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April 16, 2003

Synthesis Paper

Eng 112-052

Which is The Best Overall School for the Transfer Student?

Every year, many students transfer from junior colleges to a four year college. One such student wants to transfer to a four year school for meteorology. The student previously decided to choose schools to apply to solely base on location, and whether or not they offered meteorology as a major. The student applied to, and was admitted to three universities; however, the student is unsure of which school to attend. The three schools the student is deciding between are the University of Oklahoma, Iowa State University, and the University of Nebraska. To determine his final choice for which school he will attend, there are several major factors that he wants to compare with each of the schools. They are: price, location, student enrollment, how good the school of meteorology at each compares, housing options, eating/dining room options, and the overall environment of the school. To help in researching data, each school sent the prospective student information about each of their weather programs, and their overall school environment; in addition, the student also used U.S. News and World Reports as a tool to compare schools because it is a major news magazine that ranks schools across the country (Because every school values getting high marks from U.S. and World reports, it has become a very prestigious and authoritative source for finding college information and rankings). The student's first choice is the University of Oklahoma, so he decided to look at their information first.

According to a pamphlet from the University of Oklahoma Admission's Office, the total enrollment of OU for the 2002-03 school year is 19,230; furthermore, the same pamphlet gives the total cost to attend OU for the 2002-03 school year. The Admission's Office says that, "The estimated costs for a non-resident of Oklahoma are as follows: Tuition and Fees - \$8,077.35 (based on 30 credit hours), Room and Board - \$4,962.00, and books - \$913.00 for a total of \$13,952.35". The admission's Office also gave some stats towards trying to convince me to attend there. The pamphlet says that, "We rank in the top 15 public universities in private endowment per student; furthermore, we are the only Oklahoma public college to be included in the prestigious 'Fiske Guide to Colleges 2002', which lists the top 10 percent of all U.S. universities". So the pamphlets say that OU overall has good academics, but what about the School of Meteorology?

The University of Oklahoma is located right in the heart of “tornado alley” in the Midwestern United States; in addition, meteorologists at The Weather Channel say that “Oklahoma has the most tornadoes per year than any other location in the entire world!” Within a 3 mile radius near the school, the following weather facilities can be found: National Severe Storms Lab, National Weather Service Forecast Office, Storms Prediction Center, the Oklahoma Climatological Survey, and several others.

The School of Meteorology also sent the prospective student a brochure regarding their programs available. According to the brochure, OU has many instructional & research tools available; in addition, the brochure says that, “We have continuous weather data available from various satellites and radars we have, data from the Oklahoma Mesonet (which is an array of 115 weather observation stations throughout the state), a supercomputer with IBM workstations for environmental computing applications, and mesoscale model forecasts from our own on site storm-scale research center as well as from all other forecast centers.” Another leaflet of information came from Dr. Fred Carr, Director of the OU School of Meteorology. In it, he gives some interesting stats about the School of Meteorology.

Dr. Carr first says that, “The OU School of Meteorology is ranked #1 in the nation in mesoscale (severe weather) and severe storms research”; furthermore, Dr Carr adds that the school “is among the top 7 programs overall in the country!” Dr. Carr continues by saying, “That our school has produced a Space Shuttle astronaut (Fred Leslie), two former directors of the National Weather Service (Elbert Friday and Robert Sheets), and an elected member to the National Academy of Sciences.” He also said, “We have four endowed chairs dedicated solely to meteorology; furthermore, no other program in the nation has more than 1! We also award 30 B.S. every year, 9 recent Ph.D. graduates became professors in universities all over the world, and we celebrated our 40th anniversary in 2000.” Overall, the information from OU indicates that OU has a great meteorology program; however, what about where to live? The prospective student couldn’t go to college and live in his car, so what are the housing options at OU?

Conveniently, the OU Department of Housing put together a few guides concerning that issue. Although many students choose to live in fraternities or sororities, most start out by living in the dorms. Both the OU Housing web site and pamphlet say, “A student can live in one of five towers. Some amenities available include: parking for your car, laundry facilities, and different payment plans”. However, they both go on to say, “one must bring their

own linens, refrigerator (must be less than 25 x 25 x 25 inches), microwave, TV, and some other miscellaneous items.”

Some other miscellaneous facts and statistics about OU gathered from U.S. and World Report say, “OU is one of the best buys of any school in the country, the average freshman retention rate is 81%, the graduation rate in 2001 was 51%”. Generally, most sources looked at all had positive things to say about OU. Using the same criteria used to look at The University of Oklahoma, the student’s second choice will be looked at next; moreover, that school is Iowa State University.

A pamphlet put out by the Iowa State University Financial Aid Office says, “For the 2002-03 school year, an average out-of-state student will incur the following costs: Tuition -- \$12,384; Fees -- \$418; Room/Board -- \$5,020; Books -- \$754; and Personal -- \$2,835 for a total of \$21,411.” In addition, the pamphlet says, “An estimated cost for the 2003-04 school year for an out-of-state student will be approximately \$20,111.” ISU sent a prepared portfolio for the accepted transfer student which included miscellaneous facts and Numbers about ISU; moreover, ISU even included a copy of the student’s transcript, which indicated how the student’s classes taken in junior college fit into ISU’s degree program for meteorology. Also included was a transfer packet, which gave information, facts, and stats about ISU.

Among the facts and Numbers that ISU’s transfer packet says include, “We have a total student enrollment of 27,823; we awarded more than 4,000 bachelor’s degrees (2000-01); in 2001, more than 1,700 transfer students enrolled at ISU; we have more than 500 different student organizations; and we have more than 100 bachelor degree programs (including meteorology).” When it came to job placement capability, the packet says, “Annually, more than 1,000 companies come to ISU to recruit graduates for jobs.” Other miscellaneous facts from the packet include: US News and World Reports rank ISU in the top 40 public universities in the nation, the American Society of Landscape Architects rank ISU as one of the most beautiful campuses in the nation, and Yahoo! Internet Life ranks ISU as one of the most wired schools in the nation. Although all of those facts give good marks to ISU as a whole, what about the meteorology program; moreover, what kinds of meteorology facilities are available at ISU?

According to the College of Geological and Atmospheric Sciences at ISU website, The Iowa Agronomy Climate Network is based at ISU; furthermore, the local American Meteorological Society headquarters are also on the campus of ISU. The ISU website says, “The labs and facilities in our college allow students to do hands on

research in the field of meteorology.” Unfortunately, ISU’s website doesn’t offer much more information about their weather program; however, they do provide information about housing options.

Although many students choose to live in a fraternity/sorority, some students choose to live in the residence halls. There are more than a dozen resident halls for a student to choose from. Regarding amenities available in each room, the ISU Housing Services web site says, “We have many amenities available in most of our resident halls including: a study desk, chair, and wastebasket (one per resident), standard twin or bunk bed with innerspring mattress (one per resident), chest of drawers and wardrobe or closet (one per resident), discounted long distance service, access to campus network and Internet, cable TV, and other amenities.” The web site goes on to say, “Many halls include some of these amenities: fitness centers, laundry facilities, game rooms, and a C-store.” Although the halls feature many amenities, residents must provide their own lamps, bedding, pillows, and towels. So the housing options at ISU are vast and most students should be able to find something that fits their needs; however, what about some other miscellaneous facts from US News and World Reports about ISU?

There is a range by percentage of how many classes have fewer than 20 students, between 20-50 students, and more than 50 students; moreover, 33% of all classes have fewer than 20 students, 21% have more than 50, and the rest have 20-50. Another interesting fact is that more than 95% of ISU’s faculty teaches there full time; in addition, on a scale of 1-5 (5 being high), ISU students give the school an overall rating of 3.4. The average graduation rate of ISU is 64%; likewise, the average freshman retention rate is more than 80%! Finally, US News and World Reports ranks ISU in the top 10 in the second tier of schools who offer doctoral degrees. So far, most of the stats, figures, and amenities available at both the University of Oklahoma and Iowa State University are plentiful; however, what about the University of Nebraska? Are the Numbers also very high for them?

Like the other two schools, The University of Nebraska (at Lincoln) sent the prospective student plenty of information about their school. Their Admission’s Office sent a pamphlet containing information about their school; moreover, the first thing the pamphlet dealt with was the cost to go to their school (the costs are for the 2002-03 school year). The pamphlet says, “We are one of the most affordable and high quality educations in the nation. For a non-resident, it costs \$331.25 per credit hour; furthermore, the tuition and fees for a non-resident are \$10,759.50, the room and board is \$4,875.00 for a total of \$15,634.50”. The same pamphlet goes on with other facts about Nebraska by the Numbers (the Numbers are for the 2002-03 school year). The pamphlet says, “We have 285

programs of study, 392 student organizations, a 15 to 1 student to faculty ratio, almost 1,100 full-time faculty, and 14 residence halls”. The pamphlet also discusses the student enrollment at UNL-Lincoln.

The pamphlet says “We have 22,268 students enrolled at our main campus in Lincoln (the main campus is where the prospective student would attend should he pick UNL as his final choice).” The pamphlet breaks down the student enrollment further. “Of the 22,268 students who attend, 18,000 are undergraduate students, 3,900 are graduate students, 375 are law students, and the rest are miscellaneous students (other majors or students who attend only part-time). One other thing the pamphlet lists is all of the majors offered at UNL-Lincoln; however, the prospective student is only interested in one major, meteorology. So now the student wants to look at the quality of the meteorology program that UNL-Lincoln offers.

To find this information, the UNL website for the meteorology major was used. According to the website, it says, “The Meteorology/Climatology Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is administered through the Department of Geosciences. The B.S. degree program in Meteorology/Climatology exceeds the minimum curriculum jointly recommended by the American Meteorological Society (AMS) and the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), and also meets the course work requirements for National Weather Service (NWS) employment.” This means that if the student only wants to get a bachelor’s degree, his degree would be able to be used in gaining employment in some of the top weather organizations in the country. The website also talks about what kind of facilities and weather gadgets are available for students to learn about and use.

The website for meteorology says, “Our Meteorology/Climatology program has a state-of-the-art weather analysis laboratory facility where students get hands-on experience with real-time data. The facility has several computer workstations to display and analyze weather data; furthermore, you will be able to apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to current real-time weather situations. For example, students often gather in the laboratory during severe weather events to display current surface and upper air conditions, radar images and satellite pictures to determine where the severe weather will take place.” This is great for the prospective student because UNL has the capability of helping the student become trained in spotting severe weather, tornadoes, and other aspects of a storm. The website for the meteorology program also says that there are many opportunities for students to get involved with weather related programs.

The website says, “Students in the Meteorology/Climatology Program have organized a student chapter of the American Meteorological Society, which sponsors field trips, guest speakers, a forecast contest and an annual

banquet. In the past, the chapter has taken overnight field trips to the National Severe Storm Laboratory in Norman, Okla., the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo., and the NWS River Forecast Center in Minneapolis. The chapter also regularly visits regional NWS forecast offices and local television stations. Students who join the chapter have an excellent chance to meet and interact with their classmates and the faculty on a more personal level. The Meteorology/Climatology Program also has an extensive program of internships that allows students to gain work experience related to their academic and career interests.” This is also great for the prospective student because this a chance for the prospective student to be able to job shadow with people in the industry; furthermore, this will help the prospective student greatly in being able to find a job in the field because he will have the skills and background knowledge that will help the prospective student in his career choice. It is pretty clear that UNL has a great meteorology program with many opportunities for the prospective student. After a long day in the field studying severe weather, the student is bound to become tired, so he will want to go back to his room to catch some sleep; however, how are the dorm rooms and housing options at UNL?

The Housing Department at UNL put together a couple of guides dealing with their dorm rooms, apartments, and amenities available in each building; in addition to the paper guides, the Housing Department also had information available on its website. Both the Housing Department paper guide and website say: “Students have 14 different Residence Halls to choose from; furthermore, all are non-smoking.” The rooms have the following services available in all rooms free of charge: central air conditioning, cable TV, phone service, and a direct connection to the Internet. Also included are all the things that one would expect to find in a dorm room including: a bed, a pillow, a desk, a chair, a dresser, a closet, window coverings, a mirror, and a desk lamp. The Housing Department website also says, “Some of the available options that a student may rent include: a loft, bed linen, refrigerator, or a Micro Fridge (which is a microwave, freezer, and refrigerator all in one); moreover, Washers and dryers are also available in all the halls.” As for parking availability, all students are allowed to bring cars to campus, there are no restrictions for freshmen. Graduate, older, and married students can choose to live in an apartment. Many of the UNL Residence Halls also have eateries within the buildings.

The UNL Dining Services website says, “From roast beef and mashed potatoes to hot and spicy chicken wings to seasoned cod, you will find choices everywhere in the dining centers. We even buy the kind of cereals your folks wouldn't when you were growing up - that's right, we stock Cap'n Crunch and a whole bunch of others! You'll find a wide variety of choices, including vegetarian and vegan items.” Furthermore, some of the dining areas

include: a buffet style meal, a grab and go breakfast service, a sack lunch or dinner plan, as well as several different food plans so that the transfer student can simply walk into the cafeteria and buy what he wants. So far, UNL is a good school; however, what kinds of stats do U.S. News and World Reports have about UNL?

According to USNW, the student to faculty ratio at UNL is 19 to 1; furthermore, 50% of classes contain 20-49 students, 36% contain less than 20, and only 14% contain more than 50. Another stat given by USNW is that the freshman retention rate is 80%, which is very good; in addition, the graduation rate is 53%. One other stat that could prove interesting is that the nearest airport to the university is 60 miles away, meaning that it will be a long drive to pick up a family member visiting the student. Other than the airport situation, USNW has mostly positive praise for UNL.

Over the course of this paper, the three possible choices for the student's final destination have been laid out with plenty of statistics, facts about each school in general, and each meteorology program; however, now that the prospective student has laid out all of the information, he can now figure out where he will ultimately end up going to school at. Originally, he had based the three schools on the following criteria: price, location, student enrollment, how good the school of meteorology at each compares, housing options, and the overall environment of the school; however, he had to also take into consideration a major fact that he could never find in a book or on a website, that is a campus visit. Before deciding on his final choice, the student had to understand that he didn't visit any of the schools that he is looking at; therefore, any decision that he makes is based only on what his sources have told him, and that he has no first hand experience of spending any time on any of the campuses to get a feel of the environment of the school; moreover, this would have been a big help in his decision process. Nevertheless, by comparing the data and seeing that one school has a better meteorology program (more information and more awards than the other two), a much lower price than the other two (\$14,000), plenty of housing options, and that the school is located in the heart of "Tornado Alley", the prospective student has settled on choosing the University of Oklahoma. Now that he has picked a school, the student now must make sure to work hard to be successful so that one day he will be to walk across the stage to pick up his degree in Meteorology; furthermore, if he should happen to trip and fall while walking across that stage, then he can smile with dignity that he had picked the right stage of the right school a few years earlier.

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