



2011-07-09

An Analysis of Graduate School Recruitment Via Website Resources

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An Analysis of Graduate Student Recruitment
via Website Resources

Dylan Matsumori

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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June 2011

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ABSTRACT

An Analysis of Graduate Student Recruitment via Website Resources

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Doctor of Philosophy

Institutions of higher learning are experiencing increased difficulty managing the quantity and quality of their graduate student populations (Kallio, 1995). Currently, the most important informational resource for potential students engaged in the graduate school search process is the Web (Huddleston & Drexel, 2006). Previous research has focused on things such as website design and technological advances but has failed to address the core content needed by applicants (Huddleston & Drexel, 2006). Research has focused on website design from the perspective of administrators and web designers with little consideration of the individuals who are in the process of applying to or identifying a graduate program to attend.

This investigation sought to further define the content areas that influence applicants in the graduate program selection process. The sample (N=55) included applicants to the Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education (CPSE) at Brigham Young University (BYU), a large, private religious university in the western United States. Applicants responded to surveys about the types of content they utilized in their program selection process both in application to BYU's CPSE programs as well as more generally in the graduate program selection process.

The results are presented with descriptive statistics that allow comparison in content preference between different groups of applicants (e.g., program type, applicant status). It seems that, overall, the respondents were able to find the content areas that they were looking for on the Website. Responses indicated that the content related to faculty research, program descriptions, and course information was most commonly sought after. While some differences in content preference was noted between program types, little differentiation was noted among the different application groups. Limitations to the present study are discussed, and suggestions for future research are also provided.

Keywords: Graduate School Selection, Website Content, Web Recruiting

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is not the result of my particular expertise or ability. Quite simply put, without Amy, her willingness to support me through this crazy pursuit, and her pushing, pulling, and encouragement, I would never have reached this point in my life. She has been there as the sudden decision was made to go back to school in psychology. She moved away from a life of comfort and familiarity to a remote and strange desert in support of this ludicrous cause and has continued to show patience and understanding and love from day one. I also want to mention the excitement and energy I get from our children, Zedekiah, Talmage, and Wesley, all born within the pursuit of this radical career change. I am amazed by them each day and constantly learn from them how to pursue life with passion, emotion, and zeal.

I want to thank those who have laid the groundwork for my pursuit of knowledge: my parents, Douglas and Michiko Matsumori, who have instilled the values of hard work, faith, and education in me; my in-laws, Michael and Martha Smith, whose support of me in this pursuit has been constant and unending; and my brothers and sisters, natural and through law, who were there to laugh with us and love us through it all.

I do not want to forget those that have helped me along in my training: Lane Fischer, who came to believe in me; Aaron Jackson, the ever jovial and fun training director; and Steve Smith, the most fun supervisor and instructor I have ever met. Thank goodness for Diane Hancock, who has been integral in helping me collect data and progress through the program! I also want to thank my cohort, fellow interns at NMSU, my committee members, and all the supervisors along the way. It has been a long and arduous journey, but it has been fantastic. And now, in the words of my sons, “to Confinity and Beyond!”

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Introduction

Over 16 million students were enrolled in postsecondary education in 2005, and college enrollments are expected to increase until at least 2014 (Hawkins & Clinedinst, 2006). As enrollments in undergraduate programs continue to increase, the number of students enrolled in PhD and other doctoral programs at American colleges and universities has also increased 12%, from approximately 330,000 in academic year 1995–1996 to 369,000 in 2003–2004 (Redd, 2007). The enrollment rates in graduate psychology programs have increased 50% from 1988 to 2008 (National Science Foundation, 2011). One factor influencing this increase in enrollment rates in graduate programs could be an increase in demand for further education and training to maintain competitiveness in today's employment market. However, with this increase in the number of candidates, there is also an increased difficulty for institutions in managing the quantity and quality of their graduate student populations (Kallio, 1995).

In order to attract quality students in an environment of increased competition between universities, faculty and staff need to understand how students select the universities which they plan to attend (Kotler & Fox, 1995). This environment of increased competition requires that individual graduate programs within universities also better understand how students select graduate programs (Poock & Love, 2001). As a result, it is becoming increasingly important to understand why prospective students choose to apply to, and attend, the programs they do. An understanding of the key factors in the program selection process for potential students will allow programs to attract more, and better quality, students.

The process of choosing a graduate program is complex, not only in terms of financial implications, but also in other long-term effects upon a student's life (Raposo & Alves, 2007). The choice of a graduate program can influence an individual's life in a variety of areas,

including their career, friendships, residence, and personal life satisfaction (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Various models of choice for undergraduates have been proposed, but there is a relative dearth in the information about the process of graduate program choice (Poock & Love, 2001). The research focuses on how students make decisions but does not focus on what information a student wants or needs to make these decisions.

Current research shows that potential graduate students use a variety of information sources to make their graduate program choice. Sources such as letters, counselors, graduate school fairs, parents, and peers have long been identified as the primary information sources for graduate school decisions (Huddleston & Drexel, 2006; Kallio, 1995). Other sources include contact with faculty or current students, the reputation of the program, and input from professionals/colleagues (Kallio, 1995; Poock & Love, 2001). However, research shows that the most important informational resource for potential students engaged in the graduate school search process is the Web (Huddleston & Drexel, 2006). The literature shows that the Web is clearly the primary information source for prospective graduate students in their search process (Hawkins & Clinedinst, 2006; Lenhard, Madden, & Hitlan, 2005; Pryor et al., 2005). The literature also suggests that graduate program Websites have become the number one factor that influences a student to apply to a particular university for graduate school (Ng, Parette, & Sterrett, 2003; Poock & Lefond, 2003; Poock & Love, 2001). However, research to better understand the type of information potential graduate students seek on these Websites is very scarce. An effort must be made to meet the informational needs of potential graduate students so that graduate programs can attract students that best fit the program needs.

Review of the Literature

One of the most profound changes of the past decade to recruiting practices was the emergence of online recruiting (e-recruiting), and this has revolutionized the way that companies recruit employees (Lee, 2005). The Web has rapidly become one of the most widely used media in the history of the world (Schneider & Bruton, 2004). As a part of this rapid growth, online recruiting has changed the way companies recruit employees (Munger, 2002). Some of the major advantages cited for the rapid and successful adoption of e-recruiting methods include cost savings, efficiency, and convenience for both recruiters and job seekers/students (Gale, 2001; Miller, 2001). Increasingly more companies are creating their own corporate career Websites because of the rising cost of job board advertising and the difficulty of finding qualified applicants (McConnel, 2002). Virtually, all Fortune 100 companies now use some form of e-recruiting methods (Lee, 2005), and 94% of Global 500 companies use their Websites for recruitment, as compared to just 29% in 1998 (Greenspan, 2003).

The number of distinct advantages of a Website over other e-recruiting tools sources and traditional media has led to its popularity (Martinez, 2000; Perry & Bodkin, 2002; Robb, 2004). A Website can provide far more detailed information on culture and leadership styles than traditional printed media due to virtually unrestricted Web space (Lee, 2005). Lee also identified that Websites allow job seekers/students to get valuable information about the mission, diversity, benefits, and costs with which they can make informed decisions about applications.

However, designing useful and effective Websites is not easy for any entity (Nielsen & Tahir, 2001). Web users are becoming more skeptical of the information they find online and may be wary of Web-based experiences. As a result, Web designers now face increased pressure to enhance the credibility of their sites (Fogg & Tseng, 1999; Morkes & Nielsen, 1997). More

than 20% of job seekers have rejected job opportunities simply based on poorly designed Websites (Pastore, 2000). In addition, about three-quarters of all job seekers are unable to use company-designed Websites successfully because they are so complicated (Brown, 2004). It is especially difficult for organizations, such as universities, to create Websites that meet the expectations of the many different Website visitors (Nielsen, 2000). Universities, in particular, have been widely criticized for not understanding the needs of student Website visitors (Agosto, 2002; Raisman, 2000). In fact, in some cases, critics have criticized universities for simply having bad Websites (DeSimone & McRae, 2002; Raisman, 2003). Many schools created their Web design team within their information systems departments, reflecting a common misunderstanding that Web design was a technical process rather than a communications process (Schneider & Bruton, 2004).

The most basic design factor a Website designer needs to consider is the message content (i.e., information) provided (Maurer & Liu, 2007). The importance of this particular factor can be noted by various marketing studies that have shown that both the quantity and quality of information contained in marketing messages influences decision-making (Keller & Staelin, 1987; Kivetz, 2000). Hence, information (i.e., Website content) becomes especially important to decisions which require large amounts of background research, such as the selection of a graduate school program (Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997; Vaughn, 1986). Thus, it makes sense that the amount and type of information provided about a graduate school/program will significantly impact the outcomes of a marketing effort (Barber, 1998). During a job search, it has been found that job seekers frequently lack basic information on an organization's basic attributes (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). It has also been reported that the more information about an organization an applicant can obtain, the more attracted to the organization the applicant

becomes (Barber & Roehling, 1993). Therefore, a critical element in the design of a Website is deciding what information is to be provided.

Interestingly, research about Internet usage has tended to focus more on business and commercial applications (Lu & Yeung, 1998; White & Manning, 1998). However, the literature reveals that a majority of the research conducted about Websites in college choice has been focused on identifying variables that influence undergraduate students' choice of colleges (Pooch & Love, 2001). Comparatively, very little is understood about the graduate school admissions process (Robinson & Golde, 1999). The literature that does exist on the graduate student admission process is focused on issues such as attrition and time to completion (Bauer, 1997; Lovitts, 1996) and the impact of technological tools (Cavanaugh, Martin, & Cover, 1996).

Relative to the employment selection or undergraduate program selection research, there is a dearth of research related to issues of program choice for doctoral students (Pooch & Love, 2001). In order to attract the best students, institutions of higher education need to understand how students select programs and universities (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Understanding the process of university choice is an area that has a high potential for developing marketing strategies (Plank & Chiagouris, 1997).

A key factor in the choice process is how potential applicants obtain information about graduate programs and universities. In recent years, the Internet has outdistanced print material as the most cost-effective tool for information dissemination (Ehrlich, 2006). The use of the Web in the college selection process has therefore received increasing levels of attention in recent years, and studies report that it is the primary means by which prospective students obtain information about colleges and universities (Pooch, 2006). At the graduate level, researchers have found that prospective students' use of the Web is integral to the decision to apply to a

specific institution (Poock & Lefond, 2003). In fact, it has been found that graduate school Websites are seen as the most valuable search tool for information about graduate programs, and over 80% of graduate school research is being conducted on the Web (Huddleston & Drexel, 2006).

Although the current Web-based technological advances, such as blogs, portals, podcasts, instant messaging, and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) news feed, are currently being researched for effectiveness in recruiting, there is strong evidence that prospective students still desire traditional content-based Websites. Research has indicated that graduate programs, as a whole, should contain basics such as admissions requirements, academic programs, financial aid, scholarships, and applications (Huddleston & Drexel, 2006). The Web simplifies information-gathering and offers students an effective tool to compare different institutions and contrast their academic strengths and distinctions (Hesel, 1998).

Summary

In summary, while many studies have been completed in the examination of e-recruiting and the university admissions process, these studies fail to address what types of content students are looking for in the graduate school application process. The studies have focused heavily on the “fancy” new technology used for information dissemination but have failed to address the core content needed by applicants in the application process (Huddleston & Drexel, 2006). Little research has been conducted to better understand what, from the student’s perspective, is important information for a graduate school Website to maintain. As a group, it seems that researchers have not taken the time to look from the perspective of those individuals who are in the process of applying to or identifying a graduate program to attend.

It is evident from the literature that the Web is a commonly used means for disseminating and communicating information to graduate school bound students. However, the current literature focuses on the admissions process and the new technologies used around information dissemination. This focus clearly leaves the question of what students would like to know from graduate school Websites. By returning to the basic question of what students are looking for in a graduate school Website, more effective marketing efforts may be accomplished. More work to understand the current and prospective students' perspectives of graduate program Websites needs to be undertaken.

Statement of Problem

Although a plethora of research has been conducted on Website usability, there has been relatively little research regarding the types of Website content that students use in the college search and choice process (Poock & Love, 2001). Most of the available research on college Website use and usability in the admissions or search process has surveyed institutional admissions staff rather than students (Noel-Levitz, 2005). Past research has not sufficiently addressed applicants' perspectives of what Website content is relevant in the graduate program selection process.

Statement of Purpose

The purposes of this study are three-fold. This study looked to gain a better understanding of what types of Website content graduate school applicants used in the program selection process. The possible difference in content preference that may exist among applicants to varying graduate programs was also investigated. Finally, differences in content preference among individuals who apply to a graduate program but are not invited to interview, individuals invited to interview but not admitted, and individuals who are admitted are examined.

To achieve more insight into the content preferences of graduate school applicants, this study used survey data collected from a pool of applicants to the Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education (CPSE) graduate programs at Brigham Young University (BYU), a large, private, religious university in the western United States. The CPSE department houses three separate graduate degrees, a doctoral program (PhD) in counseling psychology, an Educational Specialist Degree (EdS) in school psychology and a Masters program in Special Education (MS). If a pattern emerges, the implications for these graduate programs would be that they could more effectively focus their Website content to match the needs of the particular group of students/applicants they are looking to attract.

To better analyze the graduate school Website content preference of applicants, the following research questions were asked:

- What are the Website content preferences of individuals applying to graduate programs in CPSE?
- Are there any differences among applicants to the three graduate programs in CPSE in terms of their Website content preferences?
- Are there any differences among individuals in the applicant, interview, and admitted pools of candidates to graduate programs in CPSE in terms of their Website content preferences?

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were individuals who were seeking admission to one of the three graduate programs (PhD, EdS, and MS) that are offered in the Counseling Psychology and Special Education (CPSE) department at BYU for the 2009–2010 academic year. The

participants were recruited upon their application to one of the three CPSE programs. A total of 92 individuals completed applications and were sent an email invitation to participate in this study. Participants were grouped according to the program to which they applied (PhD, EdS, or MS) and the participants' final admission status (applied, interviewed, or admitted group). To avoid conflicting data, individuals who applied to more than one program within the CPSE department were eliminated from the analysis (one individual). Individuals that applied for the CPSE programs and were not invited to interviews or offered admission to a CPSE program were classified in the applied pool. Individuals that applied to and were invited to participate in follow-up interviews but were not offered admission were classified in the interviewed pool. Individuals that applied to, were invited for follow up interviews, and were offered admission to a CPSE program were classified in the admitted pool.

The total number of possible participants in the designated population was 92 individuals and of those possible participants, 55 individuals responded (59.78% response rate). The numbers of participants of each gender participating in this study were nearly equal (27 females and 28 males). The numbers of participants, of each degree type, in this study were 32 individuals applying to the PhD program, 16 individuals applying to the EdS program and seven individuals applying to the MS program. Frequencies of applicants by program are represented in Table 1. The numbers of participants in each application group in this study were 17 individuals in the admitted group, 28 individuals in the interviewed group, and 10 individuals in the applied group. Frequencies of applicants by admission status are also represented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants by CPSE Graduate Program

Participant Groupings	Number of Participants	Percentage of All Participants
All Participants	55	100.00%
PhD Applicants	32	58.20%
EdS Applicants	16	29.10%
MS Applicants	7	12.70%
Admitted Group	17	30.90%
Interviewed Group	28	50.90%
Applied Group	10	18.20%

Measures

No existing measures were found that researched the Website content preference of graduate school applicants. Previous research done to measure the Website content preference of graduate school applicants was performed via focus groups (Poock, 2005). As a result, a questionnaire was created to align with the results from the focus groups studied by Poock. The questionnaire consisted of seven questions. The survey's first two questions acted as elimination questions if participants did not qualify for this study. The elimination criteria included application to more than one CPSE graduate program and non-use of the CPSE department Website in the graduate school selection process. After the two qualifying questions, the third, fifth, and seventh questions were free response questions, while the fourth and sixth questions were checklists.

The third and fourth questions were tied to the BYU CPSE department Website. The third question allowed the participants to give free responses about the information types that they were pursuing on the Website in the process of program selection. The checklist in the

fourth question was created based on resource types available on the Website. The fifth question allowed the participants to again respond freely about information types that they would have liked to have had during the selection process. The last two questions were created to know more about the information types that participants were pursuing from program Websites in their graduate school selection process. The checklist in the sixth question was based upon information types used in the graduate program selection process identified by Poock and Lefond (2003). The last question addressed what other types of content would have been useful in the process of graduate program choice and was a free response question. An example survey is attached in Appendix A.

Because a new questionnaire was created in order to focus on this topic of research, no reliability or validity can be stated. However, a pilot study was performed by administering the questionnaire to 17 individuals who had recently gone through the program selection process and applied to a BYU CPSE graduate program. These individuals were admitted to and are currently enrolled in a BYU CPSE graduate program. The pilot study asked the participants to critique to refine the questionnaire items. All feedback given indicated no changes needed to be made and, therefore, no changes were made to the questionnaire.

Procedures

Prior to beginning any research, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought and received from BYU. The participants were recruited upon their application to one of the three CPSE programs. A total of 92 individuals completed applications and were sent an email invitation to participate in this study. Upon receipt of applications to the CPSE programs for the 2009–2010 school year, all applicants received an email containing the recruitment letter and a link to a Qualtrics questionnaire. An example survey is attached in Appendix A. In an attempt

to obtain a higher response rate, a week following the initial solicitation of all participants, another email containing the same information was resent to all those who had not responded. An example of the recruitment email is attached in Appendix B.

Participant data were collected prior to any admissions decisions (e.g., invitations for interviews) were made and were not reviewed until after interviews had occurred and admission decisions had been finalized. After the admittance decisions were made, the data were grouped and analyzed according to the program to which the participants applied (PhD, EdS, or MS) and the participants' final admission status (applied, interviewed, or admitted group).

Given that the data collected focused on the types of content used by the participants, all data is recorded as counts and percentages. Responses to open-ended questions were compared to the content on the BYU CPSE Website and the list of significant content identified by Poock and Lefond (2003). The data obtained from the free response questions were coded, when appropriate, under similar groupings to those found on the BYU CPSE Website and the list from Poock and Lefond. Participants were allowed to indicate use of multiple areas of Website content for each question. However, if a participant indicated the same Website content type more than once in a question, the response was counted only one time for that question. Total response percentages to a content type were calculated by summing the number of responses by participants to a content type and then dividing by the total number of participants.

Results

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate what types of Website content are relevant in the graduate program selection process. To obtain this information the participants were asked a series of questions to identify the types of content that were of most help to them in

their decision making process. To complete the analysis of the collected data, each question posed is presented below in order:

1. Overall trends of Website content preference by all respondents
2. Website content preference by program
3. Website content preference by applicant status

All the data are described in descriptive statistics and displayed in tables below. The implications of the identified trends are further discussed in the Discussion section.

Content Sought from BYU CPSE Website

Participants were asked, in a free response format, what type of information they were pursuing on the BYU CPSE Website. Responses were coded, when appropriate, under similar groupings to those found on a list of content used in the graduate school selection process identified by Pooch and Lefond(2003). Participants were allowed to indicate use of multiple areas of Website content and if a participant indicated the same Website content type more than once in a question, the response was counted only one time.

Aggregate results to Q-1. Respondents indicated that they used 35 different content areas when accessing the BYU CPSE Website. The most common response (25 of the 55 respondents) was that content about Faculty Research was sought by applicants from the Website. Other areas that participants indicated as desirable content from the Website included Program Descriptions (19), Courses (17), Admission Requirements (16), Student Demographics (16), and Faculty Information (14). All other areas (29 areas) were indicated by less than 20% (11 respondents) of the total respondents with 21 of those areas being indicated by 10% (6 respondents) or fewer of the respondents.

Results to Q-1 by program type. When classifying the responses to this open-ended question, the applicants to the PhD and EdS programs identified a similar number of content areas (25 and 26, respectively). In comparison to the PhD and EdS programs, the applicants to the MS program identified a more limited number of content areas (13). When looking at the specific content areas, the students applying to the PhD program were most often interested in gaining information about Faculty Research (21, 65.63%) and Program Descriptions (16, 50.00%), while students applying to the EdS program and the MS program did not share in the same level of interest (three responses or fewer). The most common response among applicants to the EdS program indicated that they did not use the Website in their program selection process (5, 31.25%). However, applicants to the EdS program that used the Website indicated a similar level of interest in content about Courses (4, 25.00%) as applicants to the MS (2, 28.57%) and PhD (11, 34.38%) programs.

Content around Externships/Internships was only sought out by the applicants to the PhD program, and information about Career Options was only sought out by applicants to the MS program. The applicants to the MS program also did not indicate an interest in Faculty Information or Program Accreditation, while applicant to both the PhD (Faculty Information—11, 34.38%; Program Accreditation—5, 15.63%) and EdS (Faculty Information—3, 18.75%; Program Accreditation-3, 18.75%) programs expressed interest in both content areas. Frequencies of responses by program type are displayed in Table 2.

Results to Q-1 by applicant grouping. When reviewing responses to Q-1 by applicant groups, individuals in all three groups indicated approximately three to four primary content areas that they were pursuing when accessing the BYU CPSE Website. Classifying the responses to this open-ended question showed that the applied group indicated 20 different types of content,

Table 2

Content Sought by Participants from the CPSE Website by Program Type

Responses	Overall (N=55)	PhD (N=32)	EdS (N=16)	MS (N=7)
Faculty Research	25 (45.45%)	21 (65.63%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (14.29%)
Program Description	19 (34.55%)	16 (50.00%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (28.57%)
Courses	17 (30.91%)	11 (34.38%)	4 (25.00%)	2 (28.57%)
Admission Requirements	16 (29.09%)	11 (34.38%)	3 (18.75%)	2 (28.57%)
Student Demographics	16 (29.09%)	11 (34.38%)	4 (25.00%)	1 (14.29%)
Faculty Information	14 (25.45%)	11 (34.38%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)
Did Not Use CPSE Website	9 (16.36%)	2 (6.25%)	5 (31.25%)	2 (28.57%)
Accreditation	8 (14.55%)	5 (15.63%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)
Application Process	8 (14.55%)	4 (12.50%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (14.29%)
Program Requirements	8 (14.55%)	5 (15.63%)	2 (12.50%)	1 (14.29%)
Costs	6 (10.91%)	4 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (14.29%)
Deadlines	6 (10.91%)	1 (3.13%)	3 (18.75%)	2 (28.57%)
Extern/Internships	6 (10.91%)	6 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Financial Aid/Scholarships	6 (10.91%)	5 (15.63%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Length	4 (7.27%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (25.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Purposes	4 (7.27%)	1 (3.13%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Scheduling	3 (5.45%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)
Acceptance Rates	2 (3.64%)	1 (3.13%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Application Documents	2 (3.64%)	1 (3.13%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Career Options	2 (3.64%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (28.57%)
Length	2 (3.64%)	2 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Fit	2 (3.64%)	2 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Summary	2 (3.64%)	1 (3.13%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Research Options	2 (3.64%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (14.29%)
Thesis/Dissertation	2 (3.64%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (14.29%)
Admissions Instructions	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Alumni Contact Information	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Area (Location)	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Contact Information	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Development	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Availability	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Handbook	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Layout	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Self-Disclosure Requirement	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Supervision (Clinical)	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

the interviewed group indicated 25 different types of content, and the admitted group indicated using 21 different types of content. When looking at the specific content areas, the individuals in all three applicant groups frequently indicated that content about Courses and Faculty Research was sought from the Website. Individuals in the Admitted and Interviewed groups indicated that information about Program Description, Accreditation, and Application Process was used in the selection process while none of those in the Applied Group indicated that any of these content areas were used in the program selection process. The admitted group reported the areas utilized from the Website included Faculty Information, Program Fit, Program Purposes, Research, and Alumni Contact Information. The Applied group reported one content area, Program Requirements, as being used in the program selection process that was not utilized by the other two application groups. Frequencies of responses by applicant group are contained in Table 3.

BYU CPSE Website Content Used

Participants were then given the content areas available through the BYU CPSE Website and asked to identify which content areas were most helpful in their decision making process. Content areas were identified based upon what content was available on the BYU CPSE Website at the time of the participants' application to the BYU CPSE graduate programs. Participants were shown this information in a checklist format and were allowed to indicate use of multiple areas of Website content.

Aggregate results to Q-2. On average respondents indicated four to five content areas, of the nine available, as helpful in the program selection process. The sample population identified that, overall, content about Program Information (43 of 55 respondents) and the Program Application (42 of 55 respondents) were the most important areas of content used. Other top areas included the Faculty Directory and Contact Information (36 of 55 respondents) and the List

Table 3

Content Sought by Participants from the CPSE Website by Admissions Status

Responses	Overall (N=55)	Admitted (N=17)	Interviewed (N=28)	Applied (N=10)
Faculty Research	25 (45.45%)	6 (35.29%)	13 (46.43%)	6 (60.00%)
Program Description	19 (34.55%)	5 (29.41%)	12 (42.86%)	2 (20.00%)
Courses	17 (30.91%)	6 (35.29%)	8 (28.57%)	3 (30.00%)
Admission Requirements	16 (29.09%)	4 (23.53%)	8 (28.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Students Demographics	16 (29.09%)	3 (17.65%)	8 (28.57%)	5 (50.00%)
Faculty Information	14 (25.45%)	6 (35.29%)	7 (25.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Did Not Use CPSE Website	9 (16.36%)	4 (23.53%)	4 (14.29%)	1 (10.00%)
Accreditation	8 (14.55%)	2 (11.76%)	6 (21.43%)	0 (0.00%)
Application Process	8 (14.55%)	3 (17.65%)	5 (17.86%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Requirements	8 (14.55%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (10.71%)	3 (30.00%)
Costs	6 (10.91%)	1 (5.88%)	4 (14.29%)	1 (10.00%)
Deadlines	6 (10.91%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (10.71%)	1 (10.00%)
Extern/Internships	6 (10.91%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (14.29%)	1 (10.00%)
Financial Aid/Scholarships	6 (10.91%)	1 (5.88%)	4 (14.29%)	1 (10.00%)
Program Length	4 (7.27%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (10.71%)	1 (10.00%)
Program Purposes	4 (7.27%)	2 (11.76%)	2 (7.14%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Scheduling	3 (5.45%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (10.71%)	0 (0.00%)
Acceptance Rates	2 (3.64%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (7.14%)	4 (40.00%)
Application Documents	2 (3.64%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Career Options	2 (3.64%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Length	2 (3.64%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Fit	2 (3.64%)	2 (11.76%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Summary	2 (3.64%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	1 (10.00%)
Research Options	2 (3.64%)	2 (11.76%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Thesis/Dissertation	2 (3.64%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Admissions Instructions	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Alumni Contact Information	1 (1.82%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Area (Location)	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Contact Information	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Development	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Program Availability	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Handbook	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Program Layout	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Self-Disclosure Requirement	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Supervision (Clinical)	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)

of Courses required from each program (34 of 55 respondents). All respondents indicated that at least one content area available on the Website was helpful in their decision making process.

Results to Q-2 by program type. When responding to the checklist of content areas contained on the BYU CPSE Website, all three program groups most commonly responded that the Application and Program Information was important in the program selection process. A majority of the participants that applied to the MS program (five of seven) indicated that the Faculty Directory and Contact Information was another important content area in the program selection process. Applicants to the EdS program also commonly (10 of 16) marked that the List of Program Specific Graduate Courses was an important content area from this checklist. Table 4 contains the frequencies of responses by program type.

Table 4

CPSE Website Content Used by Program Type from Checklist

Responses	Overall (N=55)	PhD (N=32)	EdS (N=16)	MS (N=7)
Program Information	43 (78.18%)	28 (87.50%)	11 (68.75%)	4 (57.14%)
Program Application	42 (76.36%)	28 (87.50%)	10 (62.50%)	4 (57.14%)
Faculty Directory/Contact Information	36 (65.45%)	24 (75.00%)	7 (43.75%)	5 (71.43%)
Program Specific Graduate Courses	34 (61.82%)	20 (62.50%)	10 (62.5%)	4 (57.14%)
Program Handbook	29 (52.73%)	20 (62.50%)	9 (56.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Faculty Highlights	27 (49.09%)	19 (59.38%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (14.29%)
Faculty Publications & Presentations	24 (43.64%)	21 (65.63%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)
Program Learning Outcomes	22 (40.00%)	14 (43.75%)	6 (37.50%)	2 (28.57%)
Alumni Placement/Contact Information	10 (18.18%)	8 (25.00%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)
None of the Above	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Results to Q-2 by applicant grouping. When responding to the checklist of content areas contained on the BYU CPSE Website, all three applicant groups frequently indicated that Program Information and the List of Program-specific Graduate Courses were used in program

selection. Another similarity of note was that, for all three applicant groups, the least frequent responses were Alumni Current Placement and Contact Information. The option to mark “none of the above” was not used by any of the three program areas. One of the differences that existed between the three groups was that the Admitted group responded with the highest frequency that content around Faculty Highlights (52.94% of respondents) and Program Learning Outcomes (52.94% of respondents) were important in the program selection process. The Applied and Interviewed groups responded with higher frequency than the Admitted group around the content areas of Faculty Publications/ Presentations and Program Handbook. When comparing the Applied group to the Interviewed and Admitted groups, the Applied group indicated a higher frequency of use of the content around Faculty Directory and Contact Information and a lower level of frequency of use of content about the Application. Frequencies of responses by applicant group are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

CPSE Website Content Used by Application Group from Checklist

Responses	Overall (N=55)	Admitted (N=17)	Interviewed (N=28)	Applied (N=10)
Program Information	43 (78.18%)	13 (76.47%)	22 (78.57%)	8 (80.00%)
Program Application	42 (76.36%)	13 (76.47%)	22 (78.57%)	7 (70.00%)
Faculty Directory/ Contact Info	36 (65.45%)	10 (58.82%)	18 (64.29%)	8 (80.00%)
Program Specific Graduate Courses	34 (61.82%)	10 (58.82%)	17 (60.71%)	7 (70.00%)
Program Handbook	29 (52.73%)	8 (47.06%)	15 (53.57%)	6 (60.00%)
Faculty Highlights	27 (49.09%)	9 (52.94%)	14 (50.00%)	4 (40.00%)
Faculty Publications & Presentations	24 (43.64%)	5 (29.41%)	14 (50.00%)	5 (50.00%)
Program Learning Outcomes	22 (40.00%)	9 (52.94%)	10 (35.71%)	3 (30.00%)
Alumni Placement/Contact Info	10 (18.18%)	2 (11.76%)	6 (21.43%)	2 (20.00%)
None of the Above	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Desired Content Not Found on the CPSE Website

Participants were asked, in a free response format, to identify any other content areas that they would have liked to have seen when reviewing the BYU CPSE programs. Responses were again coded, when appropriate, into similar groupings to those found on a list of content used in the graduate school selection process identified by Pooch and Lefond (2003). Participants were allowed to indicate multiple areas of desired content.

Aggregate results to Q-3. The most common response (27 of 59 responses) was that there were no other types of information respondents wanted from the Website. The second most common response was that respondents did not use the Website in their program selection process (nine of 59 responses). All other responses were in a frequency less than 5% of the total responses.

Results to Q-3 by program type. When asked what other types of content the applicants to the different programs desired but had not found on the BYU CPSE Website, applicants to the PhD program specified 13 areas of information while the applicants to the EdS and MS programs identified four areas each. 16 of 32 applicants to the PhD program, 8 of 17 applicants to the EdS program and 3 of 9 applicants to the MS program indicated that “nothing” else was desired from the Website. Again there was a high frequency of respondents that indicated that they did not use the Website in the program selection process (PhD = 2 of 32; EdS = 5 of 17; MS = 2 of 9). Three of the 32 applicants to the PhD program also showed some interest in content around financial aid and scholarships. The frequencies of responses by program type to Q-3 are available in Table 6.

Table 6

Desired Content Not Found on the CPSE Website by Program Type

Responses	Overall (N=55)	PhD (N=32)	EdS (N=16)	MS (N=7)
Nothing	27 (49.09%)	16 (50.00%)	8 (50.00%)	3 (42.86%)
Did not Use CPSE Website	9 (16.36%)	2 (6.25%)	5 (31.25%)	2 (28.57%)
Financial Aid/Scholarships	3 (5.45%)	3 (9.38%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Career Options	2 (3.64%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (14.29%)
Extern/Internship Sites	2 (3.64%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (14.29%)
Program Comparisons	2 (3.64%)	1 (3.13%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Students Demographics	2 (3.64%)	1 (3.13%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Applicant Selection Process	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Application Information	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Comments from Current Students	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Current Student Information	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Dissertation/Thesis	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (14.29%)
Facilities Tour	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Faculty Research	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Insurance	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Learning Outcomes	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (14.29%)
Placement Information	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Class Schedules	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Tuition Reimbursement	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Results to Q-3 by applicant grouping. All three applicant groups indicated that the most common response was “nothing” when asked what they desired but did not find on the Website. Individuals in the Applied group desired four areas of information other than “nothing” and not using the Website in the selection process. The Interviewed group identified 11 areas and the Admitted group identified six areas outside of “nothing” and not using the Internet. The Interviewed group also showed some interest in content around Financial Aid/Scholarships and Program Comparisons. The remaining responses were indicated only once each and the

overarching theme was that no other content areas were desired from the BYU CPSE Website.

Refer to Table 7 for the frequencies of responses by applicant group to Q-3.

Table 7

Desired Content Not Found on the CPSE Website by Applicant Group

Responses	Overall (N=55)	Admitted (N=17)	Interviewed (N=28)	Applied (N=10)
Nothing	27 (49.09%)	9 (52.94%)	12 (42.86%)	6 (60.00%)
Did not Use CPSE Website	9 (16.36%)	4 (23.53%)	4 (14.29%)	1 (10.00%)
Financial Aid/Scholarships	3 (5.45%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (7.14%)	1 (10.00%)
Career Options	2 (3.64%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Extern/Internship Sites	2 (3.64%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Program Comparisons	2 (3.64%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (7.14%)	0 (0.00%)
Students Demographics	2 (3.64%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Applicant Selection Process	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Application Information	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Comments from Current Students	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Current Student Information	1 (1.82%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Dissertation/Thesis	1 (1.82%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Facilities Tour	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Faculty Research	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Insurance	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Learning Outcomes	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Placement Information	1 (1.82%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Class Schedules	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Tuition Reimbursement	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)

Content Selected from a General Checklist

A checklist based upon research done by Poock and Lefond (2003) was used to find out what types of content respondents pursued in their graduate school selection process.

Respondents were asked to check as many content areas that they used in their graduate school selection process. Participants were allowed to indicate use of multiple areas of Website content.

Aggregate results to Q-4. Overall the participants indicated that information about Application Requirements and Procedures were the most frequent content sought (43 of 55 respondents) in their graduate school selection process. Program Descriptions (42 of 55 respondents), Faculty Biographies/Research Interests (38 of 55 respondents), and Length of Programs were also highly sought out by respondents (38 of 55 respondents). Very few of the individuals sampled indicated that they were interested in student services (7 of 55 respondents), social events (5 of 55 respondents), student organization (5 of 55 respondents), and IRB policies (1 of 55 respondents). On average, respondent indicated 11 of the 29 possible content areas. All respondents indicated that at least one of the content areas was used in the program selection process.

Results to Q-4 by program type. Table 8 contains the frequencies of responses by program type to Q-4. The two most common responses from applicants to the PhD program were a description of the program and application criteria, deadlines and procedures (both had 28 of 32 respondents). In whole, over half the applicants to the PhD program indicated use of thirteen different content areas including the two indicated above. The responses of applicants to the EdS program, similar to those of the PhD program, had a variety of areas which over half the respondents endorsed as being utilized (11 of 29 content areas). The applicants to the MS program indicated use of 19 of the 29 possible content areas.

Comparisons between the groups show some consistencies and differences between the applicants to the different programs. All the programs indicated that Application Criteria, Deadlines & Procedures, Contact Information for Department or Faculty, Courses Offered, and Program Descriptions were commonly used content areas. Comparisons of the frequencies of responses show that 84.38% of PhD respondents used content about Faculty Biographies or

Table 8

Content Selected from General Checklist, Grouped by Program Type

Responses	Overall (N=55)	PhD (N=32)	EdS (N=16)	MS (N=7)
Application				
Criteria/Deadlines/Procedures	43 (78.18%)	28 (87.50%)	11 (68.75%)	4 (57.14%)
Program Description	42 (76.36%)	28 (87.50%)	10 (62.50%)	4 (57.14%)
Faculty Biographies/Research Interests	38 (69.09%)	27 (84.38%)	8 (50.00%)	3 (42.86%)
Length of Time to Graduate	38 (69.09%)	24 (75.00%)	11 (68.75%)	3 (42.86%)
Courses Offered/Descriptions	36 (65.45%)	23 (71.88%)	9 (56.25%)	4 (57.14%)
Important Dates/Deadlines	36 (65.45%)	23 (71.88%)	10 (62.50%)	3 (42.86%)
Access to the Program Application	34 (61.82%)	21 (65.63%)	11 (68.75%)	2 (28.57%)
Tuition/Fees/Cost of Living	34 (61.82%)	26 (81.25%)	6 (37.50%)	2 (28.57%)
Requirements for Graduation	31 (56.36%)	19 (59.38%)	9 (56.25%)	3 (42.86%)
Contact Info. Department/Faculty	30 (54.55%)	18 (56.25%)	9 (56.25%)	3 (42.86%)
Financial Aid/Job Opportunities	30 (54.55%)	22 (68.75%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (14.29%)
Required Courses	30 (54.55%)	19 (59.38%)	9 (56.25%)	2 (28.57%)
Contact Info Admission/Financial Aid	25 (45.45%)	14 (43.75%)	8 (50.00%)	3 (42.86%)
Students Demographics	24 (43.64%)	17 (53.13%)	6 (37.50%)	1 (14.29%)
Department Forms	19 (34.55%)	13 (40.63%)	5 (31.25%)	1 (14.29%)
Placement of Graduates	19 (34.55%)	14 (43.75%)	4 (25.00%)	1 (14.29%)
Schedule of Classes	18 (32.73%)	10 (31.25%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (14.29%)
Handbook/Policies & Procedures	17 (30.91%)	12 (37.50%)	5 (31.25%)	0 (0.00%)
School/Program Rankings/Reputation	16 (29.09%)	8 (25.00%)	6 (37.50%)	2 (28.57%)
University Mission/History	16 (29.09%)	11 (34.38%)	5 (31.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Registration Information	13 (23.64%)	8 (25.00%)	5 (31.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Campus Information/Map	11 (20.00%)	7 (21.88%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (14.29%)
City/Area Information	10 (18.18%)	7 (21.88%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)
On and Off Campus Housing	10 (18.18%)	7 (21.88%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)
Student Services	7 (12.73%)	5 (15.63%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)
Social Events	5 (9.09%)	4 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
Student Organizations	5 (9.09%)	4 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
IRB Policies or Procedures	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)
None of the Above	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Research Interests, while 50% of EdS respondents and 42.86% of MS respondents used the same information. Other areas bore similar results with the PhD program showing a higher frequency of use for some content areas in comparison to the other programs. The content areas in which the PhD applicants showed more interest included Tuition, Fees, Cost of Living, Financial Aid/Job Opportunities, and the Student Demographics. The PhD program applicants showed some similarities with the EdS program applicants in frequency of content area utilization for Length of Time to Graduate, Important Dates or Deadlines, Access to the Program Application, and Required Courses. These four areas did not reach similar levels of utilization by the MS program applicants.

Results to Q-4 by applicant grouping. When given the checklist created from items identified by Poock and Lefond (2003), the most common responses from all applicant groups were Application Criteria, Deadlines, and Procedures. (See Table 9 for respondent frequencies by application group.) Content areas such as Length of Time to Graduate, Important Dates or Deadlines, and Contact Information for Department or Faculty, appeared to be utilized more frequently by the Admitted group than by other groups. The content areas of Description of Program, Faculty Biographies or Research Interests, Tuition, Fees, or Cost of Living appeared in more frequency among the Interviewed and Applied groups. Content around Courses Offered and Course Descriptions was selected at a higher frequency within the Applied group in comparison to the Admitted and the Interviewed groups.

Web Content Desired but Not Found

The final question was intended to identify other content types that respondents may have used in their general graduate program selection process. Participants were asked, in a free response format, to identify any other content areas that they would have liked to have seen in

Table 9

Content Selected from General Checklist, Grouped by Application Group

Responses	Overall (N=55)	Admitted (N=17)	Interviewed (N=28)	Applied (N=10)
Application				
Criteria/Deadlines/Procedures	43 (78.18%)	13 (76.47%)	21 (75.00%)	9 (90.00%)
Program Description	42 (76.36%)	11 (64.71%)	22 (78.57%)	9 (90.00%)
Faculty Biographies/Research Interests	38 (69.09%)	11 (64.71%)	19 (67.86%)	8 (80.00%)
Length of Time to Graduate	38 (69.09%)	13 (76.47%)	18 (64.29%)	7 (70.00%)
Courses Offered/Descriptions	36 (65.45%)	11 (64.71%)	17 (60.71%)	8 (80.00%)
Important Dates/Deadlines	36 (65.45%)	12 (70.59%)	18 (64.29%)	6 (60.00%)
Access to the Program Application	34 (61.82%)	10 (58.82%)	16 (57.14%)	8 (80.00%)
Tuition/Fees/Cost of Living	34 (61.82%)	8 (47.06%)	18 (64.29%)	8 (80.00%)
Requirements for Graduation	31 (56.36%)	11 (64.71%)	15 (53.57%)	5 (50.00%)
Contact Info. Department/Faculty	30 (54.55%)	12 (70.59%)	12 (42.86%)	6 (60.00%)
Financial Aid/Job Opportunities	30 (54.55%)	6 (35.29%)	17 (60.71%)	7 (70.00%)
Required Courses	30 (54.55%)	10 (58.82%)	16 (57.14%)	4 (40.00%)
Contact Info Admission/Financial Aid	25 (45.45%)	10 (58.82%)	12 (42.86%)	3 (30.00%)
Students Demographics	24 (43.64%)	6 (35.29%)	12 (42.86%)	6 (60.00%)
Department Forms	19 (34.55%)	8 (47.06%)	9 (32.14%)	2 (20.00%)
Placement of Graduates	19 (34.55%)	4 (23.53%)	12 (42.86%)	3 (30.00%)
Schedule of Classes	18 (32.73%)	9 (52.94%)	9 (32.14%)	0 (0.00%)
Handbook/Policies & Procedures	17 (30.91%)	6 (35.29%)	7 (25.00%)	4 (40.00%)
School/Program Rankings/Reputation	16 (29.09%)	4 (23.53%)	9 (32.14%)	3 (30.00%)
University Mission/History	16 (29.09%)	5 (29.41%)	8 (28.57%)	3 (30.00%)
Registration Information	13 (23.64%)	4 (23.53%)	8 (28.57%)	1 (10.00%)
Campus Information/Map	11 (20.00%)	3 (17.65%)	6 (21.43%)	2 (20.00%)
City/Area Information	10 (18.18%)	3 (17.65%)	5 (17.86%)	2 (20.00%)
On and Off Campus Housing	10 (18.18%)	1 (5.88%)	5 (17.86%)	4 (40.00%)
Student Services	7 (12.73%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (10.71%)	2 (20.00%)
Social Events	5 (9.09%)	1 (5.88%)	3 (10.71%)	1 (10.00%)
Student Organizations	5 (9.09%)	2 (11.76%)	2 (7.14%)	1 (10.00%)
IRB Policies or Procedures	1 (1.82%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
None of the Above	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

their general graduate program selection process. Responses were again coded, when appropriate, into similar groupings to those found on a list of content used in the graduate school selection process identified by Poock and Lefond (2003). Participants were allowed to indicate multiple areas of desired content.

Aggregate results to Q-5. A large majority of responses indicated that the checklist covered all of the information sought by respondents (32 of 54 responses). All other responses combined make up less than 25% of all responses and, no one response was given more frequently than three times. Table 10 contains the aggregate frequencies of responses to Q-4 as well as responses by program type

Table 10

General Web Content Desired, Not Found by Program Type

Responses	Overall (N=55)	PhD (N=32)	EdS (N=16)	MS (N=7)
Nothing	32 (58.18%)	25 (78.13%)	5 (29.41%)	2 (28.57%)
Did not Use CPSE Website	9 (16.36%)	2 (6.25%)	5 (29.41%)	3 (42.86%)
Program Comparisons	3 (5.45%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (11.76%)	1 (14.29%)
Updated Research Information	2 (3.64%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (14.29%)
Career Opportunities	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)
Class Times	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)
Extern/Internships	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Fin Aide/Scholarships	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Housing information	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)
Maps/Area descriptions	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Schedules	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)
Students Demographics	1 (1.82%)	1 (3.13%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Results to Q-5 by program type and application grouping. All participants responded similarly to the final question asking what other general content they pursued in the program

selection process. On a majority basis, respondents from all three CPSE graduate programs and all three application groups indicated that either they did not use the Website in their program selection process or that there were not any other areas of content, outside the ones indicated by Poock and Lefond (2003), that they were pursuing. Those that were in the Admitted group did indicate some interest in the content area of Program Comparisons (2 of 18 responses). Table 11 contains the frequencies of responses by application group.

Table 11

General Web Content Desired, Not Found by Application Group

Responses	Overall (N=55)	Admitted (N=17)	Interviewed (N=28)	Applied (N=10)
Nothing	32 (58.18%)	8 (47.06%)	19 (67.86%)	6 (60.00%)
Did not Use CPSE Website	9 (16.36%)	4 (23.53%)	4 (14.29%)	1 (10.00%)
Program Comparisons	3 (5.45%)	2 (11.76%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Updated Research Information	2 (3.64%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	1 (10.00%)
Career Opportunities	1 (1.82%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Class Times	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Extern/Internships	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (10.00%)
Fin Aide/Scholarships	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Housing information	1 (1.82%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Maps/Area descriptions	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Schedules	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.57%)	0 (0.00%)
Students Demographics	1 (1.82%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Discussion

Universities throughout the United States have seen a continued increase in demand for graduate programs in psychology (National Science Foundation, 2011). The Web has been identified as the key informational resource for individuals attempting to identify a graduate school (Hawkins & Clinedinst, 2006; Huddleston & Drexel, 2006; Lenhard, Madden, & Hitlan,

2005; Pryor et al., 2005), and graduate program Websites are the largest influence upon graduate program selection (Ng, Parette, & Sterrett, 2003; Poock & Lefond, 2003). This project sought to identify the Website content preferences of individuals applying to graduate programs in the BYU CPSE department. The results are summarized based upon overall responses, responses by program type and responses by applicant grouping. The possible implications of this study are identified, the limitations of this study are discussed, and future areas of research are suggested.

Summary of Findings

Aggregated responses. It seems that, overall, the respondents were able to find the content areas that they were looking for on the Website. The responses from the overall group indicated that the users were more commonly pursuing content related to (a) Faculty Research, (b) Program Descriptions, and (c) Course Information. This three-part focus was indicated as being used by participants consistently across survey questions. Users typically did not use content regarding Alumni Placement/Contact Information. Content areas that the respondents used more generally in their program selection process also focused on the Application Procedures, Faculty Information/Research, and Program Descriptions.

Though the respondents indicated being able to find the content they were pursuing on the Website, many areas sought in the general program search process may not be available through the Website. Some of these areas include information about the demographics of the students in the CPSE programs, information about financial aid, graduate assistantship opportunities, scholarships, and placement after completing the graduate programs. An interesting item to note was that an unexpectedly high number of respondents (16.36%) did not use the Website at all in their program selection process.

Differences among applicants to CPSE graduate programs. Some differences were noted among applicants to the three graduate programs in CPSE in terms of their Website content preferences. When trying to identify content they utilized from the Website, applicants to the PhD program tended to focus on content about Faculty Research and Program Descriptions, while the respondents from the EdS and MS programs also showed some preference towards Website content centered upon Program Descriptions. Other responses by these groups were less concentrated.

Interestingly, applicants to the EdS program frequently responded that they had not used the Website in the program selection process. The applicants to the PhD program tended to be pursuing content surrounding Faculty Information (Biographies, Research Interests), Financial Matters (Tuition, Cost of Living, Financial Aid, Job Opportunities, etc.), and current Student Demographics. The applicants to the MS program tended to respond less frequently than the other two groups to content about Deadlines, Program Length, Required Courses, and Access to the Program Application. However, the applicants to the MS program also showed more interest in content about Career Options after graduate school.

Content preferences indicated by admission groups. Some of the most interesting differences in Website content preference may exist between the different types of applicant pools to the different BYU CPSE graduate programs. However, a review of the participant responses showed little differentiation among the different application groups. The Admitted group showed a slightly higher frequency of use of Faculty Information and identified a number of areas of content that were of interest that the other groups did not mention (Program Fit, Program Purpose, Research Opportunities, and Alumni Contact Information). The Interviewed and Admitted groups showed, in comparison to the Applied group, a higher level of interest in

content about Program Descriptions, Application Processes, and Accreditation. The Applied group reported being interested in Faculty Information and, along with the Interviewed group, the use of content around the Program Handbook and Faculty Publications and Presentations.

The individuals in the Applied group indicated use of a diversified set of areas with a higher frequency than either the Interviewed or Admitted groups. Some of the content areas used more frequently by the Applied group included information around Applications, Program and Course Descriptions, Faculty Information, Financial Information, and Student Demographics. The Interviewed group identified the content area of Contact Information for Department or Faculty less frequently than either the Applied or Admitted group.

Possible Implications

By identifying the content areas used in the program selection process, we can extrapolate the types and depth of content that the BYU CPSE graduate programs might want to include on their respective Websites in the future. The information from this study may help faculty and staff tailor Website content in order to better facilitate the program selection of individuals interested in the BYU CPSE graduate programs. Respondents did not identify many content areas that were desired outside those already provided.

Overall, the participants showed a common affinity for content around who (i.e., faculty and student information) and what (i.e., program descriptions, courses, length of time to graduate) constitutes each program. One important area of improvement for all of the CPSE graduate programs is maintaining up-to-date information, particularly around program requirements, courses, program progression, faculty biographies, and faculty research. When looking at individual programs, applicants showed interests that may help faculty and staff customize each program's Website to match their applicants' needs. The PhD and MS programs

could benefit from a focus on the big picture content such as program descriptions. Offering content such as current or past student testimonials and detailed information on program progression (i.e., learning outcomes around each year or semester of study), could allow applicants to gain a better understanding of how the programs function. The EdS and MS programs may benefit from focusing on details such as course descriptions.

The PhD program may benefit from focusing on the program's Faculty information and research by demonstrating diversity in research interests and experience. Content that shows applicants areas of possible research opportunities may also be beneficial. Another area of focus for the PhD program is making information about the typical or average financial costs of the program (i.e., tuitions, fees, books, housing, cost of living) and efforts the program makes to help defray those costs (i.e., research assistantships, paid practicum, program scholarships, grants). The PhD program may also benefit from providing placement and earnings information about graduates of the program.

Due to the high percentage of the EdS program's applicants (31.25%) who did not use the Website, the EdS program may also benefit from actively directing applicants to the Website and possibly finding other methods of disseminating information (e.g., print media). The MS program applicants indicated desiring more information on career options afforded them through the MS degree. The MS program should offer information about placement of graduates and other possible options degree may offer graduates.

While recommendations based upon application status were sought, differences between applications pools were minimal. Those admitted into the BYU CPSE graduate programs most consistently look for content about the individuals with whom they will work (Faculty Information/Research Interests) and specifics of the program applications. Another area of focus

that the admitted students indicated using was general information about the program (i.e., Program Descriptions). Overall, the results surrounding the application pools were inconclusive and offered little useful information about how to tailor the Website to appeal to admitted students.

Limitations and Areas of Future Research

While this study aptly identifies a variety of important factors concerning how applicants to the BYU CPSE graduate programs utilized the available Website content, a number of limitations were identified and many other questions were raised. One limitation is that there is no way to determine the motivation of those responding or not responding to the survey offered. The initial population (92 individuals) and the sample group (N=55) were both small and offer little ability to generalize the results to a population outside of the three graduate programs of the BYU CPSE department. Also, given the small sample size and that only one academic year's pool of applicants was surveyed, generalization within the department is also limited. Future iterations, over multiple years, of this same study could result in more robust conclusions than those available from this study. The influence of Website content on the program selection process may be minimal when applicants are applying to a highly specialized graduate program at a private, religious university. These factors hinder the ability to generalize the results of this study to other graduate programs and universities. Future research would benefit from expansion of the population to a larger sampling of types of graduate programs and universities. Pairing or including questions about the importance of Website content in the graduate program selection process in conjunction with identification of preferred Website content would also allow for greater generalization of results.

This study focused solely on overall or group frequency of content use. This focus allows little to no inference on the relative importance of the content to a user (e.g., content that solidified program selection versus was content that was quickly looked at), the individual frequency of use of the content used (i.e., if a user used the same content area 20 times or just once), the influence of the content (i.e., did the content encourage or discourage the individual to apply to the program), or the accessibility of content (i.e., is the content used easy to find). Future studies could benefit from using rankings or Likert-type scales to allow better understanding of content importance, influence, accessibility, and frequency of use. These types of measures would allow greater understanding of what applicants wanted in the program selection process, rather than focusing solely on what content was used.

This study purposely did not take into account the emerging Website features such as live chat, RSS feeds, social media, and video feeds. Each of these could be areas that influenced the online portion of the applicants' program selection process. Understanding the roles these other types of content delivery had in the program selection process could allow for a greater understanding of the features the BYU CPSE Website should offer to future applicants.

This study focused solely on utilized and desired content and did not take into consideration Website design and usability. Further understanding of the effect of Website design, Webpage layout, and the inclusion of external links upon the selection process, could allow for further customization of the Website. Comparing Websites of similar graduate programs may offer exposure to more factors that influence the program selection process.

As further research into the graduate program selection process is completed, a greater ability to match the desires of individuals going through the program selection process can be developed. Larger sample sizes would allow for further subgrouping and may then allow better

identification of the factors of program selection used by those admitted to programs rather than those that apply and are not admitted. The ability to better match the needs of individuals completing the graduate program selection process could allow graduate programs to attract and retain a higher number of quality graduate students.

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Appendix A: Student Survey

(Questions are identical across all program types: PhD, EdS & MS)

This survey is being conducted by Dylan Matsumori to determine the Website content preference of Graduate School applicants. Participants will be chosen from applicants to BYU's Counseling Psychology and Special Education Department's Graduate schools.

The survey consists of 7 or fewer questions and will take 5 to 10 minutes to answer. There are minimal risks for participation in this study. There may be some mild discomfort in giving feedback about a program that subjects are currently applying for admittance to. There are no personal benefits of participating. The results of this study may serve to inform the Website content of graduate school websites in the future.

Involvement in this research project is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or refuse to participate entirely.

There will be no reference to your identity at any point in the research. The data collected will not be examined by the researchers until **after** all admission decisions have been completed.

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Dylan Matsumori (researcher) at (801) 545-8515.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research projects, you may contact Christopher Dromey, PhD, Chair of the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects, 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; phone, (801) 422-6461; email, christopher_dromey@byu.edu.

- Please indicate your consent to participate in the research below:
 - I desire of my own free will to participate in this study.
 - I do not wish to participate.

In this survey we are looking to better understand the types of information you were pursuing via Websites in your graduate school selection process. Some questions will pertain specifically to the BYU-based Website that you may have used. Other questions will focus on your selection process in general. All responses will be kept strictly confidential from the admissions committee. No decisions will be based on your responses. No data will be analyzed until after all admissions decisions have been made.

- You recently applied to Graduate School in the Brigham Young University Counseling Psychology and Special Education program. Please indicate which program you applied to.
 - PhD Counseling Psychology
 - ED. S. School Psychology
 - MS Special Education

- 2 of the above programs

This question is specific to the BYU Counseling Psychology Website

- Research has shown that prospective graduate students often use graduate school Websites to gain the information necessary to decide on what schools/programs to apply for and attend. Did you use the BYU Counseling Psychology (PhD) program Website to gain information to help you make your graduate school selection?
 - Yes
 - No

This question is specific to the BYU Counseling Psychology Website

- When accessing the BYU's Counseling Psychology (PhD) program Website, what type of information were you looking for?

These questions are specific to the BYU Counseling Psychology Website

- Below is a list of types of information that is contained on the BYU Counseling Psychology (PhD) program Website. Please check all those that were helpful in your decision making process.
 - Alumni current placement and contact information
 - Application
 - Program handbook
 - Program information
 - Program learning outcomes
 - Faculty directory and contact information
 - Faculty highlights
 - Faculty publications & presentations
 - List of program specific graduate courses
 - None of the above
- What, if any, other types of information would you like to have found on the BYU Counseling Psychology program (PhD) Website?

In this section we would like to know more about the types of information you were looking for on Websites in your graduate school selection process.

- Past studies of the graduate selection process have indicated that graduate students look for a variety of different types of information on graduate school Websites to help inform their graduate school selection. Which, if any, of the following types of information did you use in your program selection process? (please check all that apply)
 - Access the program application
 - Application criteria, deadlines, procedures
 - Campus information or map

- Information about the city or surrounding area
 - Contact information for department or faculty
 - Contact information for admissions or financial aide
 - Courses offered and descriptions
 - Demographics of students
 - Description of program
 - Faculty biographies or research interests
 - Financial aid or job opportunities (i.e., research or teaching assistantships)
 - Forms
 - Grad school and program rankings or reputation
 - Important dates or deadlines
 - IRB policies or procedures
 - Length of time to graduate
 - On- and off-campus housing
 - Placement of graduates
 - Registration information
 - Required courses
 - Requirements for graduation
 - Schedule of classes
 - Social events
 - Student handbook/policies & procedures
 - Student organizations
 - Student services
 - Tuition, fees, or cost of living
 - University mission or history
 - None of the above
- What, if any, other types of information you would have liked to have had access to, via program Websites, when going through your graduate school selection process?

If the respondent indicates more than one program choice or they indicate they have not used the Website in their program selection process they will be shown the “appreciation for participation” screen.

Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Initial Email:

Hello!

My name is Dylan Matsumori and I am a fourth-year doctoral student in Brigham Young University's (BYU) Counseling Psychology and Special Education (CPSE) department. I am sending you this email because you have recently applied for admittance to one or more of the three graduate degrees offered within BYU's CPSE department (Counseling Psychology, School Psychology or Special Education). I am currently conducting survey to determine the Website content preference of Graduate School applicants. The survey consists of 7 or fewer questions and will take 5 to 10 minutes to answer.

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. There may be some mild discomfort in giving feedback about the Website of a program to which you are currently applying for admittance. There are no personal benefits of participating. The results of this study may serve to inform the Website content of graduate school Websites in the future. Involvement in this research project is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or refuse to participate entirely.

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported in group data with no identifying information. All data, including survey results, will be kept in a secured database and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the data from the survey results will be destroyed. Also, the data collected will not be examined by the researchers until after all admission decisions have been completed.

If you have questions regarding this study you may contact Dylan Matsumori (researcher) at (801) 545-8515. Thank you for your willingness to participate.

Sincerely,
Dylan Matsumori