our students experience a variety of the basics.

Although the Director of Admissions identified as a further compromise to the liberal arts mission the acceptance of students who were not adequately prepared academically, the Academic Dean contradicted her statement by indicating that even though they would accept students who may not "normally meet college standards," they would not consider

accepting those who could not succeed academically.

Above all, students should be able to convey the impression that they have the desire and the ability to work hard and to solidly discipline themselves. We are much more interested in this type of student than we are in students who might have high SATs, but who are lazy, who display no initiative or drive. We want well-rounded students who have an interest in the liberal arts tradition.

He further stated that College "E" had accepted only 72% of all students who applied, and had, in the last five years, accepted fewer marginal students.

The liberal arts philosophy was promoted for students at College "E" by their exposure to the value of "every aspect of liberal arts" in a seminar offered to all new students four days prior to the beginning of classes during the fall term. The Academic Dean stated that he believed that this orientation was an important aspect of acclimating entering students to a liberal arts ideology, and he emphasized repeatedly to career-minded students that the liberal arts experience was the best preparation for the world of work.

The first four days in the fall semester, all new students are required to attend a liberal arts orientation program, which emphasizes to students the importance of having a liberal arts-based education. No matter what they study, we try to get the point across that a liberal arts foundation is the best preparation for any kind of career that they might pursue in the future . . . Careers change, and what might seem important today might not be important tomorrow.

However, vocational and preprofessional programs of study

seemed to resurface throughout his conversation. He freely admitted that vocational interests were a top priority with most students, and that a number of vocational courses had been offered in concession to these interests.

Vocational interests reign. [Students] want to know how they can make money . . . Parents want them out of their homes and out earning a good living; and it's felt that at this time, that vocational areas such as allied health, computer science, business administration, and accounting are all the prime areas to offer employment.

The Academic Dean felt that College "E" with its liberal arts focus combined with career-oriented specialties had the perfect combination for the technological requirements of the future. In effect, the liberal arts mission at College "E" has been modified as needed in order to fit the demands of the market.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Listed below are analyses of the interviews with the Directors of Admissions and Academic Deans for the five colleges in the study:

#### Summary of College "A" Interviews

College "A" appeared to be experiencing greater success, in terms of dealing with its perceived challenges, than the other four institutions in the study. Both the Director of Admissions and the Academic Dean identified the quest for diversity in the student body and in the faculty as being one of their main considerations. Believing that this objective has been a mainstay of the liberal arts mission of the school since its founding, they have consistently strived to honor this commitment, rather than play a "numbers game," and recruit any students with impressive academic credentials. In a high pressure, administrative position, such as Director of Admissions in a small, independent college, it would have been easy to focus attention on just "bringing in students," but at College "A", the Director of Admissions was more concerned about the in-state perceptions of the school's academic image.

The concerns for legitimacy and credibility seemed to be a recurring theme throughout both administrators' conversations. It might be easy to take the attitude that the

school's concern for its image was unremarkable, considering the fact that College "A" is very successful and has the margin of freedom to be concerned with symbolic improvements; but College "A" pointed to the fact that its entire history has emphasized its image, and because of this concern, its success today might be explained. The consensus form of institutional governance, a trademark of the founding religious group, was stressed by both administrators as being a very significant factor in the close cooperation and collegial atmosphere at the school. The major focus of recruiting efforts has been to attract students who are seeking this type of environment, rather than adjusting the school's programs to whatever current trends happen to be in vogue. As the Academic Dean indicated, decision-making by consensus has served as a stabilizing influence for the school, and has prevented hasty, quick-fix solutions to sometimes complex issues.

This was not to say that College "A" was concerned only with public perceptions. The administrators shared the concern of other small institutions over the dwindling number of traditionally aged college students, and the widening gap between the cost of attending a public versus a private institution. However, because these were perceived by both administrators as being more peripheral concerns than major challenges, College "A", in this respect, was unique among the other institutions in the study.

Neither the Director of Admissions nor the Academic Dean at College "A" believed that the school had compromised its liberal arts philosophy, even though a number of pre-professional, professional, and vocational majors were being offered. The school's dual perspective of liberal arts included both a core of general knowledge, represented by certain required courses of study, and a liberal arts methodology of teaching, which served to liberate the individual by broadening the knowledge and understanding of the subject area, rather than narrowly focusing and specializing. With this broad definition of liberal arts, almost any area of study could be included within the liberal arts framework. By the same token, the Academic Dean stressed the notion that even traditional liberal arts disciplines, if taught only for the purpose of imparting specific facts and information, represented the "most blatant of vocationalism."

Unlike the other schools in the study, computer science was not considered to be a legitimate major for College "A", at least by the Academic Dean. It was felt instead to be a tool for any number of academic areas. Although it was felt that a computer science program would possibly attract more students to the school, the Academic Dean was not willing to make this compromise to the liberal arts philosophy, at least for the time being.

Based on the interviews with the Director of Admissions

and the Academic Dean, and the information presented in the college literature, it appeared that College "A" has remained fairly consistent in its statements of what it says it is doing educationally, and what it actually is doing. The lack of contradictions between the philosophies of both administrators, and between their philosophies and that of the institution, was quite apparent, and gave further credence to the institution's stability and success.

In order to meet the challenges perceived by the Director of Admissions and the Academic Dean, College "A" appeared to be focusing its attention on strategies that best represented Chaffee's interpretive model of strategic management: it was striving to improve the public's perception of the institution by revitalizing its admissions publications to portray a more vital, more dynamic school image; by attempting to develop a closer relationship with various segments of its religious affiliation and by making personal visits to selected churches and religious organizations, it was working toward strengthening the ties between the institution and its church constituency; and it was utilizing careful communications strategies and research to improve its image within the state.

Although College "A" also used adaptive strategies such as mass mailings and college day/night programs, as all colleges and universities do, the focus of its operations has been primarily directed toward the interpretive model.

College "A" seemed to be more involved with Chaffee's interpretive rationale for existence, answering the question, "Why are we together?" which emphasized ends rather than means.

#### Summary of College "B" Interviews

The Director of Admissions and the Academic Dean at College "B" expressed many of the same concerns about the challenges facing the school. They identified the primary challenge as being the decline in the numbers of eligible college-age women who traditionally apply to single-sex institutions. The out-of-date image that they felt the public had of women's colleges was of great concern to both administrators, and it was felt that if College "B" were to remain a viable institution, something would have to be done to improve this image.

Their response to this challenge has been to survey the changing roles, needs, and aspirations of women, in order that the school might respond to and accommodate those interests, by offering career-oriented programs. Career specialties are combined with traditional liberal arts majors and result in hybrid programs such as foreign language management and arts management. In this way, neither administrator believed that a compromise had been made to the school's liberal arts philosophy. Unlike the situation at College "A", no attempt has been made at College "B" to emphasize the necessity of presenting all courses of study

with a liberating end in mind--including a broad approach to the discipline, stressing values and concepts and implications for application to lifetime experiences. It seemed enough to College "B" to have its liberal arts requirements in place, in order to justify that it is, indeed, legitimately a liberal arts institution.

Although College "B" exhibited many of the same adaptive strategies that less successful schools in the study were using, College "B" had the distinct advantage of being able to continue to trade on its historical image as an exclusive educational institution for young women of means. Its location and campus facilities are definite assets, and leave one with the impression of prosperity and success. With its relatively comfortable endowment and alumni support, the school has continued to project this positive image to the public. Only those closely associated with the academic programs are aware at this time of the changes in the liberal arts focus, initiated because of the need to buttress the decline in interest in women's colleges, which they felt would eventually affect the school's enrollment. In a school with a student body of only 500, even a 10% decline in enrollment would be devastating. Both administrators appeared to be fully cognizant of that reality and were taking steps to prevent this possibility from occurring.

In the past several years, new programs of study such as computer science and communications have been added to

College "B"'s curriculum, not to help the students become more literate and to assume greater intellectual independence, but because the Admissions Office had learned that their strongest competitors had added them. An honors program for academically talented students, featuring interdisciplinary studies, was added for the same reason. Many of College "B"'s strategies that have been recently initiated seem on the surface to be interpretive measures; however, when the motives behind these decisions are examined, the adaptive nature of the actions becomes more apparent.

College "B" is very concerned with image, however, and has recently done a number of things to improve the school's physical plant such as the renovation of a number of dormitories, along with the addition of a patio in the Student Center. Other improvements, also interpretive in nature, include the addition of one staff member in student services, and a greater focus on the institution's career planning and placement services.

There seemed to be several contradictions in the image that College "B" was trying to project--a successful, exclusive women's college, in no apparent financial or enrollment difficulties. The Director of Admissions stressed that the school was in no way involved in a "high numbers game." And yet, the school purchased 65,000 names from the College Search Program, and mailed one or more letters to each of those students. And although neither administrator wanted to

give the impression that the school was involved in what the Director of Admissions referred to as "cafeteria style education," they nevertheless seemed to have no reservations about adding vocational or preprofessional programs of study. In fact, the Academic Dean refused to consider such courses as medical technology and economics management as being professional, at all, and adjusted her definition of "professional" to coincide with her position.

College "B" is a school that is very preoccupied with the way it is perceived by the public; however, it finds itself in a position that often requires it more and more to practice a number of adaptive strategies, which are often incongruent to the image it wants to project.

#### Summary of Interviews, College "C"

Both the Director of Admissions and the Academic Dean felt that the declining 18- to 22-year-old applicant pool was the most serious challenge facing College "C", and most of their recruitment strategies were focused directly toward meeting this challenge. The institution in 1984 had purchased 67,000 names of eligible college applicants, and produced the largest number of mass mailings of any of the other schools in the study. The Admissions Office was concentrating its efforts on contacting students earlier in their high school careers, hoping to beat out many of its competitors, and it was making a concerted effort to send follow-up communications in a timely fashion. It was attempting to be

more efficient overall, in terms of its search and selection process. While these methods appeared to be largely adaptive, the administrators were also concerned with the school's image. They were attempting to make student contacts more personalized, in an effort to convey the impression that the college was speaking to each person on an individual basis. In addition, a considerable amount of time and effort has been expended in making admissions publications more attractive, in order to present the campus in the most positive ways possible.

A second challenge identified by the Director of Admissions centered around the projected federal policies regarding financial aid. He believed that if the policies were put into effect, up to 30% of the students attending College "C" could be adversely affected in terms of their federally insured student loans. Currently, the Admissions Office had no solutions as to how to offset this potential loan deficit. The school was not in a position to substitute loan funds to fill in the gaps.

A second challenge mentioned by the Academic Dean focused on the lack of academic preparation of many high school students entering College "C". His recommendation to the school was to seek out better-qualified students by spreading the message throughout the community, especially in those churches affiliated with the institution. He also hoped to stress that College "C" is interested in students'

needs and opinions and is willing to provide an appropriate environment to meet those needs.

It appeared that the duties of the administrator played an important part in whether he would be more adaptive or more interpretive in his strategies. The Director of Admissions felt that he had very little choice, concerned as he had to be with results, except to use those marketing techniques that would result in making contact with large numbers of prospective students. The Academic Dean, on the other hand, recognized that such adaptive measures, while bringing immediate results, were not as valuable in the long run as strategies that considered the development of strong community ties and the build-up of the public's perception of the school as a stable and worthwhile institution.

College "C" used both adaptive and interpretive strategies, and up to a point, these strategies have been basically compatible. However, a conflict was evident between adaptive and interpretive strategies in terms of the school's admissions standards. Both administrators admitted that College "C" had virtually no admissions requirements other than high school equivalency, and this situation prevented them from attracting the academically-prepared students that the Academic Dean felt were crucial for improving the institution's credibility. But because of the need to enroll certain numbers of students, regardless of academic credentials, they have been unable to improve their academic image. This

"Catch 22" has left College "C" primarily using adaptive strategies in order to bring in students who can pass the coursework and pay the bills.

Liberal arts at College "C" was not a matter of great concern to either administrator. The Director of Admissions argued that, based on the broad, watered-down definition of liberal arts at the institution, the programs of study, including vocational and professional specialties, were consistent with the philosophy. He stated that if liberal arts colleges used a traditional definition, however, that every one would have to admit to a compromise in their curricula, and that this was another necessary reality that small, private institutions had to accept.

On the other hand, the Academic Dean would not admit to a compromise, contending that the term "liberal arts" was so amorphous that no one, least of all students, fully understood its meaning as it was described in college bulletins. Further, since he honestly believed that College "C" had no mission, liberal arts or otherwise, to begin with, that there could be no compromise. He had a personal definition of liberal arts that included preparation for a career, as well as for life in a complex world. In that way, he felt that there was a legitimate alliance between traditional liberal arts studies and vocational/professional specialties. With the exception of several passages in the college bulletin, there was little or no pretense about the liberal arts mis-

sion of the school.

College "C" appears to be focusing heavily on adaptive strategies in its recruitment efforts. They utilize methods that work for the moment, and sacrifice whatever is not presently operable. Their treatment of liberal arts is a case in point. If liberal arts could be easily used as a marketable asset, College "C" would very likely be incorporating it heavily into its admissions strategies. However, since liberal arts was perceived by both administrators to be of little significance to their clientele, and was difficult to interpret, even under the best of circumstances, College "C" makes only a passing reference to liberal arts in its literature and, if the subject arises, in admissions programs.

#### Summary of Interviews, College "D"

The Academic Dean at College "D", felt, as College "B" did, that its greatest challenge revolved around the competition for the declining pool of eligible 18- to 22-year-old female students. The problem was further compounded by the fact that College "D", a historically black institution, depended almost exclusively on black women to make up its enrollment. Predominantly white private and public institutions have further depleted the applicant pool over the past twenty years by recruiting the best minority students to satisfy equal opportunity and affirmative action requirements. Although the Director of Admissions shared the Academic Dean's concerns about the single-sex status of

College "D", it was for a completely different reason. She felt that the negative perceptions by the public regarding single-sex institutions was the greatest challenge to overcome. An equally serious challenge, identified by both administrators, was the escalating cost of private education, and the inability of a great number of their students to finance their schooling. Further, both perceived the Reagan administration's cuts in financial assistance as potentially causing irreparable damage.

Regardless of the administrators' conceptions of the problems of decreasing enrollment and financial burdens, College "D" was dealing with the challenges primarily through adaptive strategies. In order to offset the decreasing applicant pool, for example, the school had virtually eliminated any academic criteria for admissions. Although the Academic Dean expressed the hope of "upgrading the performance" of students, the institution found itself, with 135 students out of 550 on academic probation, in the position of having to offer tutorial services on a large scale.

The Director of Admissions viewed her primary responsibility as one of consumer advocate for students' career interests. She felt that it was important for her to survey the market demands in order to determine vocational and professional areas of interest, and to report these findings to the Academic Dean and others, who would translate as many

of these as would be feasible into academic programs of study.

Neither the Director of Admissions nor the Academic Dean felt that they had much latitude in terms of solving the financial difficulties of their students. They felt that the school must either seek additional financial aid sources or assist families of students in planning budgets for easier tuition payments. Additional financial aid sources were difficult to find, even under the best of circumstances, and College "D" did not have the alumni, programs, facilities, and research studies that would tend to attract the necessary resources to begin to offset the financial difficulties the school was experiencing. Monthly or quarterly payment plans, which might ease the families' financial burdens, did very little to offset the institution's operational costs, and at best were temporary measures.

Although College "D" was proud of its long-standing tradition of being an all-women's college, with special emphasis on its black heritage, it seemed to be clinging to an image which, while effective 25 years ago, is much less significant today. It was no longer considered by the public as being the "Vassar of the South"; however, College "D", in many ways, still attempted to trade on that image. The incongruity was that the public today views College "D" as being an institution that would accept most female students with high school equivalency, and the school appeared to

cater to those young women who may not be accepted at other colleges and universities.

Liberal arts at College "D" was made up of a core of 44-46 hours of academic work in general education courses, regardless of the student's major. Both the Director of Admissions and the Academic Dean felt that because this core was firmly in place, regardless of the vocational or professional areas of concentration offered, the credibility of all their academic programs depended on this liberal arts core. In that respect, they felt that no compromise to the liberal arts mission had been affected. To the Academic Dean, the new specialized programs that had been added to College "D"'s curriculum were "flexible alternatives," and did not dilute the liberal arts base.

Both administrators used "liberal arts" more as a term that has been absorbed into the college vocabulary, rather than as a term that has a truly working and meaningful significance. Because they were both interested in placing their students into jobs--their measure of a successful academic program--they used liberal arts as a drawing card, and as more of a means to a particular end, rather than as a freeing agent.

Most of College "D"'s strategies seemed to be adaptive. Although they were proud of their heritage and their former reputation as an exclusive school for black women, they were continually adding whatever programs they felt the market

demanded, in an effort to attract as many students as possible.

By having an open admissions policy, they once again focused on numbers, in an attempt to meet enrollment quotas. Other strategies--mass mailings, systematic alumni admissions programs, lists of names from church members--all were adaptive approaches with the end in mind being more students enrolled.

Although the Director of Admissions pointed to the fact that College "D" was also stressing the smallness of the school, the personal attention, and individualized instruction that a small institution could provide, these were not a major focus of either the Admissions Office or the Academic Dean.

Because College "D" was doing very little to improve the public's perception of the school as a viable institution, with an academic reputation that was at least equivalent to that of other public and private institutions, College "D" would probably continue to experience major difficulties in attracting academically and financially prepared students.

As an added note, the dilution of liberal arts at College "D" was almost insignificant, when compared with the many other responsibilities it felt it owed its clientele. Its students are female, black, require a great deal of financial assistance, and include a large proportion who do not have strong academic backgrounds. For these reasons, its primary commitment to them centered around realistic ways of

preparing these young women to take their places in society. Recognizing the great odds against its students, the college viewed itself as a vehicle which might give these young women the impetus that they needed to be successful in life. College "D"'s self-appointed mission was unique among the other institutions in the study, in that it felt that it was doing more than educating its students. It was taking on additional responsibilities that most colleges did not have to face. Its strategies were more concerned with the credibility and success of its graduates.

#### Summary of Interviews, College "E"

The Director of Admissions at College "E" indicated that the most serious challenge facing the institution was the fact that there were insufficient numbers of programs of study available at the school, which she felt were necessary to meet student market demands. Without a representative number of academic majors, including technology programs and computer science, she believed that the institution would not remain viable or be able to compete for students with the approximately 10 other schools in the immediate area. Her primary responsibilities, she felt, were to convey student preferences to administrators, and to convince them of the dire necessity of incorporating as many of these programs as would be feasible into the curriculum. The result of this attempt to offer a greater variety of studies has been the hiring of a greater percentage of part-time faculty members;

nearly one-half of the total faculty at College "E" works part-time. As research shows, part-time teachers earn less, receive fewer benefits, and are generally cost-efficient for the college. However, at the same time, their time spent on campus is considerably less than full-time faculty members, their loyalties and commitments to the institution and to students are generally not as great, and their turn-over rate is much higher, because they are more likely than full-time instructors to leave the institution for full-time employment.

This purely adaptive response to a declining enrollment did not hesitate to compromise the original liberal arts philosophy of the institution, even though, as the Director of Admissions admitted, this approach has not resolved its enrollment problems.

The Academic Dean pointed to a number of different challenges as being serious to the college. His first concern centered around the smaller numbers of typically eligible 18- to 22-year-olds, along with the widening tuition gap between private and state institutions. Because the public's perception had favorably changed in the last decade toward state higher education, which cost less than most private schools, the Academic Dean felt that this turn of events had adversely affected College "E". In order to compete, he felt that College "E" had to identify some feature that could be favorably marketed against the state system. Citing the small size of the institution as a dis-

advantage, he nonetheless tried to capitalize on the smallness by emphasizing the personal, face-to-face contact between faculty and prospective students and their families that was possible in such a setting. He gave the impression that this "personal touch" was being used as a workable marketing technique to attract students, and because of this underlying motivation, the technique was considered to be more of an adaptive than an interpretive strategy.

The Academic Dean did not feel that his philosophy of liberal arts was significant, but he believed that the philosophy of College "E", as stated in the college bulletin, had been in place without compromise for the past 100 years. Any compromises to the school's liberal arts mission, he felt, were made before the turn of the century, when a few vocational and preprofessional areas of study were added to the curriculum. Since that time, in his opinion, College "E" has stayed strongly within the framework of liberal arts, even though it offers a variety of non-liberal-arts programs in order to meet the demands for job preparation. He saw no contradiction between a liberal arts philosophy and technical programs, and stated that a liberal arts education was, in fact, the "best vocational preparation one could get." He did not explain how these two philosophies could work together without contradiction, (such as using a liberating methodology of instruction), and he maintained that it was the responsibility of the school to project a liberal arts image,

at the same time appealing to students' preoccupation with getting a job. Neither the Academic Dean nor the college bulletin ever made it quite clear how a liberal arts philosophy could free the student, at the same time a narrowly focused program of study prepared the student for a specialized career.

The Director of Admissions had a completely different concept of what liberal arts meant to College "E". In her opinion, a compromise to the liberal arts mission occurred when an institution was willing to admit students who were poorly prepared, and who were unlikely to succeed academically. She felt that this compromise had occurred at College "E", and that because they were forced to continue admitting "marginal" students in order to maintain enrollment, that the only ethical solution was to modify the philosophy and mission of the school.

It became clear that College "E" wanted to maintain a strong public image of being liberal arts, but by its actions, it appeared more than willing to use adaptive strategies in order to remain open. It would be less incongruous if the school openly admitted that it was practicing a more comprehensive type of education, rather than attempting to give the impression that it was operating under a different set of principles. Many of the discrepancies were apparent to the public, and were confusing because of the mixed signals that the college is conveying.

A close analysis of College "E" showed that many of the strategies that appeared to be interpretive on the surface, were actually adaptive when the motives behind the strategies were examined. Like the other institutions in the study, it was concerned with its image, but was so preoccupied with remaining open, that it failed to provide adequately for image-building as much as it did for immediate financial solvency.

#### Comparative Summary

Chaffee's models of strategic management were very useful in the analysis of these five colleges. They facilitated a more critical approach to the institutions on a more than merely surface level. As helpful as the models were, however, they did not fully encompass the range of differences that were found to exist among these schools, nor did they consider the motives behind certain actions.

Every institution in the study used both adaptive and interpretive strategies in their recruitment and retention efforts, but to a more varied degree than Chaffee presented in her model.

Of the five schools in the study, College "A" was the closest to using predominantly interpretive strategies, although it also practiced a number of adaptive methods. The one factor that appeared to differentiate it from the other institutions was its careful consideration of the consequences to its image, that it recognized an over use of adaptive

methods would mean. Its primary concern was its public image and institutional credibility. Further, the question that Chaffee posed under the interpretive model, "Why are we together?", was best responded to under the collegial form of governance, which was the model that College "A" used as an important part of its historical mission.

In comparison, College "E" was using adaptive forms of strategic management almost exclusively in its recruitment and retention efforts. Its primary concern was in gaining more resources, and it was willing to alter its programs and standards in order to accomplish this goal. Although concerned about its image, and attempting to incorporate some interpretive methods, its underlying motives were clearly focused toward increasing its resources. While this was also the objective of the other schools in the study to varying degrees, College "E" was unable to successfully convince the public of the integrity of its motives. Colleges "B", "C", and "D" fell somewhere in between "A" and "E" in terms of the ratio of adaptive to interpretive strategies used. For example, College "B" felt that it was more important to give high priority to the external appearance of its campus than did either College "C" or "D". College "C" invested its money, instead, on marketing techniques; in fact, of all five schools, College "C" devoted the most time and effort to mass mailings. On the other hand, most of College "D"'s resources appeared to be

spent in terms of giving as much financial aid as possible to its students. Of the three, it was felt that College "B", in prioritizing the external image of the institution, was the most interpretive in this area.

In some ways, College "B" was just as adaptive as were Colleges "C" and "D", especially in its admissions marketing methods. All three schools followed general techniques of mass mailings, attendance at college fairs, and contacts through church affiliations. Except in the numbers of student names purchased, the methods used were basically the same.

Colleges "B" and "D" both had distinctive sagas as finishing schools for women, which they attempted to project interpretively, although College "B" was more successful and convincing than was College "D". College "C" had no distinctive saga to capitalize on, nor did it appear to be very concerned about the lack thereof.

Alumni participation seemed to be very important in all five schools, but for many years, College "D" has recognized and capitalized on the importance of this group, more so than the other institutions in the study. It was considered to be using an interpretive strategy by utilizing its active former students in order to continue the school's traditions and values. A very influential alumni admissions association had been formally created for this purpose. Although recognizing the important contributions that alumni can make,

Colleges "B" and "C" have not been as far-reaching in the use of their former students.

College "B" has attempted to affect more selective admissions criteria than Colleges "C" and "D". This has contributed favorably to its image as a competitive institution. Although Colleges "C" and "D" expressed the desire to become more selective in their admissions standards, recognizing the positive image that they felt would result from such a step, they have, to date, made little or no attempt to put such standards into effect. Their concerns were more adaptive--recruiting numbers of students; academic quality was an aspect that they felt could not enter the scheme of things so long as enrollment looked as if it were on the decline.

The diversity that College "A" felt was so important for it as a liberal arts institution, was not as significant to the other schools. College "B" recognized the need for greater diversity, especially in terms of minority students, but to date has experienced little success in attracting large numbers from that group. Colleges "C" and "D" were not able to attract sizeable numbers of minority students using their present methods of recruitment, although they felt it was an important aspect of their institutional image. College "E", with the highest percentage of minority enrollment (17%) was not considered to be interpretive in that regard, because of the motivation associated with the process. Its over-

whelming concern was for the sheer numbers of minority students. It did not appear to believe, as did College "A", that the diversity that minority students would bring to the campus was the important issue.

In effect, then, Chaffee's model may need to be expanded, in order to define more adequately those schools that fall between the two extremes. (See Appendix E).

In the final analysis, the means and ends of an institution's raison d'être may be the determining factor in its overall success or failure. Where the means were made more important than the ends, as in predominantly adaptive institutions, the focus of concern changed from the interest in the students and their education, to strategies and techniques geared toward the institution's survival. The implications of this study for small, independent, liberal arts colleges, were clear: if a school were to remain a viable liberal arts institution, it must carefully consider its special needs as they relate to the institution's liberal arts philosophy, rather than responding too eagerly to perceived market demands. It must bridge the gap between what it claimed it was doing, and what it was, in reality, doing.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

A number of aspects of this study were surprising. It was observed that the primary emphasis in higher education, especially in small, independent institutions, has been on the use of the adaptive model of strategic management, as described by Chaffee. This model, utilized by virtually all colleges and universities today, stresses technical management in the areas of admissions marketing, recruitment, budgeting, cost analysis, and academic modification and selection. It was not clearly recognized at the outset of this study that there is another, more important factor that plays a significant role in an institution's success. The most successful small, independent, liberal arts institutions appear to be those which are using more interpretive strategies, and are aware of and have retained the essence of their historic mission. Rather than attempting to adapt to the current trends of the market, they have instead been able to assess their contributions to the communities they serve in terms of their histories, resources, and commitments. They appear to be fully aware of the necessity to apply adaptive strategies, but are more totally committed to the use of interpretive methods, which involve public perceptions and become a part of an institution's image through legitimate concepts and symbols.

One concept that every institution in the study clearly believes to be important is its status as a liberal arts college. However, after close analysis, it was discovered that the liberal arts rhetoric, as presented in the college bulletins and as stated by administrators, is, in most instances, at odds with what the colleges are actually practicing. Their dedication to liberal arts must be questioned, in view of their willingness to offer a variety of vocational, preprofessional, and professional programs of study, without adequately explaining how such programs would fit into a liberal arts mode. It was difficult to understand how these programs could lead to the liberation of an individual, when they are so narrowly focused. Even when a core of liberal arts courses is required in conjunction with an area of specialized study, unless there is a deliberate attempt to interrelate the two types of disciplines in a way that emphasizes a liberal arts methodology of instruction, students are unlikely to recognize the relevance or legitimacy of liberal arts.

Incoming freshmen are preoccupied with declaring a major, even before they have a chance to explore a variety of subject areas. As part of a "package deal," colleges promise students that they will receive both a basic liberal education and a specialization, which will boost their career possibilities in the world of work. According to Fromm (1962, pp. 69-70), this type of "marketing orientation"

encourages students to think of themselves in terms of their successful employment. Their aim is to sell themselves successfully on the market, and their sense of self stems not from activities as loving and thinking individuals, but from their future socioeconomic roles, instead. Hutchins (1943, pp. 31-32) called this the "cult of immediacy," or what may be referred to as "presentism." In this view, the way to understand the world is to grapple with short-term, immediate, materialistic goals.

Materialism has captured our culture. It has captured the state. It has captured education; for no one will deny that the test of education is whether the graduates succeed in life, and even those who argue for intellectual development as the aim of education are constrained to add that the man with a developed intellect will make more money than the man with the undeveloped one.

Every institution in the study seemed to feel very strongly that liberal arts was a very important aspect of its raison d'être. However, all but one of the institutions seemed in many ways to have lost its sense of historic mission in terms of liberal arts. The aims of education no longer appeared to be, as Hutchins (1943) stated, for moral, intellectual, and spiritual growth, even though they said that those were their ultimate goals for their students. The means that they are using--largely adaptive in nature--are very unlikely to lead to those ends. Hutchins' (1943) statement, made 42 years ago, is still relevant in terms of what institutions continue to practice.

Today, though it is possible to get an education in an American university, a man would have to be so bright and know so much to get it that he wouldn't really need it . . . Today the young American comprehends only by accident the intellectual tradition of which he is a part and in which he must live: for its scattered and disjointed fragments are strewn from one end of the campus to the other. Our university graduates have far more information and far less understanding than in the colonial period. And our universities present themselves to our people in this crisis either as rather ineffectual trade schools or as places where nice boys and girls have a nice time under the supervision of nice men and women in a nice environment. The crucial error is that of holding that nothing is any more important than anything else, that there can be no order of goods and no order in the intellectual realm. There is nothing central and nothing peripheral, nothing primary and nothing secondary, nothing basic and nothing superficial. (pp. 25-26).

Hutchins (1962) believed that there is a conflict in higher education: the pursuit of truth for its own sake, versus the preparation of men and women for their life work. Business and technical interests encourage the latter aim in order to recruit from institutions a product as nearly finished as possible, which required little training at their expense. He felt that this will lead to a situation where eventually, everybody at the institution will be there only for the purpose of being trained for a career. The result of this trend may eventually lead to Marcuse's "one-dimensional man" (in Schoolman, 1980). The question is: How can an individual, nourished in this type of educational environment, be expected, as Bowers (1974) pointed out, to respond intel-

ligerly to social and environmental conditions? We are facing depletion of our natural resources, erosion of community values, pollution of the environment, rapid cultural change, and the threat of nuclear annihilation. What society needs are people who have acquired the knowledge that will enable them to deal consciously and creatively with these situations.

According to Bailey (1977), not only should colleges examine their existing programs and requirements in terms of their academic history and the demands of the market, but also in terms of their value to the future lives of students: to their life cycle, to their work, to their capacity to cope, to their free self, and to their existential existence.

Hutchins (1943, pp. 17-18) succinctly stated:

The alternatives before us are clear. Either we must abandon the ideal of freedom or we must educate our people for freedom. If an education in the liberal arts and in the great books is the education for freedom, then we must make the attempt to give this education to all our citizens.

## CHAPTER VII

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study has suggested that some small, independent institutions have found it necessary to utilize adaptive strategies in order to remain viable, and that interpretive strategies appeared to be incorporated more in schools which were experiencing success.

It seemed apparent that those institutions which utilized interpretive strategies and were successful, had the margin of freedom to continue to do so. Conversely, those schools which had practiced a preponderance of adaptive measures found themselves unable to initiate interpretive strategies successfully. Their public image and academic credibility had been affected to the point where legitimacy was very difficult to reestablish.

Further study might be undertaken to determine whether those institutions which experienced more severe financial difficulties were more inclined to pursue an adaptive approach in solving their problems.

This study also recognized that the Directors of Admissions and the Academic Deans were significant administrators within the recruiting schemes of the institutions in the sample; however, further investigation might discover other administrators who could offer relevant insights. In

addition, other forces associated with the colleges might be significant to the working relationships within the institution such as the Board of Trustees, in terms of the power they wield, the autonomy they allow the chief administrators, etc.

It might also be interesting, from an interpretive standpoint, to survey a representative sample of parents and students who had considered enrolling in one of the institutions in the study, and to discover reasons why they later decided against attending.

Chaffee's two models of strategic management were useful tools for the purposes of this study. However, they were found to be limiting in several ways. First, it was doubtful to the researcher, having had twelve years of experience in admissions and financial aid, that any school would fit totally into either adaptive or interpretive models. Although Chaffee admitted that institutions utilized a combination of the two, there were no allowances made for the "shades of gray" between a purely adaptive and a purely interpretive approach.

Second, as Chaffee admitted, just because an institution used one model over the other, this did not explain the schools' overall resilience, even though "the more resilient colleges were consistently more likely to take actions that reflected the interpretive model." (p. 228).

Also, institutions which used an abundance of adaptive

strategies, were not necessarily guaranteed more success over those institutions which used fewer adaptive strategies. In effect, the numbers of activities were not factors of a school's resilience. Other forces obviously played an important role in each institution's overall success, and were not always apparent to the researcher, in view of the particular focus of this study.

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APPENDIX A  
COLLEGE PROFILES

	College "A"	College "B"	College "C"	College "D"	College "E"
Year founded	1837	1772	1924	1873	1838
Original student body	co-educational	women only	co-educational	co-educational (until 1900)	for women only (until 1953)
Type	4-year liberal arts	4-year liberal arts	4-year liberal arts	4-year liberal art	4-year liberal arts
Degree Programs Offered	Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Science Bachelor of Fine Arts Associate of Arts Bachelor of Administrative Science Bachelor of Music	Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Science Bachelor of Music	Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Science	Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Science Bachelor of Fine Arts	Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of Science Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in Interdisciplinary Studies
Campus Size	300 acres	57 acres	75 acres	38 acres	30 acres

## APPENDIX B

## MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

	College "A"	College "B"	College "C"	College "D"	College "E"
Library size	200,000 vol.	111,000 vol.	100,000 vol.	83,000 vol.	83,000 vol.
Mass mailing 1984	35,000 names	65,000 names	67,000 names	5,000 names	38,000 names
Response rate from mass mailing	25% response	10% response	21% response	25% response	10% response
Special services	Academic skills center (support, not remedial nor learning disabled)	Lifespan Center for Placement, Testing, & Counseling (no remedial or tutorial)	Tutorial program for freshmen students.	Budgeted for 70 students in federal TRIO program (tutorial) (not for learning disabled)	Academic Skills Center (not for learning disabled)
Affiliation with professional or graduate schools	3-2 engineering program with Georgia Tech. & Washington U. in St. Louis;  Med. tech. and Phys. Asst. with Bowman Gray;  3-3 program at any law school accredited by American Bar Association  Affiliation with Duke U. in Environmental	Bowman-Gray School of Medicine, Forsyth Memorial Hospital, and Duke U. for Medical Technology;  Forsyth Memorial and N.C. Baptist Hosp. for dietetics;  3-2 engineering with Duke and Vanderbilt	Duke U. in Forestry and Environmental Management	Nursing program affiliation with UNC-CH;  Optometry prog. affiliation with Penn. School of Optometry;  Medical Tech. with Bowman Gray;  Engineering program arrangement with A & T.	Affiliation with Bowman Gray and Forsyth Hosp. Phys. Asst. and other health prog.

## APPENDIX C

## 1984 ENROLLMENT DATA

	College "A"	College "B"	College "C"	College "D"	College "E"
Full time undergraduate enrollment	1,050	708	1,250	540	524
Out of state enrollment	60%	47.5%	50%	55%	40%
Transfer student enrollment	6%	5%	23%	10%	12%
Minority enrollment	4%	2%	8%	less than 1%	17%
Male/Female ratio	54% male 46% female	100% female	48% male 52% female	100% female	40% male 60% female
Faculty/student ratio	1 : 16 (83 full time)	1 : 10 (71 full time)	1 : 16 (63 full time)	1 : 13 (41 full time)	1 : 14 (35 full time)

APPENDIX D  
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

	College "A"	College "B"	College "C"	College "D"	College "E"
Admissions application fee	\$15.00	\$20.00	\$15.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
Expenses and fees (annual)	\$7,710.00	\$8,650.00	\$5,310.00	\$4,650.00	\$6,300.00
Percentage of students receiving financial aid	67%	50%	70%	85%	73%
Scholarships	20 honors scholarships each entering class (\$2,600.00)	4 honors scholarships awarded annually	\$1,000 to \$1,500 awarded to incoming freshmen	1983-84 offered 25 endowed scholarships	1984-85 gave 38 awards (max. \$2,000)
College endowment	\$11 million (market value)	\$11.1 million (market value)	\$8.5 million (market value)	\$2.75 million (market value)	\$4 million (market value)

## APPENDIX E

## USE OF ADAPTIVE/INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

	Curriculum	Financial Conditions	Recruitment Activities	Internal Perceptions
College "A"	mainly Interpretive	mainly Interpretive	somewhat Interpretive somewhat Adaptive	mainly Interpretive somewhat Adaptive
College "B"	somewhat Interpretive mainly Adaptive	somewhat Interpretive somewhat Adaptive	somewhat Interpretive mainly Adaptive	mainly Interpretive somewhat Adaptive
College "C"	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive
College "D"	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive somewhat Interpretive
College "E"	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive	mainly Adaptive somewhat Interpretive