

# **Council for Christian Colleges & Universities**

## **Executive Summary**

**Attitudinal Study of  
Prospects, Inquirers, Parents  
of Inquirers, Non-Matriculants,  
and Matriculants**



**Maguire Associates, Inc.**  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*"Courage is the capacity to confront what we can imagine."*

Leo Rosten

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Council for Colleges & Universities (CCCU) has a vision to integrate learning with Christian faith and to cultivate Christian morals and spiritual growth in young people. In order to be as effective as possible in communicating its vision to potential students, the CCCU decided to undertake a comprehensive market research project to better understand the expectations of today's and tomorrow's students. Maguire Associates was retained to conduct this study. In 1986, Maguire Associates worked with the Christian College Coalition on a similar project. Therefore, this study was carefully constructed to continue that work and to measure new dimensions of delivering a Christ-centered education.

In addition to this executive summary, each participating college or university is receiving a full report that includes an interpretation of the research and recommendations for action at the Council and member institution levels. The full report also contains the annotated questionnaires and highlights of the research findings. Complete documentation of the aggregate and target market analyses will be made available to the Council in hard copy and on a compact disk at the conclusion of this project.

## GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- To determine how families define value in education.
- To provide the CCCU with “big picture” themes that integrate a richly diverse, Christ-centered community of institutions.
- To develop strategies for promoting under-appreciated yet cherished elements of the CCCU's mission.
- To uncover the distinctive profiles of target audiences.
- To gain a longitudinal perspective of the college search process.
  - To monitor shifts since 1986 in families' priorities in making college choices.
  - To track changes in the overall visibility and image of Christian colleges and universities since 1986.
  - To assess market perceptions of the quality of Christ-centered colleges in 1986 and today.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

### *Design of the Instruments*

A steering committee comprised of representatives from member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities as well as a representative from the Council headquarters worked with Maguire Associates to construct the research instruments. Pilot tests were conducted with high school students for the final drafts of the instruments with special attention given to message testing and to the overall length and clarity of the survey.

### *Sample Design and Collection Procedures*

- Prospects: Prospects were comprised of rising high school juniors (Class of 2002) who were not drawn from the databases of the CCCU member institutions. A list of 10,000 students was generated by the National

Research Center for College and University Admissions (NRCCUA). The specifications required that the students be in a college-preparatory curriculum and interested in attending a four-year college or university within the next few years. Students who identified themselves as Jewish, Mormon, or as having a preference for a "liberal" campus environment were excluded from the list. Along with an introductory letter from Maguire Associates, a mail survey was sent to 5,000 students in June and 3,200 students in July of 2000 with a goal to collect 400 completed surveys; the actual number collected was 559. The response rate of 7% is typical and adequate for prospect research. To encourage candor in their responses, the CCCU was not identified as the client.

- **Inquirers and Inquirer Parents:** Inquirers are students who requested information from at least one CCCU institution. Seventy member institutions of the CCCU sent their complete inquirer files from the Classes of 2000 and 2001 to Maguire Associates. These files were merged. A randomized block design was used to draw the names from the combined pool in such a way that inquirers from every member institution were invited to participate in the study. The research methodology for this audience was a mail/telephone approach. A mailing was sent from Maguire Associates to introduce the purpose of the study without revealing the CCCU as the client. Portions of the survey were enclosed in the letter to reduce the time required for the follow-up telephone interview. A goal of 500 completed telephone surveys from inquirers was set; from June 28 to July 26, 2000, 514 surveys were completed. After talking with the student, a request was made to speak with a parent. A goal of 150 surveys was established for parents and Maguire Associates completed 205 telephone interviews.
- **Admitted Students:** Participating member institutions were asked to send their entire accepted freshman file to Maguire Associates. The files were integrated and duplicate names were eliminated. Students' status as a matriculant or a non-matriculant to a CCCU institution was

determined by the accepted students' feedback about where they intended to enroll. Matriculants indicated that they enrolled at one of the CCCU colleges or universities and non-matriculants did not name a CCCU institution as their enrollment choice. The same randomized block design method used for inquirers was employed for drawing the names of students from the available database of accepted candidates. A mail questionnaire was sent to 10,000 admitted students in order to reach the goal of 800-900 completed surveys. A cover letter from Maguire Associates summarized the reasons for the study and, once again, no mention was made of the CCCU. Completed surveys were received from 883 students – 540 matriculants and 343 non-matriculants. The response rate of 9% is lower than typically seen for admitted student surveys. This may be due to the fact that member CCCU institutions remained anonymous. The number of completed surveys was more than adequate for the purposes of this study.

#### BENCHMARKS OF 1986 AND 2000 STUDIES

Because of the number of years since the last study, the differences in ratings were not subjected to tests for statistical significance, but the Maguire Associates team has identified the following differences that strongly suggest shifts in the marketplace and changes in the image of the CCCU institutions.

- The college search is starting earlier for families. While the timing of the search process was not tested in 1986, Maguire Associates has been tracking this trend for several years. CCCU's data in 2000 indicates that many prospective students are reducing their list of possibilities *before* their junior year in high school, reflecting the behavior of college-bound students nationally.
- In 2000, prospects are placing more emphasis on monetary issues and social life than they did in 1986. They attach less importance to the general reputation of an institution. Their increased focus on

finances includes attention to the total cost of an institution and its financial aid programs, but families are also more interested in measuring investment value, particularly as demonstrated by employment opportunities after graduation. Today's students tend to replace the general academic reputation index with more targeted criteria, such as the quality of specific majors or job and graduate school placement rates. These specific measures of academic quality have remained relatively consistent with the 1986 ratings as high priorities.

- Compared to 1986, inquirers and accepted students in 2000 place more importance on monetary issues, social life, location, and the integration of faith and learning. Today, those who are considering a Christian college or university also look more closely at both total cost and financial aid when they think about price and their greater interest in location may reflect their concerns about the costs associated with travel. Changes in how they view their experiences on campus seem to focus not only on their social life, but also on the integration of faith and learning as part of their intellectual life.
- In 2000, accepted CCCU students are less interested than they were in 1986 in preparation for graduate school, the quality of faculty and campus facilities, and diversity. Preparation for graduate school is a high priority overall, but the lower importance ratings among accepted students suggests that those who are more interested have self selected out of the admissions funnel in recent years. The quality of faculty and campus facilities also continue to be reasonably important to 2000 candidates, but there is some slippage in how much emphasis they place on them. The desire to find diversity has declined more substantially from a low rating for importance in 1986 to an even lower level in 2000, which could be the result of a lack of student diversity among the accepted students in the two studies. While this information was not collected in 1986, 86% of the non-matriculants and 89% of the matriculants identified themselves as white in the 2000 study.

- The visibility of Christian colleges and universities has increased slightly since 1986, but the overall level of familiarity is still low in the marketplace. The slight gains in visibility reveal progress in the right direction, but the ability to name Christian institutions or what is distinctive about a Christian education is quite limited.
- Overall, the academic reputation of CCCU institutions does not appear to have improved substantially in the past 14 years, but some gains have been made in their reputation for preparing students well for future study. When compared to other institutions, Christian schools show some signs of a stronger relative position for the academic quality of their students, their ability to prepare students for future careers, and their overall academic reputation.
- Compared to 1986 prospects, perceptions of the cost of CCCU institutions are slightly more positive in the eyes of 2000 prospects. However, confidence in the relief provided by financial aid has declined for inquirers and non-matriculants since 1986. In both studies, CCCU institutions did not compete effectively with other colleges and universities on price.
- In their own words, prospective students mentioned concerns about “closed-mindedness” on CCCU campuses more often in 2000 than they did in 1986. These concerns shape their perceptions of the freedom of intellectual inquiry as well as the environment of campus life. Data strongly suggest that prospective students’ anxieties about finding intolerance at Christian institutions are erecting barriers to their interest in applying.

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS IN THE 2000 STUDY

- The use of the Web to search for colleges and universities represents a major change in market behavior. Since Maguire Associates began following student use of the Internet several years ago, the rate of participation has increased from 15%-20% to 75%-80% in the college-bound population. The CCCU research shows that 78%-80% (depending on the level of the admissions funnel) of the prospective students use the Web to investigate college choices. (See page 24 of the full membership report.)
- Public flagship institutions are the primary competitors for gaining the attention of prospects and inquirers. The CCCU institutions must contrast their educational offerings with the relative short-comings of public universities, namely their large size, secular environments, and lack of ability to pay attention to total student development. (See page 101 of the full membership report.)
- Many prospective students see alignment with a specific denomination as a narrowing influence. Six "Christian variables" – integration of the Christian faith and learning, church affiliation of the institution, Christian atmosphere, Christian faculty, fellowship with other Christians, and Christian service opportunities – were tested for their impact on decisions to pursue a Christian education. All but "church affiliation of the institution" played a role in moving students down the admissions funnel. Those institutions with strong denominational ties should recognize the possible marketing liability that their affiliation may have for attracting new markets outside of their denomination. (See pages 57-59 and 98.) Most likely, awareness of a church affiliation would be less of a concern among students who attend church more frequently.



- Goals for the future and academic quality indices are consistently linked together by prospective students in the CCCU markets. This calls for communications that blend academic and future-oriented offerings, so that the return-on-investment expectations of families will be addressed. (See pages 74-75.)
- The phrases “liberal arts” and “Christian liberal arts” are not immediately helpful in communicating value to prospective students and their parents. These phrases need more explanation and do not carry the implicit meaning that had once been assumed. (See page 37.)
- Prospective students have concerns about the relationship between the Christian influence and intellectual engagement. Students expressed hesitations about “closed-minded” attitudes on Christian campuses and they indicated that they would shy away from any hint of strict rules governing the freedom of thought. (See page 54.)
- Academic excellence needs to be addressed differently as the communication flow develops. Prospects need to hear about overall indicators of academic quality that combine traditional academic measures with practical outcomes; inquirers need to be informed about the breadth of offerings and the ability of Christian institutions to attend to their personal interests and ambitions; and admitted students are ready to gain a greater appreciation for the positive influence of a Christian faculty and a Christian atmosphere where faith, learning, and living come together to create a distinctive educational experience. (See pages 48-53.)
- Contrary to what most CCCU schools would probably assume, the integration of faith and living is an underdeveloped building block of the Christian college experience. While students are aware of a Christian influence on campus life, they are focused on rules and

regulations. They need to better understand how a Christian atmosphere brings together the enjoyments of service learning, social life, and a comfortable, caring community experience. (See page 69.)

- Location is especially important at the prospect stage of the college search. To gain the full benefit of location, while responding to concerns of many students that Christian colleges and universities are “too small” and “too restrictive,” Christian institutions need to help students see their campuses as a “home base,” more than a “home away from home.” Geography should extend beyond the campus’s immediate physical setting to its region and to opportunities to see the world. (See page 73.)
- The research is replete with evidence that students are focused on using their undergraduate education as the springboard to a first job, a career, and, for some, graduate school. As mentioned previously, while a sub-set of students (accepted candidates) appears to be less interested in graduate school preparation compared to their counterparts in the 1986 study, overall this outcome is an priority. This focus on the future within the CCCU market reflects a trend in the general college-bound population. Institutions that are able to provide specific information about the successes of their students are at a distinct advantage in proving the marketability of their degrees. (See page 74-75.)
- The “value proposition” message for CCCU schools should include the idea of character development. Families are interested in a return on investment in tangible terms, but they also place a high value on attention to the development of the whole person. Christian colleges and universities have a unique opportunity to position themselves as ideal environments for addressing character development as an educational outcome. (See pages 80-84.)

- Students believe that their parents have a greater influence on their college choice decision than parents indicated they think they have. This is not a common finding in other market research and underscores the importance of interaction with parents early in – and throughout – the recruitment cycle. (See page 110.)
- Parents are starting the college search process even earlier than their sons and daughters — many before the freshman year. Even though the high schools are not starting the advising process in earnest until the junior year, families are starting to develop and narrow their lists without the involvement of the high school counselors. Colleges and universities that are implementing outreach programs to prospective students and their parents before the junior year are being rewarded with growing applicant pools. (See page 110.)
- Because of the church attendance habits of students from the Southeast and Midwest, these areas of the U.S. are the most fertile for developing new interest in CCCU schools. The data revealed concentrations of students who reported higher church attendance records from these two regions and, as in 1986, those who attend church more often are more inclined to pursue a CCCU education. (See page 157.)
- The biggest shift in how students designate their religious status takes place between the prospect and inquirer stages of the college search process. Prospective students were asked to describe themselves as a Christian, Evangelical Christian, Born Again Christian, and/or Follower of Christ. This shift from a more general description of Christian to the other designations supports other evidence – including what they say a Christian education means to them – that there is a need to attend to the language used in describing the Christian experience in early “conversations” with prospective students. The specificity of language depicting Christian life on campus should evolve from a less

overt emphasis on Christian life at the prospect level to a more specific emphasis and illustration of Christian life at the applicant level, using the research as a guide. (See page 166.)

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

### *Responding to Market Behavior*

(See pages 23-28 in the full membership report.)

- Begin direct marketing efforts to families early. Institutions that are reaching out to sophomores in high school are attracting their attention before they develop their short lists, with positive results.
- Build communication flows based on the first point of contact, not the calendar. One-contact-then-wait strategies (until established flows for communication are initiated) for early inquirers are inadequate to hold their attention.
- Re-allocate resources toward the Web and other electronic communications. Careful decisions should be made about which print media should be continued and the research results should be applied to every publication and electronic tool.
- Design the Web site for use throughout the admissions cycle. Research at Maguire Associates indicates that students are using the Web as a complete diagnostic tool through to the point of the enrollment decision.

### *Increasing Visibility Using the CCCU's Hallmark Themes*

There are four hallmark themes, defined by the results of the CCCU research, which address the major components of a college experience. They should be put to work by the Council to promote the organization and by each member institution to develop institution-specific communications.

The four central themes are:

- I. Academic Quality: A high-quality education in a secular world.
- II. Christian-centered community: A close-knit, Christian community that emphasizes character development and spiritual growth.
- III. Future Orientation: Preparation for life as well as a living.
- IV. Financial Investment: The value proposition.

- I. *Academic Quality: A high-quality education in a secular world.*  
(See pages 55-57.)

The Council should advance prospective students' perceptions of the academic quality of the CCCU member institutions by leading its signature statement with reference to scholarship. The recent change in the organization's tag line is a step in the right direction. As the voice of its members, the Council must address this issue persistently and in all public relations outreach efforts. Member institutions can build on the Council's communications by reiterating the hallmark themes and developing their unique profile, using the following guidelines:

- Tackle perceptions that CCCU institutions may lack intellectual depth. Assertive action is required to address students' concerns that Christian colleges and universities are "too rigid" in academics. With a broad range of academic philosophies and levels of selectivity among members, each institution must communicate its own appropriate measure of academic freedom and challenge.

- Bring together the concepts of a Christian education and the learning process after the ethos of intellectual free inquiry has been established. Concerns about restrictions on freedom of thought need to be overcome before students are ready to hear more about how faith and learning come together on Christian campuses. Once that threshold has been crossed, the appeal of the concept of integrating faith and learning increases at each progressive stage of the admissions funnel.
- Emphasize faculty commitment to the development of the whole person. This will position CCCU schools advantageously against the public flagships and large private universities. The level of commitment given to developing the spiritual, personal, and intellectual dimensions of every student, particularly through faculty involvement, will also distinguish Christian schools advantageously against a broad range of college options.
- Develop appreciation for the value of a Christian faculty. Prospective students are not overly receptive to messages about a Christian faculty until the final stage of the recruitment cycle. Descriptions of the value of a Christian faculty are received more positively after the academic climate has been defined.

*II. Christian-centered Community: A close-knit, Christian community that emphasizes character development and spiritual growth.*

(See pages 70-74.)

The greatest impact on decisions to pursue a tentative interest in CCCU institutions is their Christian character. Many prospective students who would be extremely desirable additions to member institutions need to listen longer to the CCCU story before they exit out of the admissions funnel. The Council needs to address this issue by communicating its philosophical tenets for student life and the most distinguishing features of a Christian college experience. Member institutions will then be positioned

to tell their own story about life on their campus, following these research-based recommendations:

- Flesh out the concept of personal growth to include spiritual development in a Christian atmosphere. After students have entered into the circle of Christian college choices, they are more receptive to messages about the development of the spiritual side of themselves. However, the universally appealing notion of personal growth must continue to be aligned with spiritual development.
- Develop in stages students' appreciation for the value of Christian fellowship and its impact on all aspects of campus life. If families are brought along carefully over the course of the recruitment years, the enrollment decision will be better informed after receiving messages that evolve to "educate" prospective students about the full range of benefits offered by a Christ-centered educational experience.
- Develop a more complete idea of the true meaning of an integrated experience of faith and living. Families should be shown how students in a Christian community work together on campus and in service to others off campus in the context of experiencing an extra dimension of student life.
- Address issues about small size by drawing attention to the intimacy of the campus community. Given the dominance of relatively large universities as students are narrowing their list of choices, smaller campuses can benefit from their size if they tie in the most effective messages tested in this project that relate to campus community and development of the complete person.
- Create a multi-dimensional perspective of student life. Students have a tendency to envision a strict, structured campus environment

that may diminish expectations for having fun and leading busy lives on and off campus.

- Increase emphasis on social life as students approach their enrollment decision. Messages about social life become more important after students have been accepted. At this point in the decision-making process, they tend to focus on whether or not they are going to fit into the community.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the campus visit with a goal to achieve top ratings. The campus visit is the most important source of information for students at all stages of the admissions cycle. Institutions need to aim for the highest ratings to have a measurable impact of student interest.

### *III. Future Orientation: Preparation for life as well as a living.*

(See pages 77-78.)

Preparation for future careers and employment opportunities after graduation are at the top of students' list of priorities. Parents also give substantial weight to practical outcomes for their sons and daughters. CCCU institutions have a challenge to convince families that students who graduate from a Christian college or university will be well-educated for the world of work. Families more readily accept that graduates will be prepared to conduct moral and spiritually guided lives. In the context of academic quality, the Council must help families gain a more complete appreciation for how a Christian education will lead to a promising future. To build on this theme, member institutions should:

- Follow suit at the institutional level with ample evidence throughout the recruitment process about practical outcomes for their students. This information can be in the form of first job placements, graduate school acceptances, lists of recruiters that visit campus each year, and profiles of successful alumni.



- Demonstrate how students get “real world” experiences while still in college. Service learning and other off-campus experiences add an important dimension to the academic experience that helps students to test their interests, gain valuable experience, and flesh out their resumes.

#### IV. *Financial Investment: The value proposition.*

(See pages 92-94.)

The outcomes students associate with educational value change as the cycle progresses. At the prospect stage, expectations are closely tied with the importance of preparation for future careers and character development. Inquirers see similar relationships, but they also connect value with opportunities to be exposed to different cultures through campus and study abroad programs. Accepted students have developed more complex ideas about value, associating general and specific academic measures with expectations for character development. Parents look more favorably on the benefits of a Christian environment. However, the gap needs to be closed between their perceptions of the bottom-line value of public alternatives and CCCU institutions by encouraging them to think about a more complete value proposition and about price in terms of net cost.

The Council can play an important role by writing a value proposition that augments the Council's signature statement about the most distinctive elements of a Christian education. Ongoing messages should focus on the importance of investing in preparation for future careers and in character development. Member institutions can carry this theme forward by connecting the concept of value to their distinctive offerings:

- Communicate value-added benefits of a Christian higher education throughout the admissions process. The most effective message tested in the study expresses the commitment of the college or university to

continuing the Christian values of families and to fostering individual spiritual growth.

- Attract the parents of students who are making decisions about where to apply with the messages that appealed most to them. The research suggests that, in addition to continuing the Christian values of families, parents resonate with messages about encouraging students to form their own view of the world while engaging society with Christian principles and ideas and about integrating Christian faith and learning.
- Increase families' understanding of the concept of net cost. The recurrence of the word "expensive" in the research and parents' focus on total cost underscores the importance of doing more to emphasize the availability of financial aid.

#### *Building the CCCU/Member Institution Partnership*

(See pages 95-98.)

To build a cohesive image for the organization, the Council and its members must work together to develop a brand identity. The CCCU signature statement and tag line should position the CCCU membership against public university competitors and define the uniqueness of a Christian education. Most importantly, it should be communicated consistently by the Council and by member institutions. By helping to enhance the visibility of the organization, each member will increase its own visibility. Other initiatives to strengthen the partnership include:

- Use the CCCU logo and signature statement in member institution marketing to reinforce the identity of the organization. Variations in logos and tag lines will diminish the cohesiveness of the CCCU image.
- Adopt the hallmark themes at the institutional level throughout the recruitment cycle. Supporting the hallmark themes should be viewed as providing a pulpit for greater visibility. Within the framework of these

themes, each college and university should develop its own *complementary* and unique image.

- Promote five of the six Christian variables tested. The only Christian variable that did not help to move students down the admissions funnel referred to a church affiliation. For those institutions with a denominational affiliation, their ties to a church can be made clear. However, those without a specific affiliation can benefit equally by concentrating on the other five Christian variables.

## COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

(See pages 105-106.)

- Develop communications for introducing CCCU institutions to the marketplace with an awareness of the strong presence of public flagships. An emphasis on the benefits of smaller, more personal communities that place a premium on character development will position CCCU members advantageously against flagship universities.
- Adjust communications to position CCCU members against larger private institutions at the inquiry stage of the admissions process. The research has documented the influx of private universities at this stage, although many students will continue to hold at least one public flagship on their list of possibilities.
- Distinguish the unique religious character of a Christian institution at the application stage. Once applications have been submitted, the self-selected population has changed radically, and is focused on a set of Christian schools that are more similar than different.
- Seek the best institutional positioning strategies for addressing the areas of competitive weakness highlighted in the research.

Hesitations about the social life at Christian colleges and universities pose as barriers to application. Students also harbor doubts about recreational opportunities at the enrollment decision point. Finally, the recurrent reservation about the relative cost of CCCU schools reinforces the need to help families think in terms of net cost.

## TARGET MARKETS

- Parents: (See pages 110-115) Parents are more eager than their sons and daughters to start the college search early and more supportive of a Christian education. Since prospective students in the CCCU market have indicated that they rely more heavily than most of their peers on their parents' opinions, it is important to establish lines of communication with this under-served and crucial audience. CCCU member institutions should craft a communications flow for parents that concentrates on the benefits of integrating academics and a Christian-based community from the outset. Ongoing communications and events directed to parents should include the following topics:
  - Making the case for educational value, based on the research results.
  - Faculty – who they are, how they have made their mark in their fields, and ways they integrate faith and learning.
  - Continuing family values in college.
  - Financial planning services and resources.
  - Safety and security.
  - Career counseling and services.
- Males: (See pages 115-132) The differences between males and females emerged in their ratings of features they consider important in a college. At the prospect and inquirer stages of the admissions funnel, men are more interested in sports, which is a common finding in college-bound

student research. Less common is the lower priority (although still rated as important) male prospects gave to preparation for future careers. At the inquiry stage, males are less interested than their female counterparts in a liberal arts education, another typical finding. Men who have been admitted to a CCCU institution are less price sensitive than women are. They no longer attach higher ratings to sports as a priority, indicating a change in the composition of the pool of male candidates. They are also less interested in community and personal growth issues. If gender balance is a pressing issue, all communications should be reviewed for their attention to the male perspective. Also, direct marketing initiatives should be followed up with targeted correspondence comprised of gender-specific, research-based messages.

- **Academic Ability:** (See pages 133-156) The data were analyzed three ways to show how high-ability and “bread-and-butter” candidates compared with each other and with lower-ability students. The representation of top students in the CCCU market share increases between the prospect and matriculant stages of the admissions funnel, a positive trend line not always achieved by colleges and universities. The use of information sources is relatively consistent across categories of student quality, with the exception that printed materials from Christian institutions are used more by top students than others at the inquiry stage. This confirms the importance of preserving the print medium as financial resources are directed toward electronic communications.

The messages developed for the hallmark themes are designed to appeal to high-ability students. Since top students tend to begin the college search earlier than other students do, these messages should form the foundation of direct marketing campaigns for the recruitment of high school sophomores.

When the final enrollment decision is made, parents are seen as even more influential by high-ability students than by others, suggesting

again that parents are supportive of the distinctive missions of Christian colleges and universities. Their crucial role in the decision-making process should compel CCCU schools to include parents in their communications flow.

- Church Attendance: (See pages 157-183) The aggregate data were examined three ways by the frequency of students' church attendance – more than once per week, once per week, and less than once per week. As found in the 1986 study, the most promising market for recruitment is the dedicated churchgoer. It was somewhat surprising to learn that the length of time students reported knowing about Christian colleges and universities did not link to their frequency of church attendance. However, exposure to family and friends who attend(ed) a Christian institution is connected to church attendance patterns. Those who attend church more often are much more likely to report interacting with someone who has gone to a Christian institution, particularly among prospects and inquirers – possibly because the connections are fresh in their minds. Also, students who attend church more frequently indicated that their parents are more influential in the process.

A targeted communications strategy should be developed for church and youth groups, a broad definition of legacies, and parents. In contacts with students who are not as involved with their churches, the language used in describing the Christian experience needs to develop over time, enabling the member institution to communicate the meaning of a Christian education more completely.

## CONCLUSION

In guiding the direction of this research project, the steering committee of the CCCU has set the stage for translating a vision into a plan, data into information, and ideas into action. In order to put this research to work, the leadership at the Council and all

member institutions must accept the challenge of increasing the coordination of their marketing activities.

The hallmark themes outlined in the report have been formed by the marriage between the marketplace's expectations and the Christian mission. To develop the CCCU image, these central themes need to be disseminated with increasing attention to detail as the recruitment cycle unfolds.

Maguire Associates encourages the CCCU to probe this study's rich resource of data for the next five years. But achievement will be measured more by action than by further analysis. While further exploration is underway, forward motion on the many recommendations offered in the full report should be the focus of activity. The CCCU leadership and its rich array of member institutions are poised to shape the future of Christian education. Working together and in the spirit of mutual support, that future will be bright.