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Factors Influencing the College Choice of Music Majors

Attending a Four Year Institution:

A Comparative Study

by

Ryan Curtis

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

Factors Influencing the College Choice of Music Majors

Attending a Four Year Institution:

A Comparative Study

by


Ryan Curtis

This dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education



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Dr. Lynda Leavitt, Dissertation Chair

4/13/2012

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Date




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Dr. Deb Ayres, Committee Member

4/13/12

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Date



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Dr. Graham Weir, Committee Member

4/13/12

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Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Ryan C. Curtis

Signature: Ryan Curtis Date: 4-13-12

## **Acknowledgements**

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and leadership from my dissertation chair, Dr. Lynda Leavitt, my committee members, Dr. Graham Weir and Dr. Deb Ayres, and my go to statistician Dr. Sherrie Wisdom. I would never have been able to complete this project without your help.

I would also like to thank the participating students and faculty at the researched institutions for allowing me to come into your classrooms to conduct my research and for your added patience participating in the follow up interview.

Also to my parents, Ron, Donna, and John, my siblings Derek, Steff, and Nick, Thank you. You all made me who I am today by supporting me and encouraging me with your best wishes.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Kim and children, Brendan and Kailyn. Without their support, I would never have started this process. I am truly grateful for their patience and giving of their time to allow me to do this.

## **Abstract**

### Factors Influencing the College Choice of Music Majors

#### Attending a Four Year Institution

The purpose of this research sought to investigate and compare the factors influencing the college choice of music majors attending four-year private and four-year public universities. A comparison of college choice data among four universities was completed in the following areas: academic, institutional, financial, and personal/social. These influences leading to college choice are based on the study of real-life decision-making (Galotti, 1995) and the factors which influence the music majors choice of institution (Locke, 1982). The four main factors deemed important in college choice, surveyed through a 31 question survey and a follow up interview, focused on which of these factors guided students majoring in music to attend their chosen university and which factors were given more weight in the decision process. The survey and interviews also set out to discern if gender or grade point average bare any influence in the college choice of music majors. This study found, based on the four attributes surveyed, financial factors had the greatest influence on music majors actually enrolling in a specific institution followed by institutional, academic, and personal/social attributes in that order. Gender and GPA did not appear to influence college choice nor did social networking between university and student. Scholarship was determined to be the single highest student rated component influencing college choice of music majors.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Several studies documented the efforts of researchers in the field of college choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Chapman, 1981; Galotti, 1995; Galotti & Mark, 1994), but few studies have narrowed the focus group to include music majors as the primary sample (Locke, 1982). The researcher was unable to find previous studies that mentioned the possible influence of social media (e.g. twitter and Facebook) as an influential factor in the college choice process due to the relative newness of those technologies. Due to the lack of literature related to the college choice process of music majors, and the added benefit as a professor of music at a four-year institution, this research sought to establish the choice factors music majors undertake when choosing a higher education institution.

There are many options and great implications for high school seniors when selecting which college to attend (Galotti & Mark, 1994). Where the student will attend college in relation to their home or how many loans are required are just a few of the variables that factor into the college choice decision (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Chapman, 1981; Litten, 1991). Students confront the time and expense associated with investigating possible college choices spending upwards of 50 hours and \$1,500 preparing their search (Litten, 1991). The factors influencing a music major's choice of institution, and the goals and objectives he or she desires from their chosen institution, guided this research into the college choice of music majors.

The researcher chose this topic due to the importance of the subject to the researcher and the possible benefits to the students and institutions involved via enhanced recruitment through a better understanding of the college choice process, and/or a greater student understanding of the college attributes within the university . The college choice

of most high school students, wishing to attend a university/college, typically occurs on a well-defined timeline (Galotti, 1995). Few life decisions of this magnitude occur through such an organized process, predictable time-period, and support various forms of data gathering and development (Galotti, 1995; Galotti & Mark, 1994).

### **Background of the Study**

Many universities consider enrollment to be a key goal for their institution (Filter, 2010). Institutions create internal divisions devoted to recruitment, enrollment, and retention to maintain or increase these goals (Filter, 2010). Universities spend hours and money searching for students with the aim of attracting them to their campus (Kelly, 1988). Before effective recruiting can take place, administrators and faculty must understand the process of student choice (Kelly, 1988). Many institutions use the strengths of the student body as a marketing method to demonstrate and promote the quality of the institution and attract other interested students (Filter, 2010). While specific groups of students within a university may bring a level of status to the university such as athletic teams, artistic, or academic populations, universities that try to recruit and enroll these students require a better understanding of the factors influencing the college choice process (Hossler, 1984).

While similar studies conducted by Drewes and Michael (2006) and Hodges and Barbuto (2002) focused on various populations of interest based on socioeconomic status, academic achievement, or race, this study aimed to provide a perspective from the music major. The basis for this study stemmed from previous research findings suggesting 34 criteria within four main areas of interest which might possibly influence the college choice of general student populations (Galotti, 1995; Galotti & Mark, 1994). The

previous research which guide this study focus on academic (e.g. challenge, requirements, course offerings, faculty quality, majors offered), institutional (e.g. appearance, class size, facilities, location), financial (e.g. cost, financial aid), and personal/social factors (e.g. distance from home, parents' advice, friends at school) as guiding influences of college choice (Galotti, 1995; Galotti & Mark, 1994; Locke, 1982). This study included those previous attributes but also included the possible influences of social networking on the music majors' college choice due to the popularity of this media and the lack of studies involving social media and the college choice of the music major.

### **Purpose of Study**

Recruitment and the college choice of music majors is an important concept to many researchers (Kelly, 1988; Lindeman, 2004; Locke, 1982; Longley, 1999; Overmier, 2003, Shropshire, 2007; Waggoner, 1978), and very few studies focus on the factors which influence the college choice of specific music major populations compared to the literature on overall student choice. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing the college choice of music majors through a mixed method study using the tools of survey and interview. This research analyzed data from a survey containing a mixture of Likert responses and open questions distributed to freshmen music majors at four-year public and private universities as well as a follow up interview to those students amenable.

The study of college choice is one with many possible directions. While some researchers study the process of how students choose a university, other studies focus on the recruiting or marketing efforts (Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hodges & Barbuto, 2002; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Braxton,

& Coopersmith, 1989; Kelly, 1988). The objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing the college choice of music majors and a comparison of those factors that lead to final enrollment. The researchers chose to focus on four main factors (Academic, Institutional, Personal/Social, and Financial) deemed important in the college choice process and the importance that each factor weighs in the college choice of music majors. These factors were chosen specifically based on interview and survey questions by Galotti (1995), which identified the above attributes as the four main characteristics influencing choice. Although each attribute contains different sub criteria as described by upper class high school students (Galotti & Mark, 1994), how those relate to the music major population was established by the researcher in this dissertation.

Universities/colleges have a vested interest to attract quality students to their university over other institutions to ensure fiscal responsibility and provide appropriate opportunities to incoming students (Moll, 1994). The enrollment of key populations, such as music majors, can be one of importance to many individuals within the university (Filter, 2010). Unlike many other majors, music majors typically require an audition and the use of scholarship money in the selection process (Locke 1982). Possessing the understanding about why individuals choose to enroll at one school over another may be vital to the health and quality of the institution (Filter, 2010; Locke, 1982).

This study is noteworthy in several ways. This research adds to the body of knowledge regarding college choice by examining a population upon which many researchers have chosen not to focus. Previous studies (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hodges & Barbuto, 2002; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler et al., 1989) examined attributes of

college choice from all students with little importance placed upon the desired major. As evident by the gap in literature, the researcher found that studies examining the college choice of music majors were lacking and required further study.

This study addressed the process of choosing a college by those students majoring in music. While the presence of the desired major is an important influence in the choice of institution, few studies have broken down those choice factors exclusively by major (Locke, 1982). The results of this study are relevant for administrators and music faculty attending four-year institutions with the potential to impact the recruitment policies of university staff towards music students (Stevenson, 2011). Knowledge and information concerning the college choice decisions of music majors could allow for efficient use of resources and may raise the rate of enrollment success (Stevenson, 2011), while many college and universities “direct their marketing efforts towards academically talented students” (Kaczynski, 2011, p. 44) a marketing effort aimed to the music major population may help aid in these recruitment goals. Interpreting the progression of why music students choose their institution allows four-year universities to market their institution and increase music major enrollment (Stevenson, 2011).

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The purpose of this research is to investigate and compare the factors influencing the college choice of music majors at four-year private and public universities. Prior research by Locke (1982) found a difference in college selection based on public/private affiliation. This study compared college choice data from freshmen music majors based on a study of real-life decision making (Galotti, 1995) and the factors influencing music majors’ choice of institution (Locke, 1982). The four main factors affecting college

choice and the decision making process include financial, social, institutional, and academic (Galotti, 1995). This dissertation focused on which factors guided students majoring in music to attend their chosen university and which factors weigh heavier in the decision process.

The research questions and hypotheses considered in this research follow:

Ho: There will be no difference in proportion of participants in agreement with statements concerning the importance of factors regarding choice of college, when comparing responses for each individual question on the administered survey between public school choice and private school choice.

Ha: There will be a difference in proportion of participants in agreement with statements concerning the importance of factors regarding choice of college, when comparing responses for each individual question on the administered survey between public school choice and private school choice.

1. To what extent do academic factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. academic challenge, admissions requirements, course offerings, faculty quality, majors offered, reputation/accreditation, school regulations, success of graduates, type of school)

Ho<sub>1a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of academic factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution

Ha<sub>1a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between positive views of academic factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution

Ho<sub>1b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of academic factors described on the survey.



Ha<sub>1b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of academic factors described on the survey.

2. To what extent do institutional factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. campus appearance, campus atmosphere, class size, dorms, extracurricular programs, facilities, location, physical setting, size)

Ho<sub>2a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of institutional factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>2a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between positive views of institutional factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ho<sub>2b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of institutional factors described on the survey.

Ha<sub>2b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of institutional factors described on the survey.

3. To what extent do financial factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. cost, financial aid)

Ho<sub>3a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of financial factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>3a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between positive views of financial factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ho<sub>3b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of financial factors described on the survey.

Ha<sub>3b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of financial factors described on the survey.

4. To what extent do personal/social factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. distance from home, parents'/friends' advice, peers/friends at school, social networking.)

Ho<sub>4a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of personal factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>4a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between positive views of personal factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ho<sub>4b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of personal/social factors described on the survey.

Ha<sub>4b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of personal/social factors described on the survey.

5. Does the achievement level of entering music major students indicate differences in college selection?

Ho<sub>5a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between entering achievement level with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>5a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between entering achievement level with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ho<sub>5b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of achievement level.

Ha<sub>5b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of achievement level.

6. Do the factors influencing the college choice of music majors vary between genders?

Ho<sub>6</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between genders on importance of factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>6</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between genders on importance of factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

7. Do the factors influencing the college choice vary by type of institution (e.g. public vs. private)?

Ho<sub>7</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between type of institution with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>7</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between type of institution with regard to music majors' choice of institution

### **Definition of Terms**

*College* – A four year institution of higher learning providing a general or liberal arts education rather than technical or professional training (College, n.d.).

*College Choice* - The decision to enroll in postsecondary education not including technical or professional training (Filter, 2010).

*College Choice Process* - The complete process a student undertakes when deciding to attend a specific institution of higher learning including decisions to attend college, learning about various institutions, and making the decision to attend a specific institution (Filter, 2010).

*Music Major* - A first year college student who chooses to major or focus in one specific discipline of music including, but not limited to, music education, music performance, music business, and music composition (Locke, 1982).

*Out-of-Pocket Cost* - The calculation of all educational expenses incurred to attend college when financial aid (grant/scholarship) is removed from the final price (Chapman, 1981).

**Limitations**

Several limitations restrict and define the boundaries of this study. The researcher limited the population to include only those students claiming music as their emphasis of study at the start of their freshmen year. By choosing this population as an interest, not all results can be generalized to all students. The survey used in this study is self-reported, thus asking about a decision which may have occurred more than a year ago based on the students' college timeline that may alter the results. In addition, the survey may not address every aspect of the college choice. Music conservatories traditionally serve a separate clientele from those served by most public and private universities and were not included in the study, and two-year or community colleges were also not included due to the lack of specialized music degrees offered at these institutions (Locke, 1982). Finally, due to travel constraints, only four-year universities within a specified mileage were included in this study to be able to distribute the survey in a timely manner for analysis.

**Conclusion**

Decisions regarding college choice, although a topic of research interest for over 40 years (Astin, 1965), is lacking in the specific content area of music majors. Though some studies revolve around specific groups of students (Filter, 2010; Schneider & Klotz, 2000; Stevenson, 2011; Toma & Cross, 1998), the factors influencing music majors is one with room for growth (Locke, 1982). Only one published dissertation at the time of this study had examined the responses of music majors' choice of institution (Locke, 1982). This mixed method study involved surveying music majors as well as

interviewing students to help fill the literature gap in how music major's choose an institution.

Chapter 1 outlined the current study by providing background for the study, purpose of the study, research questions and hypothesis, definition of terms, and the limitations. Chapter 2 will provide the reader with pertinent information concerning models of college choice, factors influencing college choice, and music major perspectives. The Literature Review explored current research based on four main attributes influencing the college choice of the general student seeking a college degree, as well as the potential music major. Included is the use of social networking and its possible impact on the college choice. Chapter 3 describes the methodology for this study. The researcher's intent was to evaluate the data received using the Spearman Rank order and the equally weighted criteria model (Galotti, 1995; Levin & Fox, 2007); this chapter also includes a description of the population, sample, and procedures implemented in this research. Chapter 4 will report the results of the study, and Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of the results and areas for continued growth and research.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### College Choice Phases

This study contributes to previous literature by examining how students majoring in music are influenced during the college choice process. Although previous college choice literature explores the influence of many factors on the general choice process, the influence on music majors has not been widely researched (Locke, 1982). This chapter offers a foundation for the study and consists of three sections. First, the research concerning college choice phases is reviewed establishing the importance of when students begin their college search. Second, college choice models are presented and defined to explain environmental, institutional, and marketing strategies. Finally, factors influencing college choice related to the general student populations and music majors are presented and discussed.

The need for colleges to recruit receives little debate, and for good reason. During the 1970s and 1980s, a shift from colleges selecting students based on merit, moved to the recruitment of students based on enrollment needs (Chapman, 1981). A study conducted in the late 1970s and 1980s predicted a scenario with many complications and problems for future college and university enrollments (Carnegie Council, 1980). These studies predicted a drop in enrollment anywhere from 18% to 40% in certain regions of the country (Chapman, 1981). Although history has proven this scenario false, the recruitment of students is no less necessary today than it was years ago (Beckett, 2009).

Looking for the best academic and financial aid opportunities, students often apply to multiple institutions (Paulson, 1990). This forces universities to accept higher

numbers of students so enrollment levels remain level or rise, all while trying to maintain a standard of educational integrity (Paulson, 1990). No longer is recruitment limited to admissions, individual faculty and departments are now getting involved in the recruitment process (Holmes, 1994). The author of this study believes having a better understanding of how and why students make choices in determining their institution will better serve the admission office, faculty, and students in school recruitment goals.

Colleges and universities seek to promote their programs through basic marketing approaches (Aldridge, 2010). They want to effectively plan or forecast enrollment to the best of their ability and more effectively influence the decision-making process of students interested in the institution (Paulsen, 1990).

To plan for enrollments and to manage enrollments, professionals must begin with an understanding of the demand for higher education and of how students decide to enroll in a specific college or university...an important step in the development of a specialized knowledge base for enrollment managers. (Hossler, 1984, p. 8)

Due to the increasing demand for students, both practitioners and researchers alike have developed models of the college choice process. While some researchers have developed a seven-stage model of college choice delving into possible alternatives to college (Kotler & Fox, 1985), many researchers have focused their efforts into a two phase (Chapman & Jackson, 1987) or more notably, a three phase (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler et al., 1989) model of college choice. The three-phase model consists of a predisposition, search, and choice phase (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

While the two-phase approach involves a college search and the college choice, the terminology for each phase of the three-phase college choice varies; however, the basic design for each model involves deciding whether or not to go to college, investigating possible choices, and narrowing down those choices to a final college decision (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Literature suggests that within each model of college choice (whether referencing two or three phases) two basic approaches predominately influence the student's decision (Dixon & Martin, 1991). One approach, based on what Dixon and Martin (1991) called a "social-psychological method" (p. 32) is implemented when the student is influenced by four groups of factors impacting the thought process (e.g. academic, social, financial, and personal influences), the other, an economic perspective, occurs when the student deals only with the perceived cost to benefit his or her choice (Dixon & Martin, 1991; Murphy, 1981). This study will focus on the four social-psychological attributes as reported through the three-phase model (Galotti, 1995).

**First Phase.** In the search for an institution, high school students undergo various thought processes in an effort to determine college aspirations (Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). In the first stage, commonly referred to as the predisposition, students decide whether they would like to continue educational aspirations beyond high school (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The first phase factors deemed important and influential to the possibility of college are as follows: attending high-quality high schools, having positive attitudes toward education, and early information on financial aid as well as institutional costs. Along with financial aid and costs, Peters (1977) cited socioeconomic status as one of the more important factors in the predisposition phase.



Due to these factors occurring early in the choice process, the first phase seems minimally impacted by universities directly yet highly influenced by the parents and other individuals involved in the child's life (Hossler et al., 1999).

Parental involvement and the level of a parent's education are significant predictors as to whether their child will attend college (Hossler & Stage, 1992; Tierney, 2002). Ali and Saunders (2006) found when children feel valued and supported by their parents to attend college, it plays a key role even if the parents did not attend college themselves. Individuals such as parents, teachers, or peer groups have the ability to shape the predisposition phase (Bergerson, 2010). When individuals support students who aspire to attend college, they are influenced to follow through with their college intentions (Bergerson, 2010). Factors such as academic achievement or financial obligations may also affect the decision to attend college (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999).

Although several components of student choice are identifiable in the first phase of college choice, events shaping the first (predisposition) phase may be more difficult to understand and explain (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Simply stated, at some point between grade school and early high school, students typically decide to attend or not attend college (Jackson, 1978). Jackson's 1978 study identified three types of students, which become apparent during the predisposition phase of college choice: "Whiches, Whethers, and Nots" (p. 571). "Whiches" refer to those students who know they will attend college but need help determining which college to attend. "Whethers" refer to those students who apply to one or two local colleges, but may not attend either one at

all. Finally, “Nots” refer to the students who never truly consider college a viable option (Jackson, 1978).

While many variables influence student predisposition to enroll in higher education, one research study conducted by Cabrera and La Nasa in 2000 suggested the first phase of choice occurs between seventh and ninth grade. Another study by Hossler et al. (1999), found that many students at younger ages assumed college would follow high school as a natural progression, hinting that perhaps parents and other school influences help form aspirations to attend college prior to the seventh grade year of school. The predisposition phase continues into the 10th grade year of high school progressing into what Hossler and Gallagher (1987) refer to as the second phase, or search stage of college choice.

**Second Phase.** According to Cabrera and La Nasa (2000), high school students reach a point in their junior and senior years where they are ready to investigate a college based on their own personal aspirations and the attributes the institutions may possess. However, Hossler et al. (1989) argued the search process could start by the sophomore year. Elementary students may have thoughts or desires to attend college, but the specific decision to actually attend college is made around the sophomore or junior year of high school (Gilmour, Spiro, & Dolich, 1981). The researcher believes this is partly due to the timing of national exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT). Students interested in college typically take these entrance exams around this time in their high school career (Gilmour et al., 1981; Hossler et al., 1999).

In this phase, parental support influences students’ choices by their involvement in college visits, financial saving/planning, or filling out college forms (Hossler et al.,

1999). Parents who have attended college tend to be more knowledgeable, not just about the types of aid available to students, but the qualifications to receive that aid (Olson & Rosenfeld, 1984). Obtaining accurate information in high school is a key predictor that students will be satisfied with their final college choice and confident the criteria for colleges in consideration fit their needs (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). One significant research study pointed out that 72% of students report forming a list of possible college choices their junior year while 66% of those juniors started the process of applying to schools the next fall (Gilmour et al., 1981). Regardless, most researchers agreed the search or second phase of the choice process occurs in the middle of high school. Attributes such as quality, campus life, majors, availability, and distance are important factors to consider but only become important after parental support has influenced the desire to attend in the first place (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

This step of the process involves students learning about themselves and the institutions in which they may be interested in attending (Bergerson, 2010; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987), potential students actively search schools, visit campuses and talk to friends. During the search or second phase, potential students start to seek more information about college and interact with potential institutions with a greater consistency, allowing these institutions great influence over choice if they are proactive in their efforts (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Gathering appropriate information is essential in this phase of decision-making (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Three types of information gathering take place during the search phase: attentive, active, and interactive (Hossler et al., 1999). Attentive searching implies a passive interest in collegiate options (Hossler et al., 1999). Active searching

involves gathering information and having conversations as to the options available, while interactive searching involves having discussions with family, teachers, counselors, and college representatives (Hossler et al., 1999). Students in the interactive phase are more specifically seeking individuals that may help them realize the goal of attending college (Bergerson, 2010).

The search phase ends when the student decides to apply to certain institutions for enrollment. These institutions which the student applies to, referred to as a “Choice Set” (Jackson, 1982, p. 239), are distinguishable by variables such as the following: selectivity, distance from home, cost, size, or any number of variables viewed as important to the student (Paulsen, 1990). Many of the research studies relating to the music major do not fit the typical variables as researched to the general populations, such as the extra step of the audition process, and leave professors and admission departments with questions influencing this specific population and what attributes they search for (Locke, 1982; Ludeman, 1964; Overmier, 2003). According to many researchers, “the best way for an institution to expand their applicant pool and gain new students is to reach them at the search phase” (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, p. 218).

**Third Phase.** Finally, the choice to attend a particular institution is made for various reasons including; expectations and perceptions regarding quality of the institution, campus life, availability of majors, and the ability to finance college shape tangible enrollment (Hossler et al., 1999). This stage usually occurs in the junior or senior year of high school (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). At each phase of the process, organizational and individual factors combine to produce a college choice outcome (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). These outcomes may lead the student to seek interest in

more than one institution (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Institutional characteristics also play a vital role in this choice phase (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999). Parents tend to become secondary in the final phase with the institution itself becoming a primary influence leading a student to enroll (Bergerson, 2010; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). In this phase, the “preferences of the applicant, attributes of the college, and courtship procedures appear to determine the outcome” (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, p. 216).

Table 1

*Three Phase Model of College Choice*

| Model                         | Individual Factors  | Organizational Factors                      | Student Outcomes                     |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Predisposition<br>(Phase one) | Student characteristics<br>Significant others<br>Educational activities | School Characteristics                      | College options<br><br>Other options |
| Search<br>(Phase two)         | Student preliminary college values<br>Student search activities         | College and university search               | Choice set<br><br>Other options      |
| Choice<br>(Phase three)       | Choice set  | College and University courtship activities | Choice                               |

*Source:* Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, p. 208

In the third and final “choice” phase, students make their lasting evaluations and decide on a specific institution. Financial aid does make a difference in this phase but it is not necessarily the deciding factor (Jackson & Chapman, 1984). Large amounts of aid typically move a second-choice school up to a first-choice option (Jackson & Chapman, 1984). This information lends to the idea that institutions need to be a possible choice to

begin with before financial aid becomes an influential factor (Jackson & Chapman, 1984). During the third phase of the choice process, most colleges and universities have only a minor impact on the decision making process. Perhaps one of the most cited models of college choice is Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-stage model (Bergerson, 2010). Table 1 lists possible factors influencing each stage of their three-phase model with possible outcomes.

Each model in Table 1 results in a specific outcome based on individual student factors which may not fit into a predictable schedule (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Research in the area of college choice is a difficult discussion because not every student has the same information available at similar points in the process, and assessing decisions without appropriate knowledge of the decision-makers objectives is difficult to determine (Galotti, 1995). This creates a difficult scenario to test due to the number of influences affecting college choice such as academic quality, cost, or any number of variables (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Along with the discussion of college choice, it is important to discuss possible factors which may affect each phase of the college choice.

### **Choice Models**

Related literature in the area of college choice studies is divided into two main categories, macro-level and micro-level studies. Macro-level studies focus on overall environmental and institutional characteristics and are designed to predict or describe total enrollment for an institution or larger entity such as a region or state (Hossler, 1984). Micro-level studies aim to show relationships and how environmental, institutional, and individual student characteristics can affect the choice of institution and perhaps whether or not to attend college at all (Paulsen, 1990). Micro-level studies

estimate the effects of various attributes, and generally offer a probability that a student will select a specified college or university (Hossler et al., 1989).

Micro-level studies also provide a basis for specific marketing towards students. Given the nature of student choice and the competition among many universities for similar students, institutions can incorporate micro studies to estimate outcomes of specific student characteristics to aid in the prediction that an applicant will become an enrolled student (Hossler et al., 1989). In short, micro-level studies “focus on the factors which influence the decision-making processes” (Paulsen, 1990, p. 23) and are more beneficial than macro-level research for this study.

### **Factors Influencing Choice**

College bound high school students report considering specific criteria and approximately four different schools; for many students this is their first major life decision (Galotti, 1995). Academic factors include those attributes which are dependent on achievement and academic reputation: academic challenge, admissions requirements, course offerings/curriculum, faculty quality/credentials, majors offered, reputation/accreditation, school regulations, success of graduates, and types of school (e.g. public vs. private) (Galotti, 1995). Institutional factors are those which revolve around campus appearance, atmosphere, class size/student/faculty ratio, dorms, extracurricular options, facilities, location, physical setting (e.g. rural/urban), and size (Galotti, 1995; Galotti & Mark, 1994). Financial factors involve two attributes: cost and financial aid (Galotti, 1995; Hossler & Vesper, 1993). The final factor--personal/social--includes distance from home, parents'/friends' advice, and friends at school (Drewes & Michael, 2006; Galotti, 1995).

**Academic.** In the realm of academics and student choice, students tend to self-select the colleges in which they apply based on what they believe the college will accept as entrance criteria (Chapman, 1981). They have a preconceived notion of their own academic quality compared to the institutional reputation; they typically select institutions where they perceive the enrolled students have a comparable aptitude (Chapman, 1981). Perhaps these findings help account for the fact that many colleges contribute to this scenario by posting average standardized test scores and grade point averages (GPA) for their incoming classes as a measure of comparison to advise potential students of their probability of admission (Hossler et al., 1989).

Students, who excel academically, tend to have more postsecondary options as well as higher levels of access to information (Bergerson, 2010). Higher achieving students find themselves receiving more information concerning college options from counselors, family, and from the college themselves compared to students with lower academic ability or GPA (Galotti, 1995). Because these students find themselves loaded with information earlier in their high school career, the school choice processes may begin and lead to different outcomes which lower achieving students may not be privy to (Galotti, 1995).

In many cases, students select colleges in which they feel they can take the courses they need to enter graduate school or obtain jobs (Chapman, 1981). The courses available and the benefits of those courses seem to be important characteristics in college choice (Chapman, 1981). The higher the academic ability of a student, the greater they concern themselves with academic quality, programs, and awareness of “net cost” or total out-of-pocket cost incurred when grants and scholarship have been factored into the



equation, versus the price (Litten, 1982). Socioeconomic status of the student has shown to relate positively to the academic achievement of the student (Bergerson, 2010).

Students become less concerned about campus appearance, career outcomes, and financial matters as their academic increases (Litten, 1982).

**Institutional.** Aside from the academic factors which may influence choice, three institutional characteristics of extreme importance factor into the college search process: locations, programs, and quality (Chapman, 1981; Drewes & Michael, 2006; Ihlandfeldt, 1980). Location can play a major role influencing the decision. Over 50% of entering freshmen attend college within 50 miles of their home; 92% attend college within 500 miles of home (Ihlandfeldt, 1980). Filter (2010) found that as distance increased, students were less likely to enroll in their first choice institution while Chapman (1981) found college in general becomes less attractive to students when distance from home increases.

Students are also more apt to attend college when they live in an area with several college choices (Paulsen, 1990). A study conducted in Canada found, with uniform tuition fees throughout the Canadian university system, distance and scholarship opportunities are the most important factors when considering to which schools students applied (Drewes & Michael, 2006). High school students were likely to rate a university close to home as their first choice institution with everything else considered similar (Drewes & Michael, 2006).

An institutional factor often overlooked in many studies is the effect athletic programs or the reputation athletic programs may have on the college decision (Braddock, Sokol-Katz, Dawkins, & Lv, 2006). A student interested in a specific sport

may choose a school with a national reputation in that area regardless of the reputation of various institutional attributes the school may or may not possess (Braddock et al., 2006).

This example may not hold true for every student, but studies show many institutions benefit from successful athletic programs regardless of a student's involvement in athletics (Toma & Cross, 1998). Toma and Cross (1998) found a championship sports team, specifically football or basketball, can translate into dramatic increases in the number of admissions applications the school receives the following school year.

Athletic reputation, according to Toma and Cross (1998) appeared to have some bearing on school choice. Many institutional factors such as the location of the institution or reputation are difficult to change in a relatively short time period; the award of financial aid however, may be an immediate factor in persuading the college choice when institutional attributes do not (Jackson, 1978).

**Financial.** An important component to the economic aspect of deciding to go to college is financial aid (Hossler et al., 1999; Jackson, 1978). Studies on the effects of financial aid related to college choice indicate that major determinants to college choice are the result of socioeconomic background, academic achievement, and aspiration (Hossler et al., 1999). An interesting point made by Jackson's (1978) research is that the amount of financial aid seemed to be less important than the simple offer of any financial aid. In the field of finance, a student's choice of college is based upon the relative cost and quality of all of the institutions in his or her choice set (Kealy & Rockel, 1987). Students' perceptions of their families' capacity to pay also appear to weigh heavily in college selection among lower income students (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Financial

aid and knowledge of the financial aid process may help influence the student and parents that college is affordable (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

Other studies in the area of finance and college choice conclude that behavior from different socioeconomic classes may be somewhat predictable (Tierney, 1979). Students from homes with higher socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to go to four-year universities (Chapman, 1981). Lower income families tend to be more predictable in this area concerning influence and college choice compared to middle-income families, while middle-income families tend to be more predictable than upper income households (Chapman, 1981). Educational aspirations and expectations have shown to correlate positively with SES. Upper income students gravitate towards private universities while middle income students prefer state universities (Chapman, 1981; Tierney, 1979). Students with lower family incomes statistically prefer community college as their first choice institution due to price and ability to pay (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Chapman, 1981). In most scenarios, students made their college choice based on three financial factors: student loans, grants and scholarships, and work-study programs (Chapman, 1981).

Cost tends to be more of a factor in the decision of which college to enroll as opposed to influencing where they apply (Chapman, 1981). Perhaps variables to attend college are more associated with family background and income over college price (Chapman, 1981). For students with lower income and aptitude levels, college becomes less attractive when tuition expenses, room and board expenses, and distance from home increase creating a greater need for financial aid (Lynch, Engle, & Cruz, 2011). At higher levels of student income and aptitude, the effects of financial aid, particularly

scholarship aid, become less important in the college decision (Blakemore & Low, 1983; St. John, 1990; Tierney, 1982).

Regardless of social class, all students were noticeably more responsive to financial aid than tuition (St. John, 1990). For low-income students, an increase in scholarship or financial aid increased the probability of attendance more than two and one half times an equal decrease in tuition may provide (St. John, 1990). Socioeconomic status is made of composite factors: parental education, family income and wealth, funds available for college, and the degree of sacrifice college expenditures would cause (Paulsen, 1990).

Socioeconomic status seems to be one of the more important student characteristics to be associated with college choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Fetters, 1977; Hossler et al., 1989). Student perceptions of their ability to pay weigh heavily in college selection, specifically among low-income students (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Financial aid and knowledge of financial aid may help influence the student and parent's decision that college is an affordable option (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Many students lack accurate information on the true net cost of an institution and may just give attention to the cost or "sticker price" of the school (Jackson, 1982). This researcher believes a better communication effort from universities and colleges could enhance the marketing information of true cost through attendance. "Short form" or some type of early financial aid form may aid in the cause (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

As important as financial aid can be in the college choice, it is not necessarily the final factor. Large amounts of aid typically move a second-choice school up to a first-

choice school, but an institution needs to be a possible choice to begin with (Jackson & Chapman, 1984). Freeman (1984) found that financial aid did positively affect choice and perhaps price is sensitive to a number of variables. Even more interesting, studies found that non-aid based actions like letters, on-campus banquets, and special certificates may be as important as financial aid in some scenarios (Freeman, 1984; Kealy & Rockel, 1987). Freeman (1984) reported students prefer personalized correspondence, especially from faculty who taught in the student's desired major. These findings are of special significance when one considers the typical choice set for many students is only one or two institutions (Astin, 1984). These types of personal and social influences play a role in a student's college choice.

**Personal/Social.** While many social factors affect the decision to attend college, parental encouragement has shown to be of crucial importance in the formation of college aspirations. Parents, peers, and counselors are included as major factors influencing decisions on school choice and the process students undertake (Chapman, 1981; Litten, 1982). A positive relationship exists between the amount of parental encouragement received and the child's postsecondary plan of attending a selective four-year university (Conklin & Dailey, 1981). In some cases, parental influence on their child's school choice resulted in some schools focusing their recruitment efforts towards the parents (Hodges & Barbuto, 2002).

Parental encouragement has two facets: maintaining standards for their children (motivational) and having a proactive interaction where they become involved in school matters and saving for college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Saving for college, presumed to be an objective and a key expression of parental encouragement to attend college

(Hossler & Vesper, 1993), becomes evident when parents initiate college savings plans or advise their children on a possible range of options showing support for their decisions (Flint, 1992). Parents help shape expectations by offering advice and influencing not only college attendance, but which schools their child should consider applying to (Filter, 2010). While parents may be the authoritative figure in a young child's life, peers begin to influence decisions beginning in adolescence (Payne, 2010). This researcher believes peers play an important role in the college choice.

Students with peers who plan to attend college play a vital role influencing enrollment as they are more likely to attend as well (Kealy & Rockel, 1987; Tillery, 1973). Friends help shape college aspirations as well as decisions on where to attend (Chapman, 1981; Kealy & Rockel, 1987). Parents, friends, teachers, and counselors are not the only influences, however; current collegiate students along with the campus visit appear to have a significant influence on a prospective student's perceptions of academic, social, and athletic qualities (Filter, 2010; Kealy & Rockel, 1987).

### **Marketing**

A determining factor in college choice revolves around the process of how the college or university markets (effectively communicates) the student preferences, such as size or academic standards, and benefits to potential students (Litten, Sullivan, & Brodigan, 1984). The goal for any institution is to "determine the needs and wants of target markets and to satisfy them through appropriate and competitively viable programs and services" (Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 10). Colleges effectively recruit by promoting the institution's own attributes compared to students' educational and personal desires (Paulsen, 1990).

Research that focuses on general practices leading to effective new student recruitment and enrollment of high school graduates indicates a blend of proven recruiting strategies and the incorporation of new methodologies from social science research (Paulsen, 1990). Direct mail, high school visits, college fairs, telemarketing, off-campus previews, alumni recruitment, and on-campus visits are the mainstay of admissions recruitment to increase enrollment (Galotti & Mark, 1994). New developments include using demographic tools to refine regions where colleges should actively search for students, providing individualized tours of campus facilities, and offering individual financial aid counseling as part of a campus visit (Dehne, 1994). Technology and advanced information systems which allow students to apply electronically and look up their application, or financial aid status, is a popular trend among universities (Galotti & Mark, 1994).

The more personalized the search for an institution is during the search process, the more effective the marketing efforts are likely to be (Dehne, 1994). In direct mail, telemarketing, campus visits, and many other forms of recruitment, students view the level of personalization as a form of courtship (Dehne, 1994). A study conducted by the admissions advisory committee from the University of Rhode Island (2011), found personalizing the experience for families and consolidating necessary information to one central location positively influences the admissions process (Admissions Advisory Committee, 2011).

The other guiding principle of effective new student recruitment, or searching, is timing, or reaching students when they are ready for information (Hossler et al., 1989). Research indicated that marketing and recruitment resources directed to high school

sophomores should be selectively restricted (Hossler et al., 1989; Kappler, 1998). While completing the predisposition phase and deciding to attend or not attend college, sophomores may not be ready to accept specific college choice information (Hossler, 1999). To the extent it takes place, information should be succinct and written as much for parents as for prospective students (Hossler et al., 1999; Hossler et al., 1989).

As juniors, students are ready for more information (Hossler et al., 1989; Kappler, 1998). During the junior year and the summer before the senior year, college-bound students become more serious and focused about the college decision-making process (Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler et al. 1989). By the fall of the senior year, seniors are simultaneously very active in seeking out information about colleges and universities but also more likely to report that they are feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information (Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler et al., 1999; Kappler, 1998). Additionally, most seniors have stopped adding any previously unconsidered colleges by January. Thus, the spring and summer of the junior year emerges as the ideal time in which students search for prospective institutions (Hossler et al., 1989).

Some authors argued that a marketing approach can be successful if it involves information on its standing compared to its competition (Paulsen, 1990). Kotler and Fox (1985) believed that an effective marketing mix for a college involves developing and offering an attractive product, effectively communicating and promoting its attributes, and delivering it in appropriate places at acceptable prices. While printed material may have been a preferred source to send and receive information by parents, students, and college admissions in the past (Waggoner, 1978), online communication by universities



is a growing trend, and one of the most popular and widely used applications today (Papp, 2009).

**Online.** The use of online communications to market a school and students can be a viable option when other forms of communications are lacking (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). The online source Universitiesandcolleges.org reports that every top 100 school, according to US News and World Report in 2010, had at least one twitter account officially associated with the school. By 2010, 83% of college admissions officers support Facebook as well as other social networking sites as a realistic form of communicating with students (Barnes & Mattson, 2010).

According to Nielsen online, the use of online communities is growing at a substantial rate (McGiboney, 2009). Between February of 2008 and February of 2009, Twitter grew 1382% totaling over seven million users and growing at a rate of approximately 500,000 users per day in March 2011 (McGiboney, 2009). No longer are sites like Twitter and Facebook an avenue for friends to stay in touch but rather a form of brand marketing to connect with others (McGiboney, 2009).

Colleges and universities use a form of online marketing and social media in a variety of different ways. University sponsored media such as a digital university press or online campus radio allows specific departments to give specialized updates (McGiboney, 2009). Colleges and universities also use social media to broadcast their school to current and prospective students (Universitiesandcolleges, n.d). Some schools have gone as far as using social media to advise current students and meet prospective students in the virtual world. Pennsylvania State University social-network advisors are

required to spend a minimum of two hours each week on the site “Second Life” in an effort to better serve students (Parry, 2009)

As universities plan and market to promote their respective institutions, none may rival the potential market saturation of a web site (Turner, 2004). With immediate access from anywhere in the country, web sites may make it easier for potential students to gather information about the many different programs and weigh each department’s individual strengths (Turner, 2004). If web sites intend to promote or advertise to a broad audience, it may be prudent to examine web pages for a more balanced presence of images. Advertising research suggested that if potential customers (students) can see themselves within the advertised picture, there is a greater likelihood that they will buy the product (Hirshmann & Thompson, 1997).

In a related vein, Tower (2007) recommends that universities examine their marketing efforts, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach to reach potential students. This survey found that an overwhelming number of high school students are using the internet to research and even tour campuses. More than 81% of respondents began collecting information on colleges before beginning their junior year of high school claiming electronic correspondence as the format in which they would most like to receive information from colleges and universities (Tower, 2007). This study also reported that 55% of students said they had taken a virtual campus tour prior to a personal tour. Additionally, more than 75% of the respondents claimed to investigate college web sites mostly or only while at home, where parents exert influence (Tower, 2007).

**Face-to-Face Interactions.** Many college admissions representatives consider campus visits an effective recruiting activity for students (Chapman, 1981; Filter, 2010;

Kealy & Rockel, 1987). Previous studies have shown that students did not select a college based on printed material (Kealy & Rockel, 1987). Students tend to be persuaded by cost, friends' decisions, and availability of desired programs (Jackson & Chapman, 1984). In many cases students reported that they did not know how to evaluate much of the printed information they received from university mailings or handouts (Jackson & Chapman, 1984).

An understanding of which college attributes are most influential offers important guiding principles for the expansion of the programs, prices, and places, which make up a favorable marketing program for attracting desired students (Paulsen, 1990). The inspiration guiding a student's choice can be distinctive and different from what many recruiters may believe. Standard recruiting methods such as printed programs, brochures, or alumni may be ineffective in persuading college choice (Overmier, 2003). Many recruiters imitate the tactics of other schools, only to find the results unsatisfactory (Kelly, 1988). One recruitment method should not be used for every instance but rather individualized approaches should guide recruiters to discover what students are looking for and direct recruitment strategies towards those desires (Kelly, 1988; Kuras, 1997).

**Marketing Influences.** The best marketing practices take place when institutional characteristics are clearly and effectively illustrated to students (Paulsen, 1990). To encourage and aid in college marketing, knowing how students want to receive information is important. Once college aspirations form and students enter the second or "search" phase, they begin acquiring information about possible college choices. They search for information about institutions with characteristics they deem to be important (Kelly, 1988; Paulsen, 1990). They do so by asking and inquiring, in what

they view are the most trustworthy sources (Paulsen, 1990). A study conducted by Litten and Brodigan (1982) found eight main institutional attributes which students find important. Parents and students agreed on the same eight characteristics; however, they did not necessarily agree on the most important influence for each attribute, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Preferred Information Sources by College Attribute*

| <u>College Attributes</u> | <u>Students</u>                               | <u>Parents</u>                                  |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Financial              | Admissions Officer<br>College Publications    | Admissions Officer<br>College Publications      |
| 2. Fields of Study        | College Publications<br>Admissions Officer    | College Publications<br>Admissions Officer      |
| 3. Academic Reputation    | H.S. Counselor<br>Commercial Guides<br>Alumni | H.S. Counselor<br>Commercial Guides<br>Alumni   |
| 4. Teaching Quality       | H.S. Counselor<br>College Students            | Alumni<br>College Students                      |
| 5. Academic Standards     | H.S. Counselor<br>College Students            | Alumni<br>Admissions Officer<br>College Faculty |
| 6. Location               | College Publications<br>College Students      | College Publications<br>College Students        |
| 7. Social Atmosphere      | Alumni<br>College Students                    | Alumni<br>College Students                      |
| 8. Careers Available      | Alumni<br>Admissions Officer                  | Alumni<br>Admissions Officer                    |

Table 2 shows similarities and differences when it comes to how parents and students choose to receive information. This study demonstrates the relationship and

impact parents can have on the college choice so it could be important to analyze both parties involved. This table reveals that college faculty only appeared on one attribute (Academic Standards) and only as a recommended source of information for the parents. In fact, according to the study, parents are twice as likely to identify faculty as a preferred source of information in the field of academics (Litten & Brodigan, 1982). Students prefer personalized correspondence from faculty who teach in the students desired major (Freeman, 1984).

### **High Ability Students**

For institutions and recruiters, early recruitment may be a necessary requirement considering high achieving students search earlier and more often (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Students of average ability might just need to be aware of an institution to allow it to become a searchable choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Efforts to recruit these types of students early may be counterproductive. Similar to sophomores, average academic ability students may not be ready to receive information on possible college choices (Filter, 2010). High ability students, however, tend to conduct more sophisticated searches (Litten et al., 1984). This coincides with findings from Zemsky and Oedel (1983) that found as Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and SES fall, applicants narrow the geographic range of institutions in consideration.

Higher ability students are apt to report more criteria and very distinct types of criteria in the choice process (Galotti, 1995). They also report starting the search earlier than their peers and consider more college options in the process (Galotti & Mark, 1994). College-bound high school students report considering specific criteria and approximately four different schools as they face this decision (Galotti, 1995). While the

most influential factors tend to stay consistent as they get closer to their final decision, average to high ability students report more criteria and even more distinct categories of criteria in the choice process (Galotti & Mark, 1994; Filter, 2010).

High ability students have more post-secondary options and investigate options that other students may not (Bergerson, 2010; Filter, 2010). Financially, however, attributes which hold true for average and lower SES students seem to apply to high achieving students as well (Bergerson, 2010). Family income for high achieving students did not seem to be a good indicator of which college a student would enroll in (Filter, 2010). The more a student or the family would have to pay out of pocket for their education, the less likely they were to enroll in their first choice institution (Filter, 2010). Analyzing data from his study, Filter (2010) found academically talented students are significantly influenced by price, and therefore, factor cost into their final choice.

Another attribute, seemingly having a negative impact on a high ability students' first choice institution was distance. Like other studies linking distance to enrollment choice (Chapman, 1981; Dixon & Martin, 1991; Paulsen, 1990), Filter (2010) found high achieving students prefer college choices closer to home with the availability of majors consistent between universities. Parents, counselors, and campus visits, however, significantly influenced the choice of academically talented students to choose their first choice institution (Filter, 2010).

High ability students who viewed a parents' input as important were .08 times more likely to choose their first chose institution compared to the students who did not value their parents input as much (Filter, 2010; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler & Stage, 1992;). High ability students are also likely to be influenced by a school counselor

and a campus visit (Filter, 2010; Mayher, 1998). Filter (2010) wrote that campus visits influenced the high ability student .56 times more than other students in the study making it statistically significant.

Research on high achieving students is important for this study. Schneider and Klotz (2000) reported the following:

Traditionally, music students have been considered high achievers whose academic abilities were enhanced by the discipline the arts have afforded them.

High school music students have been shown to hold higher grade point averages than non-musicians do in the same school. (p. 15)

Similar research has shown a comparable and significant difference in the achievement level of music students (Shropshire, 2007). Students who participate in music, show significantly higher test scores compared to non-music students on national and state level standardized tests (Shropshire, 2007).

### **Music Involvement and High Ability Students**

As a student's ability increases, college choice and the formation of attending college may be recognizable at an earlier age (Litten, 1982). "Music has been known to contribute to learning and can influence other areas of the curriculum by enhancing spatial reasoning ability" (Shropshire, 2007, p. 81). A student's involvement in music may serve to boost grades and intelligence quotient (IQ) scores compared to those not involved in music, especially instrument and voice students (Bower, 2004). Bower (2004) reports students involved in a weekly music lesson demonstrate a small increase in their IQ score of approximately seven points. A school in Washington State saw a rise in math test scores from 27% to 71% when music was required of their students

(Churchill, 2004). Research studies argue music may have the ability to create higher achieving students (Churchill, 2004; Longley, 1999; Schneider & Klotz, 2000).

A connection between music participation and increased learning in a core curriculum, such as math and reading, is linked through the complex use of affective, cognitive, and psychomotor skills (Longley, 1999). Spatial reasoning may also increase due to the development of reading various symbols and problem solving associated with reading music (Argabright, 2005). One such study examining the use of music and learning occurred in 1994 when The Bolton project, named after Bolton Elementary School in Winston-Salem, initiated an orchestra program into the curriculum of “at risk” children and found that a 30 minute music session three times a week resulted in significant differences in the student’s achievement (Lipkin, 2004). Less than 40% of the student’s participating in the study achieved at or above grade level when initiated: however, following several years, 85 % scored at or above grade level in reading while 89% of the students reached this level in math moving the elementary school from “at risk” to exemplary (Lipkin, 2004). Simply stated, studies show students who participate in music programs, achieve higher mean scores on standardized test compared to their non-musician peers (Schneider & Klotz, 2000)

### **Music Majors**

“College and university programs are becoming increasingly competitive as the demand for higher business and technology fields intensifies” (Overmier, 1992, p. 4). With the push for many school curriculums moving towards a math and science focus and teacher salaries falling behind many other fields, attracting new music majors and music students requires more time and effort (Harris, 2001). With an annual need of



11,000 music teachers, music departments need to increase and improve their recruiting efforts to contribute to higher enrollment (Lindeman, 2004). This researcher found little published information regarding the factors influencing a music student's choice of institution. Since department survival may depend on factors relating to recruitment, it is important to determine the college choice process of music majors (Locke, 1982).

**Music Major Influences.** Current research in the field of college choice concerning music majors contains mixed results. The researcher found that many of the studies contribute similar ideas in the field of college choice, but none are exact. Overmier (2003) found the most important factors influencing freshman music majors were: reputation of the department, course availability, personal involvement with music faculty, cost (best deal), and parents. Campus activities were identified as being very influential by several studies as a means of personal contact with the school while the least important were: reputation, fraternities or sororities, advice of their high school music instructor, proximity of the institution to their home, and a family member attends the same institution (Kelly, 1988; Overmier, 2003).

Students surveyed by Overmier (2003) also listed the five most popular recruitment techniques employed by faculty in this study. The five recruiting techniques employed, as reflected in the responses by all respondents were form letters, a departmental brochure, scholarship offer, an invitation to visit the school, and personal letters expressing a desire to have the respondent attend the institution (Overmier, 2003). Of those five, the most effective identified was the scholarship, and the least effective recruitment method was the form letters (course catalog, department pamphlets) (Overmier, 2003).

One of the first studies this researcher found in the arena of institutional choice of freshmen music majors was by Ludeman (1964). Ludeman (1964) found the five most influential items leading to specific college enrollment were outstanding music faculty, high standards, a “well-rounded” music program, outstanding performing groups, and studying music under top faculty members in the field. The five least influential factors influencing the enrollment of music majors were religious and social groups, no discrimination, influence of friends, high school counselor, and scholarship (Ludeman, 1964). The researcher found that this study is one of the few to list a scholarship as having little importance in the selection process. Based on related literature, it seems contradictory to this researcher that all influential factors are related to music faculty and performing groups when all other studies reference factors outside the music department as possibly influential in the process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hodges & Barbuto, 2002; Jackson, 1978).

An influential study in the area of college choice and one which guided several survey questions for this research was Locke’s (1982) study on the factors that influence the college choice of freshmen music majors. Locke’s (1982) study resulted in a list of the top 10 most influential and top 10 least influential factors affecting choice. The 10 factors found to be influential were: overall reputation of the music department, location allows me to live at home and commute, reputation of the music faculty, the music faculty seemed friendly, location is close to home, opportunities to perform with the top ensemble at the college, financially this college was the best deal, the availability of the specific degree program enrolled in, the reputation of the performing groups at the desired college, and the academic reputation of this college (Locke, 1982). Although

almost two decades separate Ludeman (1964) and Locke's (1982) research, many of the same attributes influencing student choice remain consistent like faculty quality and the reputation of performance groups. Locke (1982) also noted location and "best deal" as an influence not mentioned by the Ludeman (1964) study.

The 10 least influential factors in the Locke (1982) study were reputation of the athletic teams, the fraternities or sororities at the college, the advice of the high school guidance counselor, the opportunity to be a "star" in the music department, advice of family members other than parents, the reputation of the music degree at the college was easy, information obtained from a representative of the college who visited the high school, the college is supported or affiliated with religious denomination, the location of the college is distant from the home, and the advice of the high school band, choir, or orchestra director (Locke, 1982). Attributes with little influence on college choice seem to be similar between these two studies. Both Ludeman (1964) and Locke (1982) reference religious affiliation, friends, and counselors having little influence. The difference of note between these studies references the scholarship by Ludeman (1964) as having little importance on choice. Of the 41 possible factors listed in the survey, the advice of the band, choir or orchestra director was rated 32 out of 41 influential factors (Locke, 1982). This may give good reason for recruiters and music professors to spend less time with the directors of these performing groups and more time with the student and/or parents (Locke, 1982; Overmier, 2003).

When broken down, Locke's (1982) study pointed out several factors based on string, wind/percussion, vocal, and piano (keyboard) instrumentation as selected by the student. The study correlated string instrumentalists as being more concerned with the

reputation of their private instructors, cultural opportunities, and the city or town in which the college is located. The wind/percussion students focused more on the reputation of the conductor compared to the vocal students which were more concerned with the reputation of the ensemble or performing groups (Locke, 1982; Overmier, 2003). The piano/keyboard group was more concerned with the overall academic quality, religious affiliation, and family influence (Locke, 1982).

### **Summary**

The reviewed literature formed the basis for this study regarding the college choice of music majors. This literature focused on pertinent influences to this study, and background information of the music major population. College choice is dependent on several factors and external influences (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Kaczynski, 2011). Although this literature review does not exhaust every possible influence on the college choice, it does recognize and discuss recruitment strategies and the influences potential students, or more specifically music majors, manage as the college choice is made.

Prior to making the choice on which college to attend, students travel through several phases in the process (Filter, 2010). Deciding to go to college, searching for an institution that meets their needs and wants, and finally choosing a school requires time and resources (Chapman, 1981). Each students' background varies via location, socioeconomic background, and parental encouragement, therefore receiving information at various times and looking for different attributes within their search allows the college choice to be made (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). For many students, the choice is defined by four characteristics; financial, institutional, academic, and personal (Galotti, 1995; Galotti & Mark, 1994).

Financially, students from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds are more likely than their peers with a lower economic status to attend college (Chapman, 1981; Filter, 2010). Along the same vein, students having to pay more out of pocket cost are less likely to attend college when compared to the student with less out of pocket cost factored into the decision (Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982). Strong institutional factors influencing enrollment are related to the location of the university and the distance from home the university is located (Chapman, 1981; Paulsen, 1990). Institutions located in more urban areas and within 50 miles of their home tend to positively influence enrollment (Chapman, 1981; Paulsen, 1990).

Academic factors which encourage students to choose a specific college or university revolve heavily on the students' perception of course offerings and how the college/university will better allow them to enter graduate school or get a job afterwards (Chapman, 1981). Personal/social factors influencing choice include the advice of friends and parents as major elements dictating where students choose to attend school (Conklin & Dailey, 1981; Hodges & Barbuto, 2002; Litten, 1982). Music majors however, may operate through a different channel of influences compared to the general public and may seek specific guidelines and be influenced by diverse choices which matter less to students of other disciplines (Overmier, 2003).

Music majors tend to value the reputation of the department and involvement with the faculty as deciding factors in college choice compared to other areas of study (Ludeman, 1964; Overmier, 2003). They also identified proximity to home and the influence of friends as a low priority compared to the general student (Locke, 1982; Ludeman, 1964).

The study of college choice is important in assisting institutions and distinguishing which characteristics students' view as important to facilitate enrollment (Galotti, 1995). The potential music major is a student that meets requirements beyond those of the traditional college-bound student (Schneider & Klotz, 2000). They tend to be high achieving students and search for specific criteria and institutional attributes other students may not consider (Churchill, 2004; Locke, 1982; Longley, 1999; Overmier, 2003; Schneider & Klotz, 2000). High achieving students are very likely to attend college regardless of major and analyzing the final institutional choice with a set population at the time of enrollment, in this case music majors, may be the best indicator for which attributes affect choice (Filter, 2010; Maguire & Lay, 1980).

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### Overview

College choice research centers around the decision students make to attend and pursue a postsecondary education (Filter, 2010). Much of the literature in this field pays attention to why students may pursue a college education or which college attributes tend to lead students to choose that institution in general terms (Chapman, 1981; Dixon & Martin, 1991; Hodges & Barbuto, 2002). Very few studies seek information concerning the music major population (Overmier, 2003).

The purpose of this research was to investigate the characteristics pertinent to the music major's choice of college at the time of enrollment. This study analyzed data generated by freshmen music majors using a combination of the Chi-Square test for independence and the equally weighted criteria model (Galotti, 1995). A Chi-square test for independence and a  $z$ -test for difference in proportion were used with appropriate items. Since the  $z$ -test was for proportions, it did not require randomization of sample data (Bluman, 2009). The college choice factors surveyed to students was based on the study of real-life decision-making (Galotti, 1995) and the factors which influence the music major's choice of institution (Locke, 1982).

This study employed a mixed research design to evaluate college choice factors. Using data results from a questionnaire based on the study of real-life decision-making (Galotti, 1995), a 31 attribute survey was distributed to all freshmen music majors at each researched university. All enrolled music majors who attended the researched universities gave survey consent at the time of the study and participation was voluntary.

This chapter presents the study's method and explains the primary data and design within the research.

### **Population**

The population for this study included all undergraduate students declaring music as their major area of study entering their first semester of college as freshmen; four universities in total were included in this study. Two private universities and two public universities offered a comparison of factors between the public and private universities as well as the influences that guide each student's choice of institution. The schools were chosen for their public or private affiliations as well as program attributes. Music degrees offered within these universities at the time of the study included a bachelor's degree in music, music education, music business, and music performance. All universities offered a general music degree, music performance, and music education degree while one private university included in this study offered music, music education, music performance, and music business as an additional possible major. Table 3 offers an overview of majors available at each university researched as well as the total number of surveys distributed and returned.

The locations of the universities varied from urban, suburban, and rural communities, and all universities were located in Missouri and Illinois. These universities, chosen due to the similarity of majors and music ensembles offered, and the proximity to the researcher, provided a diverse population based on college attributes.



Table 3

*University Attributes and Survey Distribution*

| College Affiliation  | Majors Offered  | Surveys Distributed | Surveys Returned |
|----------------------|---|---------------------|------------------|
| Public University 1  | Music Education<br>Music Performance<br>Bachelors of Arts in<br>Music<br>Composition    | 34                  | 31               |
| Public University 2  | Music Education<br>Music Performance<br>Music Business<br>Bachelors of Arts in<br>Music | 12                  | 11               |
| Private University 1 | Music Education<br>Music Performance<br>Music Business<br>Bachelors of Arts in<br>Music | 11                  | 11               |
| Private University 2 | Music Education<br>Music Performance<br>Music Business<br>Bachelors of Arts in<br>Music | 29                  | 29               |
| Total                |   | 86                  | 82               |

**Sample**

The sample for this study included data from those students attending the researched universities as music majors at the time of survey distribution. No compensations, either monetarily or through class credit, was offered to students for their participation in the study. In return for their assistance, a condensed version of the results

were emailed to all students who reported they would like a copy of the results, and a full copy of the dissertation was emailed to the faculty representatives teaching the classes in which the survey was distributed. The sample size for this study included 84 total students enrolled in their institutions primary theory course. All of the researched institutions chosen required at least two semesters of theory included in their music degree. Since these theory courses are required at the beginning of the degree, it was an optimal venue to distribute the survey.

### **Development of Instrument**

The survey was given to all students claiming music as their major during the 2011 fall semester. The survey was reviewed by a committee of nine professionals in the field of music education, music performance, music business, K-12 education, higher education, and university admissions prior to administration. The survey instrument was three pages in length and required approximately 15 minutes to complete. The format of the survey included 24 questions concerning specific attributes of the college choice rated on a 5 point Likert scale. Following the Likert responses were five multiple choice questions and one open-ended question. The questions included in the survey, based on the results table (Galotti, 1995, pg. 471), revolve around four attributes found to be important in the process of college choice and include academic, institutional, financial, and personal/social factors as the basis for this survey and a guide to this research.

The survey, although original, is established through the research findings of Galotti (1995) and Locke (1982). The methodology from the Galotti study incorporated high school students describing their college decision process at one or more sessions toward the end of their high school years using a sequential longitudinal design (Galotti,

1995). Students involved in each session “described their thinking and experiences in choosing a college, both through open-ended questions and structured items”; students then rated and assigned weights to alternative factors for a goodness of fit (Galotti, 1995, p. 464). The study by Locke (1982) offered guidance and structure to the methodology by providing one of the earliest studies on the college choice of music majors and general characteristics which guide music majors’ choices. Although no interviews were conducted, Locke’s (1982) study surveyed, through a 43 question 7 point Likert scale, 631 music majors attending 22 private and public universities during the fall of 1981 in the state of Illinois.

The survey, checked for a variety of issues by professionals in the field, included parallel construction of the question and the corresponding scale, clarity in the wording of questions, content of the survey, alignment with the research question, alignment with the literature review information, and alignment with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application. Changes made to the initial survey based on suggestions included adding a short answer comment section due to the chance a strong influence in college choice was not covered in the Likert response questions; shortening the total amount of questions included in the survey to allow the student to complete the survey in a more timely manner; and including a specific institutional question regarding the quality of the facilities on campus.

Following the distribution and collection of the survey, those students offering consent were then asked six follow-up questions either face-to-face or over the phone within one month of completing the survey. Discussion of the interview questions lasted approximately seven minutes in length and were intended to be open-ended allowing for

possible factors and student perceptions which may not have been included or asked in the initial survey. Consistencies and variations between the survey and interview may allow a better understanding of the decision making process students undertake as well as a better understanding between the differences in the factors which spark interest compared to those that lead to enrollment (Galotti & Mark, 1994). With each interview question, the researcher was interested in determining the initial attraction of the university that initiated the students' interest, the process they used to narrow their search of institution, factors that may have deterred them from choosing an institution, other possible school options, institutional factors important in their search, and personal/social factors important in their college choice.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Ho: There will be no difference in proportion of participants in agreement with statements concerning the importance of factors regarding choice of college, when comparing responses for each individual question on the administered survey between public school choice and private school choice.

Ha: There will be a difference in proportion of participants in agreement with statements concerning the importance of factors regarding choice of college, when comparing responses for each individual question on the administered survey between public school choice and private school choice.

1. To what extent do academic factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. academic challenge, admissions requirements, course offerings, faculty quality, majors offered, reputation/accreditation, school regulations, success of graduates, type of school)

Ho<sub>1a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of academic factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>1a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between positive views of academic factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ho<sub>1b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of academic factors described on the survey.

Ha<sub>1b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of academic factors described on the survey.

2. To what extent do institutional factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. campus appearance, campus atmosphere, class size, dorms, extracurricular programs, facilities, location, physical setting, size)

Ho<sub>2a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of institutional factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>2a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between positive views of institutional factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ho<sub>2b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of institutional factors described on the survey.

Ha<sub>2b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of institutional factors described on the survey.

3. To what extent do financial factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. cost, financial aid)

Ho<sub>3a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of financial factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>3a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between positive views of financial factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ho<sub>3b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of financial factors described on the survey.

Ha<sub>3b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of financial factors described on the survey.

4. To what extent do personal/social factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. distance from home, parents'/friends' advice, peers/friends at school, social networking.)

Ho<sub>4a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of personal factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>4a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between positive views of personal factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ho<sub>4b</sub>: Choice of college setting is independent of personal/social factors described on the survey.

Ha<sub>4b</sub>: Choice of college setting is not independent of personal/social factors described on the survey.

5. Does the achievement level of entering music major students indicate differences in college selection?

Ho<sub>5a</sub>: There is no difference in proportion between entering achievement level with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

Ha<sub>5a</sub>: There is a difference in proportion between entering achievement level with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

$H_{05b}$ : Choice of college setting is independent of achievement level.

$H_{a5b}$ : Choice of college setting is not independent of achievement level.

6. Do the factors influencing the college choice of music majors vary between genders?

$H_{06}$ : There is no difference in proportion between genders on importance of factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

$H_{a6}$ : There is a difference in proportion between genders on importance of factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

7. Do the factors influencing the college choice vary by type of institution (e.g. public vs. private)?

$H_{07}$ : There is no difference in proportion between type of institution with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

$H_{a7}$ : There is a difference in proportion between type of institution with regard to music majors' choice of institution

### **Data Collection**

Information for this study was gathered through a 31-question survey followed by a six-question interview conducted at a later date (within one month of completing the survey). Responses from the survey and interviews were stored in a locked file cabinet within the researcher's office. Data was entered onto the researcher's computer via an excel spreadsheet which was located in the researcher's locked office.

An informational letter obtaining the students' written consent to conduct the survey and interview was collected at the time of the survey for those students who wished to participate. Each survey, coded by institution prior to distribution, was placed

at the teacher workstation of each theory classroom upon completion. Those students agreeing to an interview provided a contact number or email address in the space provided at the bottom of the survey. The researcher identified those students who agreed to participate in a follow up interview and contacted these students at a later date to arrange a specific day and time to conduct the interview. The researcher did not include any names during the interview and all personal information was removed from the interview sessions.

### **Data Analysis**

Upon receiving the surveys from the four universities, the data was reviewed, placed into an excel file for analyzing, and separated based on those students which agreed to an interview and those that did not. Analysis for this survey included six statistical tests; a weighted mean was analyzed to distinguish if an observable difference of .2 was evident in the average difference between groups or universities on similar questions. An observable difference of .2 signified there was likely a statistical difference in answers to necessitate discussion. Any weighted mean over 3.0 signified there was a general positive response to the question. The second test, a  $z$ -test for proportion, allowed the researcher to observe the percentage of students answering a specific Likert response. This allowed the researcher to view which questions students responded as positively or negatively overall.

The third test, a  $z$ -test for difference in proportion, allowed the researcher to compare the proportion and either reject or accept the null hypothesis concerning a measureable difference in the importance of each factor considered. A  $z$ -test for difference in proportion allowed the researcher to compare groups of students from one



question to another and distinguish if certain schools (public/private) answered similarly while the Chi-square test for independence tested the likelihood an attribute influenced their decision. The Chi-square test also gave an overall look at group proportions represented by the survey responses. Due to the relationship between attribute and college choice established by the Chi-square test, the  $z$ -test allowed a closer look at individual questions. The  $z$ -test for difference in proportion also allowed an analysis of data that was not normally distributed. All surveys were axial coded when analyzed qualitatively.

Frequency tables were completed for each survey question from the four groups they were administered to: public university 1, public university 2, private university 1, and private university 2. A calculated weighted average for each question as well as the weighted average for each group was tabulated. A statistical analysis was not applied due to the lack of instances where the differences were notable. The overall weighted averages were also compared to allow the researcher to observe differences in overall group responses from one university to another.

The frequency tables were then changed into proportions, allowing the researcher to view responses from each student for every question within the four groups. This allowed an observation of any differences/similarities for the proportion of students responding in agreement from group to group for each question. The researcher also combined the proportion of students responding with a 4 or 5 for each question from each group. The tables were rearranged to allow the researcher to calculate proportions in agreement (answering a 4 or 5) for each question based on school affiliation, allowing an observation of responses comparing public and private universities. A  $z$ -test for

difference in proportions was then applied to questions based on school size simply for discussion purposes which will be addressed in Chapter 5.

### **Demographics**

This section represents the demographics of the sample and includes information regarding the gender and instrument/vocal choice from the surveyed students to compare to general populations and previous research. Instrument/vocal emphasis is not typically considered a student demographic, but due to research from Locke (1982) that identified area of emphasis (instrument or vocal) as a subgroup influenced by contrary factors; this researcher included it as a student demographic which may offer insight and guidance on the factors influencing school choice based on their instrument or voice. The demographics of the respondents are identified in Table 4.

Table 4

#### *Survey Respondents by Demographic Information*

| <u>Demographic Information</u> | <u><i>n</i></u> | <u><i>%</i></u> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Gender                         |                 |                 |
| Male                           | 43              | 51.2            |
| Female                         | 41              | 48.8            |
| Area of Emphasis               |                 |                 |
| Wind Instrument                | 28              | 33.3            |
| String Instrument              | 7               | 8.3             |
| Percussion                     | 13              | 15.4            |
| Vocalist                       | 28              | 33.3            |
| Piano                          | 5               | 5.9             |

Each university possessed certain traits and demographic information which may have some influence on the final results. Private university 1 is located in a small rural area with four full time music faculty. Private university 2 is located in a suburban area

with five full time music faculty. Public university 1 is located in a rural area with 19 full time faculty and public university 2 is located in an urban area with 9 full time faculty.

Out of 88 total surveys distributed throughout four institutions, 84 surveys were collected and reviewed as data for this study. Within the surveys collected, 81 were fully completed while three surveys lacked a response to a single question. In this case, all three students left question 30, referring to their area of emphasis, blank. From the 84 surveys collected, 41 respondents (48%) agreed to a follow up interview. While 41 respondents agreed to an interview,  $n=19$  (46.3%) responded to the researcher's correspondence and completed the interview portion. All students participating in the interview completed each question.

### **Survey Distribution**

The percentage of male to female students distributed fairly even, however the emphasis area fell heavily on the side of total wind instruments and vocalists (66.6%). The smallest percentage of students, those majoring in piano, captured just fewer than 6% of the total music major population for this survey (5.9%). The proportion of wind instrument/vocalist attending the researched institutions was similar between universities with the exception of private university 1 which was predominantly occupied by those claiming wind instruments as their area of emphasis (54.5%). The distribution of public to private students majoring in music divided somewhat evenly as well with  $n=41$  (48.8%) attending a private school while the other  $n=43$  (52.2%) attending a public university. This was by design as the researcher chose public and private universities with comparable enrollments and majors to provide an accurate account of the college choice process.

## Interview Procedures

Upon completion of the survey, students were invited to participate in a follow up interview by providing a phone number or email address as correspondence. Those students listing a phone number were initially contacted by phone within one week of completing the survey. The students listing their email address were also contacted within one week to set up a time to conduct the phone interview. All interviews were finalized within three weeks of completing the survey. When possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face in place of the phone interview. Due to access, all interviews with private university 2 students were conducted face-to-face. Table 5 provides the demographics of those students participating in the interview.

Table 5  
*Interview Respondents by Demographic Information*

| Demographic Information | Public u. 1 | Public u. 2 | Private u. 1 | Private u. 2 |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Gender</b>           |             |             |              |              |
| Male                    | 0           | 0           | 0            | 3            |
| Female                  | 0           | 2           | 1            | 13           |
| <b>Area of Emphasis</b> |             |             |              |              |
| Wind Instrument         | 0           | 1           | 0            | 4            |
| String Instrument       | 0           | 0           | 0            | 2            |
| Percussion              | 0           | 0           | 0            | 2            |
| Vocalist                | 0           | 1           | 0            | 8            |
| Piano                   | 0           | 0           | 1            | 0            |

## Human Subjects

The researcher applied several safety measures to ensure data was kept private and confidential. Consent to obtain data from all researched universities was gained through the university IRB or through department approval if the university did not have a review board. Once data was obtained from the universities, it was input into an

institutional computer and stored. Data did not transfer out of the researcher's office upon analysis.

### **Summary**

This research utilized a mixed method analysis using surveys and interviews. The intent of this research and the research method was to provide data to further the understanding between music majors and the choice of institution to which they enrolled, including a comparison of those factors. Chapter 4 will examine the data obtained in the study including a brief overview, analysis information of the sample in relation to the research questions, and comparison data based on demographic variables. Chapter 5 will present a discussion of those findings beginning with a summary, interpretation, and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter Four: Data**

### **Background**

As stated earlier, this study used an original survey based on the study of real life decision-making (Galotti, 1995) and the factors influencing music majors' choice of institution (Locke, 1982). Students were asked about several topics related to college choice including academic, institutional, social, and financial factors, as well as demographic information to help establish which, if any influences were imperative in the student's college choice. This study surveyed specific institutions in the surrounding eastern side of Missouri and Western side of Illinois.

### **Survey Results**

The following data represented the information collected through the Likert response surveys for each question; included is the weighted mean, proportion, z-test for difference in proportion, and chi-square test for independence. The weighted mean scores included in Table 5 demonstrate the total average response to each question. Due to the five point Likert response and for purposes of this study, an answer above three signifies a positive response to the question and any observable differences greater than 0.2 will be discussed in Chapter 5. All university participants rated question number 4 regarding the quality of the music faculty and question number 20 related to the influence of financial aid/scholarship high (at or above 4.0).

The response proportion to each question is listed below in Tables 6-9 by university. A response with a proportion of 40.0 or higher for each question, for purposes of this study, is worthy of discussion due to the high percentage of participants who answered positively and will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 6

*Weighted Mean Score*

| Question | Public<br>university 1 | Public<br>university 2 | Private<br>university 1 | Private<br>university 2 |
|----------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1        | 3.2                    | 4.0                    | 3.3                     | 3.3                     |
| 2        | 3.1                    | 3.0                    | 3.4                     | 3.1                     |
| 3        | 4.0                    | 4.8                    | 3.5                     | 4.0                     |
| 4        | 4.6                    | 4.9                    | 4.5                     | 4.0                     |
| 5        | 4.3                    | 4.1                    | 4.0                     | 3.9                     |
| 6        | 3.8                    | 4.0                    | 3.7                     | 3.8                     |
| 7        | 2.2                    | 2.3                    | 2.5                     | 3.1                     |
| 8        | 3.5                    | 2.5                    | 2.6                     | 3.5                     |
| 9        | 2.7                    | 2.4                    | 3.4                     | 3.3                     |
| 10       | 3.2                    | 2.9                    | 3.8                     | 3.9                     |
| 11       | 3.4                    | 3.4                    | 4.1                     | 4.0                     |
| 12       | 3.5                    | 4.0                    | 3.5                     | 4.5                     |
| 13       | 2.8                    | 3.5                    | 2.3                     | 3.7                     |
| 14       | 3.1                    | 3.5                    | 3.6                     | 3.7                     |
| 15       | 3.8                    | 3.6                    | 3.8                     | 3.9                     |
| 16       | 4.1                    | 3.5                    | 3.7                     | 4.3                     |
| 17       | 3.2                    | 3.2                    | 2.8                     | 3.6                     |
| 18       | 3.2                    | 3.6                    | 3.1                     | 3.9                     |
| 19       | 4.3                    | 4.4                    | 3.7                     | 3.7                     |
| 20       | 4.3                    | 4.7                    | 4.6                     | 4.5                     |
| 21       | 4.4                    | 3.3                    | 3.0                     | 4.0                     |
| 23       | 3.2                    | 3.1                    | 2.6                     | 3.4                     |
| 24       | 2.8                    | 2.9                    | 1.7                     | 2.7                     |
| 25       | 1.8                    | 1.2                    | 1.0                     | 1.6                     |
| Total    | 3.4                    | 3.5                    | 3.3                     | 3.6                     |

Table 7

*Public University 1 Proportions*

| Question | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1        | 6.1  | 9.1  | 48.5 | 27.3 | 9.1  |
| 2        | 18.2 | 9.1  | 30.3 | 27.3 | 15.2 |
| 3        | 3.0  | 0.0  | 18.2 | 48.5 | 30.3 |
| 4        | 0.0  | 0.0  | 6.1  | 30.3 | 63.6 |
| 5        | 0.0  | 3.1  | 12.5 | 31.3 | 53.1 |
| 6        | 0.0  | 15.2 | 30.3 | 18.2 | 36.4 |
| 7        | 30.3 | 33.3 | 30.3 | 3.0  | 3.0  |
| 8        | 15.2 | 15.2 | 12.1 | 24.2 | 33.3 |
| 9        | 30.3 | 18.2 | 18.2 | 18.2 | 15.2 |
| 10       | 9.1  | 15.2 | 36.4 | 27.3 | 12.1 |
| 11       | 3.0  | 12.1 | 36.4 | 36.4 | 12.1 |
| 12       | 12.5 | 9.4  | 18.8 | 37.5 | 21.9 |
| 13       | 33.3 | 6.1  | 24.2 | 18.2 | 18.2 |
| 14       | 12.1 | 21.2 | 24.2 | 27.3 | 15.2 |
| 15       | 6.1  | 9.1  | 21.2 | 27.3 | 36.4 |
| 16       | 6.1  | 3.0  | 24.2 | 6.1  | 60.6 |
| 17       | 21.2 | 6.1  | 27.3 | 27.3 | 18.2 |
| 18       | 12.1 | 15.2 | 24.2 | 39.4 | 9.1  |
| 19       | 3.0  | 3.0  | 15.2 | 21.2 | 57.6 |
| 20       | 6.1  | 3.0  | 9.1  | 15.2 | 66.7 |
| 21       | 3.0  | 0.0  | 9.1  | 27.3 | 60.6 |
| 23       | 18.2 | 15.2 | 18.2 | 21.2 | 27.3 |
| 24       | 21.9 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 18.8 | 15.6 |
| 25       | 56.3 | 18.8 | 15.6 | 3.1  | 6.3  |

Table 7 displays the results from the survey as reported by students from public university 1. Public university 1 participants demonstrated seven responses with a total



positive response rate above 40%. Many of the positive responses occurred on questions regarding academic and financial aspects of the college choice.

Table 8

*Public University 2 Proportions*

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| Question | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1        | 0.0  | 0.0  | 30.0 | 40.0 | 30.0 |
| 2        | 30.0 | 10.0 | 20.0 | 10.0 | 30.0 |
| 3        | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 20.0 | 80.0 |
| 4        | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 10.0 | 90.0 |
| 5        | 10.0 | 0.0  | 10.0 | 30.0 | 50.0 |
| 6        | 0.0  | 0.0  | 30.0 | 40.0 | 30.0 |
| 7        | 30.0 | 10.0 | 60.0 | 0.0  | 0.0  |
| 8        | 20.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 20.0 | 0.0  |
| 9        | 40.0 | 20.0 | 10.0 | 20.0 | 10.0 |
| 10       | 10.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 20.0 | 10.0 |
| 11       | 0.0  | 20.0 | 30.0 | 40.0 | 10.0 |
| 12       | 0.0  | 10.0 | 20.0 | 30.0 | 40.0 |
| 13       | 20.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 20.0 | 40.0 |
| 14       | 20.0 | 0.0  | 20.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| 15       | 10.0 | 10.0 | 20.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| 16       | 20.0 | 10.0 | 20.0 | 0.0  | 50.0 |
| 17       | 20.0 | 0.0  | 30.0 | 40.0 | 10.0 |
| 18       | 0.0  | 10.0 | 40.0 | 30.0 | 20.0 |
| 19       | 10.0 | 0.0  | 10.0 | 0.0  | 80.0 |
| 20       | 0.0  | 10.0 | 0.0  | 0.0  | 90.0 |
| 21       | 30.0 | 10.0 | 0.0  | 20.0 | 40.0 |
| 23       | 10.0 | 20.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 10.0 |
| 24       | 20.0 | 30.0 | 10.0 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| 25       | 80.0 | 20.0 | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  |

---

Table 9

*Private University I Proportions*

| Question | 1     | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    |
|----------|-------|------|------|------|------|
| 1        | 9.1   | 18.2 | 18.2 | 45.5 | 9.1  |
| 2        | 9.1   | 9.1  | 27.3 | 45.5 | 9.1  |
| 3        | 0.0   | 18.2 | 27.3 | 45.5 | 9.1  |
| 4        | 0.0   | 0.0  | 9.1  | 36.4 | 54.5 |
| 5        | 0.0   | 9.1  | 18.2 | 36.4 | 36.4 |
| 6        | 0.0   | 9.1  | 18.2 | 63.6 | 9.1  |
| 7        | 18.2  | 27.3 | 45.5 | 0.0  | 9.1  |
| 8        | 18.2  | 36.4 | 18.2 | 18.2 | 9.1  |
| 9        | 20.0  | 0.0  | 30.0 | 20.0 | 30.0 |
| 10       | 9.1   | 0.0  | 18.2 | 45.5 | 27.3 |
| 11       | 0.0   | 0.0  | 36.4 | 18.2 | 45.5 |
| 12       | 9.1   | 27.3 | 0.0  | 27.3 | 36.4 |
| 13       | 27.3  | 18.2 | 54.5 | 0.0  | 0.0  |
| 14       | 9.1   | 18.2 | 9.1  | 27.3 | 36.4 |
| 15       | 9.1   | 9.1  | 9.1  | 36.4 | 36.4 |
| 16       | 9.1   | 9.1  | 18.2 | 27.3 | 36.4 |
| 17       | 18.2  | 27.3 | 27.3 | 9.1  | 18.2 |
| 18       | 18.2  | 18.2 | 18.2 | 27.3 | 18.2 |
| 19       | 0.0   | 27.3 | 18.2 | 9.1  | 45.5 |
| 20       | 0.0   | 0.0  | 9.1  | 18.2 | 72.7 |
| 21       | 36.4  | 18.2 | 0.0  | 0.0  | 45.5 |
| 23       | 18.2  | 36.4 | 18.2 | 18.2 | 9.1  |
| 24       | 54.5  | 27.3 | 9.1  | 9.1  | 0.0  |
| 25       | 100.0 | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  |

Table 10

*Private University 2 Proportions*

| Question | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1        | 6.7  | 16.7 | 23.3 | 50.0 | 3.3  |
| 2        | 13.3 | 16.7 | 20.0 | 43.3 | 6.7  |
| 3        | 0.0  | 6.7  | 23.3 | 30.0 | 40.0 |
| 4        | 16.7 | 3.3  | 6.7  | 13.3 | 60.0 |
| 5        | 20.0 | 3.3  | 0.0  | 16.7 | 60.0 |
| 6        | 6.7  | 3.3  | 16.7 | 50.0 | 23.3 |
| 7        | 16.7 | 13.3 | 26.7 | 33.3 | 10.0 |
| 8        | 13.3 | 3.3  | 30.0 | 23.3 | 30.0 |
| 9        | 10.0 | 20.0 | 30.0 | 13.3 | 26.7 |
| 10       | 6.7  | 6.7  | 10.0 | 43.3 | 33.3 |
| 11       | 6.7  | 3.3  | 10.0 | 40.0 | 40.0 |
| 12       | 3.3  | 0.0  | 10.0 | 16.7 | 70.0 |
| 13       | 10.0 | 3.3  | 23.3 | 36.7 | 26.7 |
| 14       | 6.7  | 13.3 | 16.7 | 33.3 | 30.0 |
| 15       | 6.7  | 0.0  | 26.7 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| 16       | 3.3  | 0.0  | 16.7 | 26.7 | 53.3 |
| 17       | 10.0 | 13.3 | 10.0 | 40.0 | 26.7 |
| 18       | 3.3  | 0.0  | 30.0 | 36.7 | 30.0 |
| 19       | 3.3  | 6.7  | 33.3 | 30.0 | 26.7 |
| 20       | 0.0  | 3.3  | 6.7  | 23.3 | 66.7 |
| 21       | 6.7  | 6.7  | 10.0 | 30.0 | 46.7 |
| 23       | 10.0 | 10.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 20.0 |
| 24       | 30.0 | 23.3 | 10.0 | 16.7 | 20.0 |
| 25       | 66.7 | 16.7 | 10.0 | 6.7  | 0.0  |

Table 8 lists the proportions for public university 2. Public university 2 students responded to 13 questions with at least a 40% positive response rate. Public university 2 participants also answered very positively to academic and financial questions, but also

responded highly to institutional factors, when compared to responses from public university 1.

Private university 1 student responses are tabulated in Table 9 and identify 10 questions with more than 40% positive responses. Private university 1 students also responded more favorably to academic and financial aspects influencing college choice compared to social networking and institutional attributes.

Private university 2 students, displayed in Table 9, demonstrated the most positive responses compared to all other private and public universities participating in the survey with 13 questions receiving a 40% positive response. Although public university 2 and private university 2 both responded to 13 questions positively, private university 2 rated one question (question 11) positively on two separate Likert responses resulting in a total positive proportion of 80%.

### **Difference in Proportion of Agreement**

The null hypothesis for all examined survey responses states: There will be no difference in proportion of participants in agreement with statements concerning the importance of factors regarding choice of college, when comparing responses for each individual question on the administered survey between public school choice and private school choice.

Table 11 shows the results for  $z$ -tests for difference of proportion in agreement between both private universities compared to both public universities, for each individual question in the survey. The  $z$ -test scores show four questions (7, 10, 11, and 19) which individually reject the null hypothesis, which stated that there would be no

difference in proportion of agreement when comparing public university responses to private university responses.

Table 11

*Public vs. Private z-test for Difference of Proportion in Agreement*

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| Question | Private | Public | z-test score |
|----------|---------|--------|--------------|
| 1        | 53.7    | 44.2   | 0.867922     |
| 2        | 51.2    | 41.9   | 0.857528     |
| 3        | 65.9    | 83.7   | -1.6371      |
| 4        | 78.0    | 95.3   | -1.58513     |
| 5        | 75.6    | 81.4   | -0.53011     |
| 6        | 73.2    | 58.1   | 1.377241     |
| 7        | 34.1    | 4.7    | 2.702511     |
| 8        | 46.3    | 48.8   | -0.22867     |
| 9        | 43.9    | 32.6   | 1.039427     |
| 10       | 75.6    | 37.2   | 3.518462     |
| 11       | 75.6    | 48.8   | 2.453049     |
| 12       | 80.5    | 60.5   | 1.834589     |
| 13       | 46.3    | 41.9   | 0.410574     |
| 14       | 63.4    | 46.5   | 1.548747     |
| 15       | 68.3    | 62.8   | 0.504122     |
| 16       | 75.6    | 62.8   | 1.174553     |
| 17       | 56.1    | 46.5   | 0.878316     |
| 18       | 61.0    | 48.8   | 1.112187     |
| 19       | 56.1    | 79.1   | -2.10484     |
| 20       | 90.2    | 83.7   | 0.597671     |
| 21       | 68.3    | 81.4   | -1.20054     |
| 23       | 43.9    | 46.5   | -0.23907     |
| 24       | 29.3    | 34.9   | -0.51452     |
| 25       | 4.9     | 7.0    | -0.19229     |

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All other responses to individual questions failed to reject the null hypothesis, so for those questions there was no significant difference in positive response to factors relating to college choice. Further discussion follows in Chapter 5.

### **Research Question Explanation and Analysis**

This section will discuss the data based on the summarized research results. Research question one: “To what extent do academic factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university”? (e.g. academic challenge, admissions requirements, course offerings, faculty quality, majors offered, reputation/accreditation, school regulations, success of graduates, type of school). The null hypothesis for this question was: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of academic factors with regard to music majors’ choice of institution.

### **Research Question One**

The total weighted mean average to research question one regarding academic factors resulted in an average response of 3.49 when all four university scores were included, indicating a positive response to academic factors influence the music major college choice decision. Questions 1-9 in the survey inquired into the academic influence a student is faced with in making the college decision. Within the nine questions involving academic influence, several university responses fell outside of the researcher established 0.2 threshold in both positive and negative responses from one university to another and will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

A Chi-Square test for independence was applied to determine if any trends existed in the data as a whole, regardless of attribute, using both mean averages and proportion of agreement for comparison. The null hypothesis stated: Choice of college setting is

independent of academic factors described on the survey. The critical value for both tests was 90.531. With a test value of 3.109692 for the chi-square test utilizing means, the researcher accepts the null hypothesis. The Chi-Square test utilizing proportions resulted in a test value of 324.1585 for comparison of individual schools and a test value of 119.961 when grouped by size or affiliation and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected for each of those cases. Results are summarized in Table 15.

Questions 8 and 9 relating to academic factors resulted in split results with two universities separated by a weighted mean average of one full point. Question 8 resulted in a split weighted mean average with one public and one private universities weighted response rate at 3.5 while the other two (one public, one private) averaged a 2.5 and a 2.6 resulting in a full one point difference in weighted mean response. Question 9 was also split with both public schools averaging a 2.55 response and both private schools averaging a 3.35 response. Since the average on questions 8 and 9 was equally split, a baseline weighted mean response could not be established to determine if any single university response fell outside the researcher established observable .2 threshold , however the point difference between public and private schools will be discussed .

The total weighted mean for all questions regarding academic factors for public university 1 resulted in a 3.48 average on questions 1-9. The proportion of students answering more than 40% positively is included in Table 5 and shows three questions (questions 3, 4, and 5) with over a 40% positive response rate for later discussion.

Public university 2 resulted in an average response rate of 3.55 for academic factor related questions 1-9. Three questions resulted in above average weighted mean responses. Question 1 resulted in a difference of .7 compared to the next highest average

while questions 3 and 4 earned a positive .3 difference when compared to the next highest average. The proportion of public university 2 students answering each question with over a 40% positive response rate occurred on 5 questions (questions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6).

Private university 1 averaged a 3.4 weighted response rate with two questions outside the observable norm. Question 2 averaged .3 higher than the other university responses and question 3 was the lowest at 3.5 or .5 lower than the closest average. The proportion of private university 1 students answering at least 40% positive occurred on 5 questions (questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6). Private university 2 averaged a weighted mean score of 3.55 with two observable differences. Question 4 resulted in the lowest average at 4.0 (.5 lower than the next highest score) and question 7 averaged .7 higher than the other three schools at 3.1. The z-test for difference in proportion is shown in Table 10 for questions 1-9. Although question 7 individually rejects the null hypothesis, the overall data led the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis for an overall view of academic factors.

The null hypothesis for the Chi-square test for independence regarding academic factors state choice of college setting is independent of academic attributes described on the survey. With a critical value of 36.415 and a test value of 133.4082 for comparison of individual school results and a test value of 64.41528 when grouped by school affiliation, this data led the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. There is a significant difference in positive view of the importance of academic factors in college choice.

### **Research Question Two**

The second research question asked to what extent institutional factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university (e.g. campus appearance,



campus atmosphere, class size, dorms, extracurricular programs, facilities, location, physical setting, size). The null hypothesis for this question was: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of institutional factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution. The total weighted mean average to the second research question regarding institutional factors resulted in an average response of 3.55 when all four university scores on questions 10-18 were calculated, indicating an overall positive response that institutional factors influence the music major college choice. All questions except two regarding institutional factors resulted in split averages, with two universities within the .2 researcher established threshold from each other, but more than .2 away from the other two universities. Public university 1 students produced one of two exceptions with a weighted mean average of 3.1 (.3 less than the other three universities) on question 14 while producing a total institutional average of 3.4. The proportions for public university 1 yielded one question (question 16) with a percentage above 40%.

Public university 2 participants earned an institutional average of 3.5 with all responses within .2 of at least one other university with the exception of question 12 being .5 away from the next highest and .5 away from the next lowest score. The proportion of students answering more than 40% positive occurred on five questions listed in Table 7 (question 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17).

Private university 1 respondents produced a total weighted average of 3.4 when all institutional attributes were averaged producing only one response (question 17) more than .2 away from the other three universities. Private university 1 students also demonstrated in two institutional responses (question 10 and 11) more than 40% positive while private university 2 resulted in six positive responses (question 10, 11, 12, 16, and

17). Private university 2 also incurred the highest weighted mean average at 3.9 for all institutional attributes.

Results from the  $z$ -test for difference in proportion in agreement is shown in Table 11 for questions 10-18 and indicates results that led the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis with the exception of questions 10 and 11 regarding campus appearance and campus atmosphere.

The Chi-square test for independence regarding institutional factors resulted in split results. The null hypothesis stated: Choice of college setting is independent of institutional factors described in the survey. A critical value of 36.415 and a test value of 101.5368 resulted in the researcher rejecting the null hypothesis based on comparison of individual schools; however, a test value of 19.14359 when grouped by school size or private/public affiliation led the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis. Choice of college setting in is not independent of institutional attributes stated on the survey.

### **Research Question Three**

To what extent do financial factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. cost, financial aid) The null hypothesis for this question was: There is no difference in proportion between positive views of financial factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

The total weighted mean average to the third research question regarding financial factors resulted in an average response of 4.3 when all four university scores on questions 19-20 were calculated, indicating an overall positive response. Three of the four averaged university responses fell within the established .2 threshold of each other with the exception of public university 2 which resulted in .3 higher than the next highest score.

The proportions for each financial question in the survey all resulted in above 40% responses with the exception of private university 2 on question 19. Question 19 relates to how cost influences their decision while question 20 refers to scholarship. The  $z$ -test for difference in proportion in agreement is shown on Table 11 for questions 19-20; indicating results that allowed the researcher rejected the null hypothesis.

The Chi-square test for independence with regard to financial factors resulted in mixed results. The null hypothesis stated: Choice of college setting is independent of financial factors described on the survey. With a critical value of 7.815 and a test value of 14.33479 financial factors on an individual school basis led the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. When grouped together by size or affiliation, financial factors resulted in a test score of 7.714828 which rejects the null hypothesis.

#### **Research Question Four**

To what extent do personal/social factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university? (e.g. distance from home, parents/friends advice, peers/friends at school, social networking.) The hypothesis for this question is there is no difference in proportion between positive views of personal factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution.

The total weighted mean average to the fourth research question regarding personal/social factors resulted in an average response of 3.12 when all four university scores on questions 21, 23-24 were averaged indicating an overall positive response. The weighted mean average for public university 1 resulted in a 3.5 response with question 21 at .4 higher than the next closest score. Question 21 (referring to distance from home) also resulted in the only personal/social proportion with a 40% positive response rate for

each public and private university. Public university 2 earned a 3.1 weighted average while private university 1 earned the lowest with a 2.5 and private university 2, the second highest with a 3.4. The  $z$ -test for difference of proportion in agreement is shown on Table 10 for questions 21, 23, and 24, indicating the results that allowed the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis. Question 21 related to how distance influenced choice, question 23 related to parents or friends advice, and question 24 asked if peers or friends already attending the institution influenced choice.

The Chi-square test for independence with regard to personal/social factors resulted in a mixed result. The null hypothesis stated: Choice of college setting is independent of personal/social factors described on the survey. With a critical value of 12.592 and a test value of 33.3316 personal/social factors on an individual school basis led the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. When grouped together by size or affiliation, personal/social factors resulted in a test score of 10.80191 the researcher did not reject the null hypothesis.

### **Research Question Five**

Does the achievement level of entering music major students indicate differences in college selection? The hypothesis for this question is that there is no difference in proportion between entering achievement level with regard to music majors' choice of institution. Table 12 displays the frequency of responses given for the cumulative high school grade point average of the surveyed freshmen music majors from private institutions and public institutions.

A Chi-square test for independence was applied and no difference was found between entering achievement levels ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ;  $p = 0.266$ ). The null hypothesis was:

Choice of college setting is independent of achievement level. Therefore, the researcher did not reject the null hypothesis as shown in Table 12.

Table 12

|             | 4.0- | 3.4- | 2.9- | 2.4- | Below |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Affiliation | 3.5  | 3.0  | 2.5  | 2.0  | 2.0   |
| Private     | 17   | 14   | 9    | 0    | 0     |
| Public      | 23   | 12   | 7    | 0    | 0     |

*Note:* P value equals 0.2668 compared to alpha =.05 with 1 degrees of freedom

### **Research Question Six**

Do the factors influencing the college choice of music majors vary between genders? The hypothesis for this question was there is no difference in proportion between genders on importance of factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution. . Table 13 provides evidence of average response rate to each factor of choice by gender.

Table 13

| Gender | Academic | Institutional | Financial | Personal/social |
|--------|----------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Female | 3.61     | 3.64          | 4.58      | 3.15            |
| Male   | 3.38     | 3.39          | 3.92      | 3               |

### **Research Question Seven**

Do the factors influencing the college choice vary by type of institution (e.g. public vs. private)? The hypothesis was there is no difference in proportion between genders on importance of factors with regard to music majors' choice of institution. As evident by Table 11, two questions (question 7 and 10) related to academic factors, one question (question 11) related to the institutional factors, and one question (question 19)

within the category of financial factors did vary by type of institution leading the researcher to reject the null hypothesis.

### **Interview Questions and Responses**

A secondary component to the dissertation involved a qualitative interview and aimed to discover which factors lead students to enroll in their final institution. The interview questions are listed in Appendix A with the survey. The responses to the interview questions were coded by the researcher and placed into like responses based on each attribute identified by Galotti (1995) as important in the college choice. For example, if a student answered “faculty” to question 1, that response would be classified as an academic attribute.

Table 14

*Summarized Results to Interview Questions*

| Question | Academic | Institutional | Financial | Personal/Social |
|----------|----------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1        | 16       | 3             | 1         | 4               |
| 2        | 9        | 4             | 10        | 3               |
| 3        | 8        | 4             | 3         | 5               |
| 4        | 11       | 2             | 4         | 2               |
| 5        | 0        | 17            | 0         | 1               |
| 6        | 0        | 0             | 0         | 15              |

*Note: n=19*

A general summary of the responses are listed in Table 14 and will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Some students responded with multiple reasons for attending their institution of choice resulting in more than 19 responses for certain questions and will be addressed. Four students answered no to question 6 when asked if any personal/social factors influenced their decision therefore less than 19 responses occurred on question 4.

The Chi-square test in Table 15 summarized the critical value and test value for the mean and proportion. Based on the critical and test value, the data indicates choice of college did not necessarily depend on institutional, financial, and personal/social factors. Academic factors however, were likely to influence college choice as shown in Table 15.

Table 15

*Chi-Square Results*

| Test             | Critical value | Individual attribute value | Test value |
|------------------|----------------|----------------------------|------------|
| Total Mean       | 90.531         | 3.10969                    |            |
| Total Proportion | 90.531         | 324.159                    | 119.961    |
| Academic         | 36.415         | 133.408                    | 64.4153    |
| Institutional    | 36.415         | 101.537                    | 19.1436    |
| Financial        | 7.815          | 14.3348                    | 7.71483    |
| Personal/social  | 12.592         | 33.3316                    | 10.8019    |

**Interview Results**

The interview portion of the research offered a qualitative view of the college choice of music majors. The influences affecting students and the attributes they seek offer insight to individuals involved in the choice processes. The first question during the interview process, the researcher asked; “What initially attracted you to (attending institution) as a possible university you might want to attend”? The purpose for this question is to get an idea as to which characteristics may draw students to initially consider a school. When coded by the researcher, an overwhelming response reported academic influences as the primary consideration attracting them to their school of choice. Out of the total n= 19 students responding, 16 reported academic influences initially attracted them to the school they ended up attending. Out of those 16 academic responses, 10 specifically pointed out faculty or reputation of the department/faculty as

the main factor. The next highest response was availability of their major with four. Of the 10 students responding with faculty, eight of those students specifically pointed out that it was the act of a faculty member contacting them or reaching out to express interest and wanting them to tour the school. While faculty seemed to play the biggest role in initial attraction, personal/social factors were a distant second with four students responding personal/social factors initially lead them to their school.

Personal/social factors seemed to condense down to one influential characteristic, “the school was close to home.” Even though personal/social factors contained more characteristics than distance from home, the initial attraction for the music majors interviewed is that it was “close enough to drive but far enough to be on my own.” The next highest response rate with three students answering fell under institutional characteristics and more specifically it fell under campus appearance as initially attracting them to the campus. Of the four factors important in the college choice, according to Galotti (1995), three of these were answered at least three times with the exception of financial. Only one student responded with the financial reason of a scholarship as initially attracting them to the institution. These findings are consistent with Locke’s (1982) research since scholarship is typically an influence leading to final enrollment rather than initial interest.

According to Locke (1982), financial obligations are not considered one of the top five factors influencing choice. Locke (1982) also found in his research that the top three factors influencing choice are reputation of the department, location allows the student to live at home and commute, and reputation of the faculty. Locke’s (1982) findings fit very well with this researcher’s interview findings which determined initial interest and



student choice are highly influenced by academic attributes such as reputation and institutional attributes such as location.

Interview question 2 asked; “How did you narrow down your decision to attend (attending institution)”? The purpose of question 2 was to determine which factors influenced the choice process and ultimately what was the final factor leading them to choose the university they did. The interview results for question 2 were split among two attributes. Financial factors comprised 10 responses while academic factors were still highly regarded with nine responses. Institutional attributes totaled four responses while personal/social garnered three responses. Due to the almost equal response rate of financial and academic factors, it is difficult to decipher one main attribute as the final distinguishing result from the interview. Within the academic responses to question 2, only three of the academic responses regarded availability of the degree/major offered as the determining factor. All other academic factors given in the interview were in regards to the faculty as a deciding factor in the student’s choice.

The financial answers are all similar in that scholarship was listed as the deciding factor, however after speaking with them further; it appears that the students view cost of the university and scholarship offered with little disparity between the two. If scholarship was given as an answer, the researcher asked if that was more important than cost and many of them viewed cost of the university as the cost after scholarship with little importance placed on the sticker price of the school. This may lend credence as to why many students did not list the financial attributes as initially attracting them to their chosen university. Perhaps this would vary if community college students were included in the survey. Out of the four institutional attributes listed as important narrowing down

their search, three of the four students listed location while one student commented class size was important to him. This same student however listed scholarship as more important in the decision. Ultimately, these interview findings aligned to the survey finding which distinguished the scholarship and faculty as the two main factors leading to final enrollment with the offer of a scholarship vitally important in the decision.

Interview question 3 asked; “Were there any factors that deterred you from attending a specific institution: If so, what were they?” The purpose of this question was to gain an understanding as to why the student attended their chosen university over another and if there might be something university faculty and staff can do to aid in the college choice process. Question 3 resulted in five students stating academic reasons while seven students listed institutional, three students listed financial and five students listed personal/social reasons for not attending a specific institution. Two students responded by saying “no” there were no other reasons that kept them from attending another institution, they had their mind set on one institution or they did not look into other options or another institution.

When considering all of the interview questions, question 3; “Were there any factors that deterred you from attending a specific institution” resulted in the largest mixture of responses. Although five students responded with academic attributes as a reason not to attend a specific university, those five responses were varied. Four of those responses were attributed to “quality of the music program” as a reason not to attend leaving one person to state the other school did not have her available major. Interestingly to this researcher, only three people listed financial reasons, in this case cost, as a reason they did not attend a different school. All of the students listing

personal/social reasons for their school choice listed distance as the reason they did not attend another school. Similar to the survey, parents and peers were not listed as an influence to or not to attend an institution.

The fourth interview question asked; “If you did not attend (attending institution) where do you think you might have gone and why”? The main goal for this question was to determine if music majors valued the school affiliation enough to influence choice; will private school students attend another private institution regardless of any other attributes and vice versa for public school students. The public school students interviewed for this data all chose another public school to attend. One student claimed he would have attended an in-state public school while another chose an out of state public school.

The private school students were split. Out of a total of 17 private school students interviewed, five students said they would have attended an out-of-state public school, two said they would have attended an in-state public school, three students commented they would have attended an in-state private school, while three other students said they would have attended an out-of-state private school. Three students attending a private institution claimed they would have attended the community college due to financial reasons. Not one of the other private or public interviewees mentioned cost or financial reasons when answering why they might have gone to this other institution. For many of the students, personal/social factors and academic factors seemed to be the pivotal trends influencing their choice. According to their answers, the other college was either close to home and family, or they had the desired major and faculty with a good reputation. No students listed another school specifically because it was public or private.

Question 5 and question 6 provided a varied result as each question asked how a particular attribute influenced their decision. Question 5 asked; “Were there any institutional factors that influenced your university selection decision?” If so, please describe the influence. Question 6 asked; “Were there any personal/social factors, such as parents, friend’s advice, or social networking that influenced your university selection decision? If so, please describe the influence”. These questions were included by the researcher to specifically address the amount of influence these two attributes may carry in the college choice decision. Since much of the prior research, as well as the first three questions of this survey, described academic and financial reasons as main factors influencing choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Dixon & Martin, 1991; Drewes & Michael, 2006), what specifically influenced the choices of music majors in these two areas mentioned?

Total responses for question 5 revealed 17 students answered institutional factors with two students answering no institutional factors influenced their school decision. Out of those 17 responses, the most recorded by students was facilities with seven responses. Appearance and class size both registered six responses while extra-curricular activities, specifically marching band as reported by the interviewees, garnered three responses and location with two responses. More than 17 responses were given due to multiple answers in the interview.

Question 6 was asked for one simple reason; Overmier (2003) came to the conclusion in his research that high school music teachers are very influential in the choice of major their students undertake, but carry little weight in their final college choice. For this study, high school faculty such as a band director or influential teacher

was only listed three times by students, signifying the students in this research do not consider the band director influential in the choice process and validates previous research by Overmier (2003).

Ludeman (1964) found the influence of friends as one of the five least influential factors affecting choice. If this is true, what if any, personal/social factors influence the college choice of music majors? According to the interview, friends are the number one personal/social influence in college choice. Out of 19 students, 10 students listed friends as their main personal/social influence leaving parents with the second most responses at seven. High school faculty was listed three times, and a college admissions visit was listed once as a personal/social influence. Four students responded by saying no personal/social influences had any bearing on their college choice.

One final component to the survey involved question 31 which was an open-ended question asking; what if any factors highly influenced your college choice that were not mentioned in the survey? Although this question was slightly modified and asked in the interview, it was designed to allow the student to provide a response if they did not participate in the interview. Out of a total of 84 surveys collected, four students completed this question. Three of the four students answering this question responded with a personal/social response highly influenced their decision. The most common personal factor related to a faculty member who invited them to a musical event while one student commented “a family member attended the same institution.” The other responses to this question stated the school was accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) while another student said playing sports highly influenced her decision. These answers are unique in that these are the only two student responses

where accreditation or sports were important to the music major. Every other student which responded to extracurricular activities influenced their decision referenced a musical activity such as marching band rather than a club or sport and while reputation was listed as important to several music majors in the interview, none of them specifically mentioned an accreditation highly influenced their school choice.

### **Summary**

Based on the null hypotheses discussed in this chapter, these findings indicate several factors, both statistical and observable which help perceive the college choice trends of music majors. The intent of this data was to determine, not just which factors students value when deciding on a college, but which factors are valued the most by music majors. The results of this study established a significant difference in several of the attributes identified as important in the college choice and will be discussed in Chapter 5 along with recommendations for further research and recruitment ideas.

## Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

### Overview

Research involving the college choice process and factors influencing college enrollment started in the 1970s and continue to this day (Chapman, 1981; Filter, 2010; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Locke, 1982; Overmier, 2003; Tierney, 1979). Much of the college choice research, instigated by Chapman (1981), focused on the general population. Although this data may be helpful to general college retention and recruitment, the specific choices music majors undertake in recent years is underdeveloped and lacking (Kelly, 1988; Locke, 1982; Overmier, 2003). With mixed results from various research regarding college choice by both the general population and music major population (Barnes & Mattson, 2010; Locke, 1982; Ludeman, 1964), and new methods to aid in the college choice process, this research set out to identify which factors are most sought after by today's music major.

The research questions guiding this study and the discussion of Chapter 5 were;

1. To what extent do academic factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university?
2. To what extent do institutional factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university?
3. To what extent do financial factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university?
4. To what extent do personal/social factors influence the decision of music majors to attend their chosen university?

5. Does the achievement level of entering music major students indicate differences in college selection?
6. Do the factors influencing the college choice of music majors vary between genders?
7. Do the factors influencing the college choice vary by type of institution?

Many attributes are identified as variables influencing college choice (Chapman, 1981; Galotti, 1995; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Locke, 1982). This study used a mixture of those variables influencing college choice by Galotti (1995) for the first four questions and the factors influencing the music major's choice of institution by Locke (1982) for the last three research questions.

### **Discussion**

This research contributed to the literature gap by expanding the degree of data available regarding the music major and the factors important in their college choice. This research is augmented with the inference of social media's involvement through the survey as well as an interview portion to investigate a possible overarching theme to the single factors important in the music major's choice of institution. The interview portion took place at a later date and was open-ended with the goal for open discussion.

### **Academic**

The data for this survey is broken down by attribute. Questions 1-9 in Appendix A related to academic influences according to Galotti (1995) and Galotti and Mark (1994). Any weighted mean differences greater than .2 according to Table 5, proportions answering over 40% on Tables 6-9, and z-test scores rejecting the null hypothesis on Table 10 will be discussed in order of university. For all academic survey responses,



responses from public university 1 fell within the .2 trend for all questions except question 8 which was split equally between schools. This gives credence to the idea that although academic factors are important to public university 1 students, they are no more or less important than they are to any other freshmen music major attending another public or private school. Public university 2 incurred the highest variance of responses outside .2 compared to the other universities. Survey question 1, 3, and 4, were all rated higher by a considerable margin in relation to the other universities' responses.

For survey question 1, students from public university 1 responded .7 higher than the next highest score indicating the academic challenge influenced their decision to attend that university at a greater rate than the other schools. According to Locke (1982) this would align with his findings if many of the respondents were string players; however, only one student claimed strings as his/her major instrument. Question 3 resulted in a mean score .8 higher for public university 1 than the next closest average. Question 3 referred to the course and curriculum offerings and suggests this attribute is more important for public university 1 students compared to the other three universities. This is unique because the four universities surveyed offered the same music degrees. This researcher believed this mean score may be slightly skewed due to the location and lack of music degrees in the communities surrounding public university 1.

The final question exceeding the .2 threshold related to the quality of the music faculty. This would hold true to previous studies stating wind and percussion students value the faculty and that the faculty does have some influence over their college decision (Locke, 1982; Ludeman, 1964). This research may vary slightly from previous studies; however, general student populations, as reviewed by Litten and Brodigan (1982), found

college faculty bore little influence on college choice, and most of that influence was toward the parents. This research found the opposite to be true. Although students from every school answered highly to this question, public school 2 answered .3 higher than the next closest school and .9 higher than the lowest average signifying the faculty at public university 2 did influence the decision of those students. Although public university 2 responses may be statistically higher than the other institutions, all schools rated this aspect high, and no observable area of emphasis seemed to value it more or less than another.

Private university 1 fell outside the .2 difference on two questions involving academic attributes. Survey question 2 asked how much did the admissions requirements influence your decision. Overall, the total responses were fairly low for this question, but private university 1 answered .3 higher than the next school leading the researcher to believe something about the admission requirements, either positive or negative, influenced the students to consider and choose this school compared to students attending the other schools. The admissions process was not studied for this research but further research regarding how the admissions process influences music majors may be needed. Many university music departments have to coordinate with and audition students for scholarship and acceptance into the program. Perhaps private university 1 allowed students to apply and check on their application process or financial aid status online influencing the process as reported by Galotti and Mark (1994).

Question 3 as reported by private university 1 is unique in that it is the only academic question to score considerably lower than the other schools. Private university 1 students responded with a total mean average of 3.5 to this question with the other two

universities at a 4.0 and public university 2 achieving a 4.8. This was the largest discrepancy achieved on any single question in the survey regardless of the overall positive response. This researcher believes private university 1 students may have recognized all four year institutions in their surrounding area offered similar degrees, therefore the course offerings and curriculum were similar in their choice set and factored little importance in this area.

Private university 2 also fell outside the .2 difference on two questions. Question 4, although rated high, resulted in the lowest of all four universities with a 4.0, a full .5 lower than the next highest score signifying the faculty played a less important role than the other schools. Considering both private universities and public university 1 have comparable full time faculty on staff, it is unusual to this researcher private university 2 is .5 lower. Private university two also achieved the highest score on question 7 with a 3.1, or .6 higher than the next school. Question 7 asked about the school policies and their influence on school choice. Although private university 2 reached a positive score with a 3.1, the other schools averaged a 2.35, making this the lowest overall response gathered for academic factors; signifying school policies do not influence many music majors in general terms. A response of 3.1 by private university 2 may require further study to determine and define exactly what school policies include and how they factor into school choice decisions.

The proportions for academic responses resulted in four questions with over 40% positive responses overall. Survey question 1, 3, and 4 all received very positive responses from every university signifying the academic challenge, course offerings, and quality of the music faculty was highly regarded by many of the music majors attending

the institutions. Public university 1, public university 2 and private university 2 all responded above 50% positively to question 5 stating the music degree offered was also important in their college choice. Question 3 resulted in a low response proportion by private university 1. This researcher believes, based on the interview, course offerings and the curriculum of the university is no less important to private university 1 students than any other university students but rather all universities in the search process held similar course offering, and, therefore, little importance was placed towards this attribute in determining the final choice. When factoring the interview data with the survey results, similar trends seem to occur. Academic attributes are the most reported attributes in the interview influencing initial interest and attraction in a university. Similar to the survey, many of these attributes received high proportions of student responses. Four students responded the availability of the major was key to determining where to start the college search. All of those students happened to claim music business as their major.

Question 2 and question 6 received over 40% positive responses from the private universities while receiving neutral to negative responses from the public universities suggesting the admissions process and reputation of the university was not influential to public university music majors. Questions 7, 8, and 9 did not receive proportions above 40% positive. The fact that question 9 did not receive more than a 30% positive response may elude a response to research question 7. Although the students may be unaware how the school's attributes influence their decision, the students claim not to concern themselves with type of institution (e.g. public or private) as a determining factor.

### **Institutional**

Questions 10-18 all attributed to institutional influences. These institutional attributes included influences such as campus appearance, campus atmosphere, class size, dorms, extracurricular programs, location, and size to name a few. Questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 18, however, were split leaving only one question to fall outside the .2 trend. Public university 1 responses fell outside the .2 trend on question 14 with a 3.1 or .4 behind the next closest school. The question asked “To what extent extracurricular programs influenced their decision?” While the other universities averaged a 3.6 between them, public university 1 fell just on the positive side of this question. The institutional attributes surveyed supplied the researcher with interesting results. Out of the nine questions surveyed, public university 1 responses fell outside the norm on question 14 regarding extracurricular programs, and all universities were in agreement for question 15. The results to question 14 make sense to this researcher since public university 1 was the only university not to have extracurricular activities like marching band due to the lack of a football program. Every other question resulted in not just split results but varying results. Some questions resulted in private schools in agreement while other questions gave similar results based on school size while other averaged means resulted in similar answers based on school location. No real trends regarding institutional attributes can be established from this survey based on weighted mean results.

The institutional proportions of note were once again quite varied. Public university 1 achieved one response with over 40% positive responses (question 16 regarding how the location of the university influenced their decision) while public

university 2 and private university 2 answered over 40% positive to five questions Public university 2 students responded to positively to questions 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17 while private university 2 students responded positively to question 10, 11, 12, 16, and 17. Private university 1 answered positively to two questions regarding institutional attributes. Three of the four universities, excluding private university 1, answered positively to question 16. Question 16 asked: to what extent did location of the university influence your decision to attend. This would hold true to previous studies in the literature review that state location is a large influence in school choice (Dixon & Martin, 1991; Drewes & Michael, 2006; Filter, 2010; Hodges, & Barbuto, 2002; Locke, 1982).

The single private school responding below 40% positive to this question happened to be located in a more rural area which would seem to correspond appropriately to this survey. Public university 2 and private university 2 students each answered highly on five questions. Out of those five questions, questions 11, 12, 16, and 17 were in agreement. Question 11 referred to the atmosphere of the campus, question 12 referred to the class size, and question 17 involved the setting of the university (e.g. rural/urban). Interestingly, both private university 2 and public university 2 are located in close proximity to each other so it would make sense that responses to questions 11 and 16 are similar for these two schools. The two differences occurred on question 13 for public university 2 and question 10 for private university 2. Public university 2 responded with 40% positive responses regarding the dorms and residence halls, while private university 2 responded with a 43% positive proportion regarding the appearance of the university they selected influenced their choice.

The two questions private university 1 responded with a high proportion are questions 10 and 11. However, both private universities responded with a high proportion to these two questions involving appearance and atmosphere of the university, which may suggest students interested in private school seek a specific appearance or are at least influenced more by the campus appearance than public school students as the follow up interview may suggest.

The follow up interview specifically asked what institutional factors influenced their decision. Due to the high proportion of private school students interviewed compared to public school students, these findings may only hold true to the private institutions but 10 students concur with the survey results and claim appearance and atmosphere are the number one institutional attributes students looked for in deciding on a school.

### **Financial**

Financial attributes were surveyed in questions 19 and 20. For the question regarding costs and how it influenced choice, results were mixed. The public university students rated cost at an average of 4.35 substantiating the claim costs greatly influenced their choice. The private school responses rated cost equally at 3.7. Due to the average cost of the private school tuition at approximately \$26,500 (from the private universities surveyed) versus the average public school tuition at \$13,530 (from the public universities surveyed), the results are consistent.

Question 20 was equitable in weighted mean average regarding the influence of scholarship in the college decision. Every school viewed financial aid/scholarship with high regard as evident by this attribute receiving the highest weighted mean average for

all universities. These findings are consistent with previous research (Locke, 1982; Overmier, 2003) but vary when compared to Jackson and Chapman's (1984) research which stated financial aid is not the deciding factor in school choice. Based on the survey results, financial aid and scholarship may not be the only factor influencing choice but it is the single greatest factor to influence choice as reported by the students in this research.

The proportion of students responding over 40% positive to the financial aspects asked in the survey were also very high from most universities; however the survey results do allude to a slight variance in public versus private students. Three of the four university students surveyed indicated they regarded cost as important based on the proportion answering positively. Both public universities responded to question 19 with 57.6% from public university 1 and 80% from public university 2. Private university 1 was slightly lower with 45.5% saying cost of the university influenced their decision; however, private university 2 responded with just 26.7% saying cost was highly influential in their decision. Since the public school's tuition is considerably lower than the private school tuition, the findings seem to be consistent.

The slight variance in students occurs on question 20 regarding financial aid/scholarship and the influence on college choice. Public university 1 jumped from 57.6% regarding cost to 66.7% positive regarding scholarship while public university 2 jumped from 80% to 90%. The proportion of private university 1 students answered 45.5% but jumped to 72.7% when asked about financial aid/scholarship. Private university 2 encountered the highest difference going from 26.7% regarding cost to 66.7% regarding the influence of financial aid/scholarship. The data leads this researcher



to believe one of two positions regarding private university students, they either do not concern themselves with cost as much as students interested in public school, or they have a notion the sticker price of college is not the actual out of pocket cost they will incur as reported by St. John (1990), and Tierney (1982). This researcher believes the private school music majors surveyed for this study are aware of the scholarship opportunities based on the proportion of students listing scholarship as an influential factor in final choice. It is interesting to this researcher private university 2 students regarded the financial aid and scholarship with such prominence over the cost of the university.

In the interview, financial attributes were the most recorded attribute on the second question of the interview regarding how students narrow down their decision. Out of the 18 financial responses given in the interview, 10 of those responses were given on question 2. The interview and survey results seem to be in agreement that finances tend to be a deciding factor for where students decide to attend school. No other question in the interview resulted in the number of financial attributes as question number 2.

### **Personal/Social**

Personal/social attributes resulted in two schools falling outside the .2 threshold for weighted mean. Public university 1 achieved the highest score on question 21 with a 4.4. This score was .4 higher than the next closest score and a full 1.4 higher than the lowest score. These results, as irregular as they may be, make sense to this researcher considering the school. Question 21 asked to what extent did distance from home influence your decision to attend. Public university 1 was the most rural school surveyed, and although the school is located in a moderate sized town, very few universities

surrounding this location offer a music degree. Question 23 asked to what extent did parents and friends advice influence your decision and question 24 asked to what extent did having parents or friends at the university influence your decision.

Responses to these two questions averaged low but private university 1 was the lowest on question 23 with a 2.6 resulting in the only negative response for this question. In general terms parents tend to show influence in college choice but based on these results, the students attending private university 1 overall were not influenced by their parents and vary considerably compared to the other university students in this study and previous research (Galotti, 1995). The next highest score on question 23 was a 3.1 by public university 2, which demonstrates a sizeable gap of .5 between the two lowest averaging universities for this question.

Private university 1 was also the lowest score with a 1.7 on question 24. Although every universities weighted mean was below 3.0, private university 1 was a full point lower than the next highest rating (private university 2). These findings differ from previous research. Filter (2010) reported parents help shape the college choice by extending advice on college aspirations and where their child should attend. This researcher found parents provide little influence, at least in the area of where they should attend. This researcher also believes, based on research and personal experience, the music major is a specific student and based on the influences guiding their choice, individuals other than parents may offer more guidance and possibilities of where they should attend due to an awareness often lacking from parents with little music background.

The proportion of students answering highly positive to questions 21, 23, and 24 are consistent. All four universities responded with at least a 40% positive proportion to question 21 stating distance from home did influence their decision to attend their school. The only discrepancy conveyed by private university 1, occurred on question 24 with 54.5% of the students saying having peers or friends attend the same school did not have any influence on their decision to attend which corresponds to the weighted mean scores from the four universities but differs slightly from Payne's (2010) research stating peers do influence decisions of young students.

This researcher's interview findings do seem to differ with the survey results and concur with Payne's (2010) research findings. Although many students listed peers and parents as having little influence, only four students responded to question 6 of the interview regarding personal/social factors by saying parents and peers did not have any influence on their choice. Eleven of the 19 students interviewed responded by saying a friend or family member influenced their college choice which differs from the survey results of this research. Perhaps students felt compelled to provide an answer to the interview question or the same students interviewed happened to respond positively to the survey questions regarding personal/social influences. Regardless, the interview results and survey results differ for this attribute.

Question 25 was the only survey question not based on one of the four factors viewed as important in the college choice by Galotti (1995). Because much of the research in the area of college choice was published prior to the age of social networking, the influence of social networking on the music major's choice of institution is severely lacking. The results of social networking and the influence regarding college choice as

reported by this researcher shows very few music majors view the social networking as an influence when making their college decision. The weighted mean resulted in an average of 1.4 when all universities are combined and every university answered with a high proportion that stated it did not bear much influence in their choice. Although many universities around the country incorporate social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter (Barnes & Mattson, 2010), these types of media seemed to offer little guidance for students planning to major in music. Students interviewed for this research also failed to mention any type of social media as influential in the choice process. The music major population surveyed and interviewed for this research placed little importance in this topic and advised this researcher that time could be better spent in other areas recruiting and encouraging college choice.

The  $z$ -test for proportion in agreement for all attributes resulted in four questions which reject the null hypothesis and show a difference in agreement between public and private school students. Questions 7, 10, 11, and 19 in Table 10 provide the  $z$ -test scores and indicated the students attending the private universities are in much higher agreement on three out of the four questions (questions 7, 10, and 11) which show the private school student surveyed for this research value the policies, appearance, and atmosphere of the university to a greater degree than the public school students, while the public university students agreed more proportionately on the influence of cost on college choice (question 19).

This data supports the suggestion, while private university students may not specifically choose their school based on appearance and atmosphere alone, it definitely factors into the choice process more heavily than public university students. This data

also suggest public university students pay particularly close attention to the cost of college and consider this very high prior to any scholarship or financial aid intervention.

The data on Table 12 concerning research question 5 provided an overview of the amount of students and their GPA ranges. There is no statistical achievement level or GPA difference from those students choosing to enter private university compared to a public university. Generally, music majors have a higher GPA on average compared to the general student population (Shropshire, 2007). For this survey, 47.6% of the students claimed to have received between a 4.0-3.5 cumulative GPA in high school with 30.9% claiming to have obtained a 3.4-3.0 GPA. Overall, 78.5% of the music majors completing this survey had a 3.0 or higher high school cumulative GPA. Although official transcripts were not previewed, the researcher assumed this is a fairly accurate estimate from the surveyed students due to the multitude of times students must provide their GPA when applying for school and scholarship/grant applications.

### **Further Research**

Throughout this study of college choice, certain data revealed issues requiring further scrutiny and research. Academic attributes have shown to be a big influence to music majors in the college choice but how they garner their opinion on which academic attributes are important or how students view schools as academically strong leaves room for further research. This research, as well as others (Locke, 1982; Overmier, 2003), shows music majors value the academic attributes and those attributes influence their college choice. Further research is needed to decipher how students and specifically music majors receive information in those areas viewed important to them in the college

choice, not just to influence choice based on fact but to determine the best method and time to reach those students.

If music majors value academic reputation fairly evenly across the researched institutions, did other attributes influence them to a greater degree than the academic attributes or did they happen to value one academic attribute enough to choose that university? For example, music majors listed faculty quality fairly high on their list of attributes influencing choice. If this is an attribute which draws them to seek information about a university, where do they garner their perception of faculty quality? Is it through word of mouth, visible performances, or meeting the faculty member in person? Further research in this vein would provide a foundation for college representatives to focus student marketing trends.

The students also viewed the admissions process as influencing the college choice of private university students but further research is needed to distinguish which attribute of the admission process is viewed as influential. Are private students influenced by the ease of the paper work involved, the process of the application, the counselor influence, or some other attribute of the admissions process unique to the private schools surveyed? Along with the admissions process, students surveyed for this research did not view social networking as an influential part of the college choice. Further research may need to be conducted to determine if the music major is unique in this regard or do many more students entering college prefer to use more traditional approaches compared to social media.

Data evaluated in this research similarly demonstrated cost was not a significant variable to private school students when compared to the scholarship. Research

discussing the possible means of how private school students accumulate information and process those different options affordable to them should be examined to provide universities a better understanding of how possible private university students approach and weight this decision. Included in this research should be the contrary aspect according to the public school student and his/her important placement of cost (according to this study) prior to scholarship.

The next recommendation includes the personal and social aspects of music majors and how those influence enrollment decisions. Many research studies have analyzed the personal/social effects on the general population and specifically the role of the parent with varying results (Chapman, 1981; Galotti, 1995; Litten, 1982), further research is needed, guided towards the parents of those students wishing to major in music. Parents seem to hold some influence on the college choice whether by means of saving for college, posing the idea of college, or by proposing specific colleges to attend, however the importance of the parent to the music major and the research on this topic is underwhelming.

This study surveyed music majors and found the role of the parent to be minimal in college choice, however, are music majors with musically inclined parents more likely to be influenced in the area of college choice? Further research in this area should focus on what percentage of music majors have parents with some musical background and do those parents offer specific options and guide their children majoring in music to a greater degree compared to music majors with non-musically inclined parents. A secondary component to this study would involve general student populations and how

parental knowledge in any specific area influences students with a desire to major in that area of expertise.

Table 16

*Public vs. Private University z-test for Proportion Based on Size of Department*

| Question | Small public vs. private | Large public vs. private |
|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1        | -1.4148                  | 1.55353                  |
| 2        | 1.3316                   | 0.69354                  |
| 3        | -4.1613*                 | -0.8045                  |
| 4        | -0.8323                  | -1.8864                  |
| 5        | -0.6658                  | -0.7057                  |
| 6        | 0.24968                  | 1.71998                  |
| 7        | 0.83225                  | 3.41223*                 |
| 8        | 0.6658                   | -0.3884                  |
| 9        | 1.83095                  | 0.61032                  |
| 10       | 3.91158*                 | 3.41223*                 |
| 11       | 1.24838                  | 2.88514*                 |
| 12       | -0.5826                  | 2.49849*                 |
| 13       | -5.4929*                 | 2.46901*                 |
| 14       | 0.3329                   | 1.91418                  |
| 15       | 1.16515                  | 0.27742                  |
| 16       | 1.24838                  | 1.22063                  |
| 17       | -2.0806*                 | 1.94192                  |
| 18       | -0.4161                  | 1.6645                   |
| 19       | -2.3303*                 | -2.0251*                 |
| 20       | 0.08323                  | 0.74903                  |
| 21       | -1.3316                  | -1.0264                  |
| 23       | -1.1652                  | 0.13871                  |
| 24       | -2.8297*                 | 0.2098                   |
| 25       | 0                        | -0.2479                  |

Note: z-critical = 1.96. \* Reject the null.

The last recommendation is to conduct a similar study based on the size of the undergraduate student body, or perhaps the size of the music departments, rather than private or public school affiliation. For this study, each public school had a corresponding private school of similar size. Since the data was available and previously entered into a spreadsheet, the researcher organized the data based on the number of



music majors attending each university and found unique trends which support and reject the previously stated null hypothesis from this research.

The null hypothesis was: There will be no difference in proportion of participants in agreement with statements concerning the importance of factors regarding choice of college, when comparing responses for each individual question on the administered survey between public school choice and private school choice. Table 16 provides the z-test for proportion based on size of the music major enrollment at each university. The smaller private and public school data is combined as well as the larger private and public school data and reported in Table 16.

When the data is organized by size rather than public or private affiliation 12 results reject the null hypothesis and show a difference in proportion of agreement compared to the four results which rejected the null hypothesis when the data is displayed individually and by affiliation. This data leads the researcher to believe institutional attributes play a key role in college choice which may be difficult for the student to put into words or even realize they are being influenced. School size, regardless of any other attributes, seems to have some bearing on student perceptions and how this influences college choice is an area with room for growth.

### **Summary**

Music majors fall into a unique category of student and are therefore highly recruited individuals. They are typically high achievers in school and offer a unique skill set many universities and schools of music seek out (Shropshire, 2007). Strategies to recruit and understand the college choice process from this subset population need to be cultivated to encourage their enrollment and future music performers, educators, and

business majors. This research determined significant factors from each of the four main attributes influencing college enrollment pertaining to the music major as well as other attributes critical to college choice based on research by Locke (1982).

Academic influences for both individual schools and grouped institutions based on private and public affiliation have an impact on the college choice of music majors. The music major tends to value the quality of the music faculty as the highest rated academic influence on choice according to the survey. Institutional attributes have a positive effect on the college choice of music majors and the factor most influencing choice was the location of the university followed closely by class size. The financial attributes influencing choice are all rated very high by music majors, however the highest rated factor influencing choice across all areas was the scholarship. The offer of a scholarship received the highest number of positive responses overall on the survey from all universities.

The personal/social factors influencing choice were viewed low by many of the universities. This research indicates, when individually analyzed by school, social factors tended to have a slightly positive response to college choice. When combined by school affiliation however, the influence does not seem to weigh heavily in the college choice of music majors. In fact, based on this research, personal/social factors were rated the lowest of the four attributes influencing choice. The only attribute which scored below the personal/social attributes was the use of social networking between music majors and college choice. The music majors surveyed for this study did not rely on social networking to determine their college. This aspect on the survey received a low proportion of positive responses and mean score. In the interview, the use of social

media was not mentioned as an influence at any point in the college choice of music majors.

The achievement level of the music major also bore little influence in their college choice. No statistical difference was determined that would assert private school music majors have a higher GPA than do public school students and vice versa. As reported by others (Shropshire, 2007; Schneider & Klotz, 2000), music majors in general tend to have a higher than average GPA.

The factors influencing choice based on gender do seem to be evident. Although females rated their responses higher than their male peers, the averages were rather even from one attribute to the next with the exception of financial attributes. Females rated cost and scholarship statistically more significant than male students. Finally, the factors influencing the college choice seem to be more prominent when based on size rather than public or private affiliation. Very few differences ( $n=4$ ) were statistically significant compared to the differences based on size of the department ( $n=12$ ).

The overall arching theme in the interview is answered by the first two questions. What attracted you to the school and how did you narrow down your decision to attend? A basic understanding of these two concepts can aid in the recruitment and understanding of how music majors are influenced by key attributes. Understanding what music majors seek in these two areas may help steer advisors and recruiters to possible talking points which are of interest to many music majors.

For this study, the music majors interviewed answered similarly to the survey and stressed importance in the area of faculty and reputation of the department leading them to seek more information about the school with the offer of a scholarship being the

biggest single factor influencing final enrollment. For the students participating in the interview, private or public school affiliation did not play a major role in college choice. Many private school students reported looking into other universities with little importance on a private or religious affiliation. Public school students which responded they would go to another public school did so for academic reasons. No significant number of students reported specific school affiliation was a significant factor in their final choice.

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### Appendix A: Survey

Factors Influencing College Choice:

Please rate how each question influenced your college choice by circling the appropriate number.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Did not influence my decision to attend     |
| 2 | Minimally influenced my decision to attend  |
| 3 | Somewhat influenced my decision to attend   |
| 4 | Moderately influenced my decision to attend |
| 5 | Highly influenced my decision to attend     |

1. To what extent did the academic challenge of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
2. To what extent did the admissions requirements of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
3. To what extent did the course offerings/curriculum of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
4. To what extent did the quality of the music faculty at the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
5. To what extent did the music degrees offered at the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
6. To what extent did the reputation of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5



7. To what extent did the school policies of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
8. To what extent did the success of previous graduates at the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
9. To what extent did the type of university (e.g. public vs. private) influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
10. To what extent did the appearance of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
11. To what extent did the campus atmosphere influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
12. To what extent did the class size (e.g. student/teacher ratio) of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
13. To what extent did the dorms/residence halls at the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
14. To what extent did the extracurricular programs at the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
15. To what extent did the facilities at the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
16. To what extent did the location of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
17. To what extent did the setting (e.g. rural/urban) of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
18. To what extent did the size of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5

19. To what extent did the cost of the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
20. To what extent did financial aid/scholarships from the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
21. To what extent did the universities distance from home influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
23. To what extent did parents' or friends' advice influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
24. To what extent did having peers or friends at the university influence your decision to attend?  
1      2      3      4      5
25. Was social networking (e.g. facebook, twitter. etc.) a factor in your college choice, and if so, to what extent did social networking from the university/faculty influence your decision to attend. (if social networking was not a factor, please circle 1)  
1) 1      2      3      4      5
26. When looking at universities, how far from home were you willing to travel?  
(please circle the appropriate response)
- a. 1-30 miles(within daily driving distance)
  - b. 31-60 miles (app. 1hour)
  - c. 61-120 miles (app. 2hours)
  - d. 121-180 miles (app.3hours)
  - e. 181-240 miles (app. 4hours)
  - f. Any distance
27. How many different universities did you visit prior to making your final choice?  
(please circle the appropriate response)
- a. 1-2
  - b. 3-4
  - c. 5-6
  - d. 7-8
  - e. More than eight different universities

28. My approximate cumulative high school GPA:  
(Please circle the appropriate response)

4.0-3.5

3.4-3.0

2.9-2.5

2.4-2.0

Below 2.0

29. My gender: (please circle the appropriate response)

Male

Female

30. Are there any factors that highly influenced your college choice that were not mentioned above? (Please list or describe these influences)

## **Appendix B: Information Letter**

Dear Music Major,

I am inviting you to participate in a research project to study college choice conducted by Ryan Curtis. The purpose of this research is to investigate and compare the factors that influence your decision to attend a specific university. Along with this letter is a short survey regarding factors leading to college choice. Please review the survey and, if you choose to do so, complete it and place it in the envelope at the front of the room. It should take you approximately fifteen minutes to complete. This study will use approximately 260 music majors from six universities.

The results of this project will be included in my dissertation. Through your participation I hope to gain a better understanding of college choice factors leading to the enrollment of music majors at private and public universities. The results of the survey will be useful in the search, recruitment and enrollment of music majors at all universities and I will share my results with all faculty/music majors attending the researched universities.

There are no risks to you if you decide to participate in this survey and your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Your identity will not be disclosed in any publication of this study. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate and no names are required on the questionnaire. I hope you will take the time to complete this survey and place it in the envelope.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Ryan Curtis at 949-4664 or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Lynda Leavitt at 949-4756. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

Thanks you in advance for your participation,

**Appendix C: Interview Questions**

1. What initially attracted you to consider \_\_\_\_\_ (attending institution) as a possible college you might want to attend?
2. What was the deciding factor that caused you to enroll at \_\_\_\_\_ (attending institution)?
3. Were there any factors that deterred you from attending a specific institution? if so, what were they.
4. If you didn't attend \_\_\_\_\_ (attending institution) where do you think you might have gone and why?
5. What could your alternative choices have done differently to persuade your college selection?

### **Vitae**

Ryan Curtis was born in St. Louis, Missouri on October 24, 1977. He attended Francis Howell High School in St. Charles, Missouri where he graduated in 1996. Following high school, he attended Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri where he graduated in 2001 with a bachelor's of science in education. Mr. Curtis taught middle and high school music in the Missouri public schools upon graduation. While teaching, he attended the University of Missouri, St. Louis and earned a Master's Degree in Music Education, in 2007. After completing his master's degree, he taught on the faculty of Fine and Performing Arts at Lindenwood University as an Assistant Professor of Music responsible for the concert band, athletic band, and music technology programs. Mr. Curtis lives in St. Charles, Missouri with his wife Kim, and two children, Brendan and Kailyn, and is expecting to complete his doctorate in educational leadership from Lindenwood University in May of 2012.