

OCTANE™

VOL. 4, ISSUE 4, 2020

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT
REMARKABLE TOPICS

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INSIDE

No Pets Allowed in
Residence Halls—Lizard
Brains an Exception

The Year Ahead: Three
Fundamental Drivers for
Recruiting Success

Seven Reasons Why
Your CRM is More
Important Than Ever

Letter from the President



Dear Octane Booster,

When enrollmentFUEL published the initial issue of *Octane* in 2017, the first article I wrote was, “How and Why College Students Select an Institution.” The article touched on many aspects of college selection, including cost-benefit analysis, how students are swayed by emotion, and the opportunities every admission counselor has to create positive feelings.

In this issue, I have also written about decision making. The topic is Lizard Brain selling, discussing how enrollment leaders who link school choice to survival thinking can win recruits. As I researched the article, I could not help but reflect on what has changed and what remains constant.

Mike Wesner, the founder of enrollmentFUEL, writes about “The Year Ahead: Three Fundamental Drivers for Recruiting Success,” providing practical information on how you can close digital marketing gaps to find leads, convert, and increase yield. Jay Fedje, enrollmentFUEL’s Vice President of Client Services (and enrollment Jedi), returns to the topic of your CRM, making a compelling case to find ways to use this resource better in the 2020-2021 cycle.

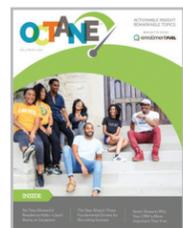
We tapped into Gen Z for insight, too. Amanda Prahll interviewed three students in her article, “Life Choices – Three Students Share Thoughts on Returning to College This Fall.” And Xavier University of Louisiana sophomore, Jared Shelton, shares his story on why he chose a Historically Black University (HBCU).

As I reflected on that first 2017 article and compared the current landscape, my mind kept turning to the digital landscape. Now more than ever, having a winning digital strategy can be the difference between making a class and not. We know having a comprehensive digital strategy is as essential as having a strong communication flow. The proof has been evident, as the majority of our partners met or exceeded enrollment goals this year—despite a major upheaval unlike any we have experienced. Those who incorporated enrollmentFUEL’s digital services prevailed. But, even with these successes, we know now is not the time to stop! We continue to roll out new digital services to support Student Search in the expanding online advertising universe. The work we have done over the past year in this space made me pause to encourage you to examine your own strategy moving forward.

Cheering you on, and always yours in partnership,

Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.
President

Now more than ever, having a winning digital strategy can be the difference between making a class and not.



enrollmentFUEL would like to extend our gratitude to Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans, Louisiana for allowing this photo to be featured on the cover of our magazine.

Octane the Magazine:
A publication of enrollmentFUEL
A collection of innovative thoughts from a team of people bonded to clients in a way to prevent the knocking that comes with the “one size fits all” Student Search strategies. Adding *Octane* to your thinking fuels creativity and releases positive energy among enrollment professionals.



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THE FINDER

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CHECK OUT THE BACK COVER TO LEARN MORE!

No Pets Allowed in Residence Halls— Lizard Brains an Exception

By Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.

Yes, it's a brave new world filled with neoteric language (COVID), new styles (the Trikini), and words we hope we never hear again (unprecedented). But some things are business as usual, and we all want to stay focused on the future ahead of us. In this article, I examine the true "science" of selling and how it impacts enrollment professionals when you are closing sales (getting deposits) from students.

The basis of the research I am presenting comes from neuromarketing, a concept developed by psychologists at Harvard University in 1990.¹ Until about five years ago, these concepts were still considered debatable. Since then, an abundance of field research has been conducted, and many now accept neuromarketing concepts as viable. Because it is a newer field within marketing and sales, it presents an excellent topic for modern enrollment professionals looking to reformulate strategies for recruitment.

Neuromarketing "loosely refers to the measurement of physiological and neural signals for the purpose of gaining insight into customers' motivations, preferences, and decisions, which can help inform creative advertising, product development, pricing, and other marketing areas."²

A common mistake made by all marketers is selling against the competition. As enrollment professionals, this occurs when we focus our energy on telling our story to "outdo" our competition and why we are the better choice. Instead of talking about our school, what might make more sense is selling to families and students in a way that tells them something they didn't already know about a problem or missed opportunity.

Let me share an example. When I listen to college recruiters on the phone or at college fairs, most launch into their "spiel," touching on the college's majors, quick facts, and financial aid availability. It sounds just like what students and parents have heard from every other college. The audience's eyes glaze over, and words become white noise.

Let's pause and re-think this scenario. Instead of talking about your school and how great you are, pause to find out what the student needs and wants, and then communicate how you align with their stated desires.



Perhaps the dialogue might go something like this: "So, Myra, I'm super excited you're interested in learning more about Sample University. Can you tell me a little more about why you were initially drawn to us?"

Armed with information about what the student wants, you can communicate the appropriate information about your school to align with the student's reasons, needs, or desires. *See the difference there?*

Moving away from psychology, let's get back to the science. This is all about the brain. Your brain is divided into three parts: the neocortex, the limbic system, and the brain stem.

The **neocortex** is your analytical computer, your **limbic system** controls your emotions, and your **brain stem** is responsible for your survival. The stem is described by Robert Ornstein³ as the old brain, or the "Lizard Brain" as Seth Godin, marketing expert and American entrepreneur, likes to call it.⁴

Enrollment professionals are attuned to understanding how the limbic system drives a student's decision to enroll because this part of the brain is all about emotion. How often have you asked a student why they chose to enroll, and he or she responded by saying, "Because it just felt right." Or "It just felt like home."

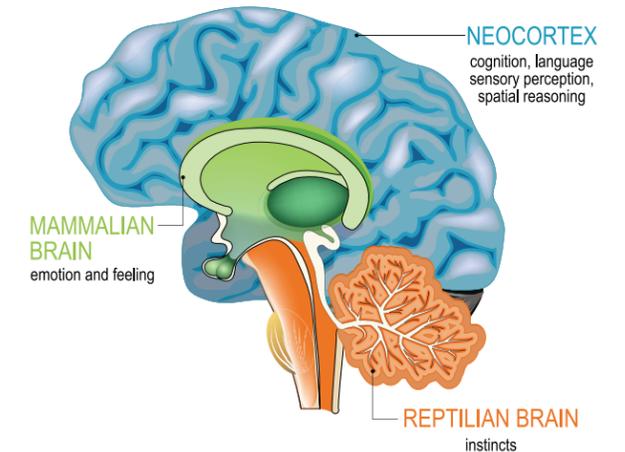
While emotion will still be a primary driver for many students as they select a college, what I am positing here

Perhaps the dialogue might

go something like this:

is that we move to get students to question *old brain* thinking, which leads to students selecting the path of least resistance for ease. We need to connect our approach with their Lizard Brain so they realize a status quo choice might be unsustainable, unwanted, or outright wrong. For example, help students understand that going to a school a few hours away instead of one in their backyard helps them prepare for the work world where they have to travel, experience the unknown, and problem solve independently. These are all soft skills that will set them apart in their level of maturity upon graduation.

Brain evolution



(Secret tip: Why do students transfer? Because their Lizard Brain finally realizes the status quo isn't getting them what they want at the most basic level, and they have to make a change to get results, be happy, or set themselves apart from the masses.)

I love how author and strategy expert, Tim Riesterer,⁵ explains this. He tells a story about a tornado siren going off every Saturday in his Wisconsin neighborhood to test the warning system. When it's sunny outside,

1 Morin, C. Neuromarketing: The New Science of Consumer Behavior. Soc 48, 131-135 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-010-9408-1>

2 Harrell, E. (2019, January). Neuromarketing: What you need to know. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2019/01/neuromarketing-what-you-need-to-know>

3 Riesterer, T. (2012, July). Stimulate your customer's Lizard Brain to make a sale. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2012/07/stimulate-your-customers-lizard>

4 Godin, Seth. (2010). <https://seths.blog/2010/01/quieting-the-lizard-brain/>

5 Riesterer, T. (2012, July). Stimulate your customer's Lizard Brain to make a sale. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2012/07/stimulate-your-customers-lizard>

everyone ignores it. When clouds roll in with a vengeance, everyone heads for cover. The siren alone doesn't create either reaction. However, the change in the environment suddenly makes the siren invaluable.

The lesson here is this: your differentiators aren't the reason your students will change, decide, or select you. Instead, it's because students develop a clear, compelling sense that they won't be able to achieve their goals or objectives without you. When the Lizard Brain kicks into high gear, the survival instinct says make a change or wither.

Using the science of neuromarketing, you can take intentional actions to activate a prospect's Lizard Brain to help close the sale. Let's examine tactics you can easily deploy during this recruitment cycle. I give credit to Tim Reisterer⁶ and Dr. Bryn Farnsworth⁷ for curating these ideas, which I have applied to the enrollment arena.

⁶ Reisterer, T. (2017, October). Neuromarketing: Seven ways to sell to the decision-making Lizard Brain. Harvard Business Review. <https://corporatevisions.com/neuromarketing-tips/>

⁷ Farnsworth, B. (2019, March). 15 powerful examples of neuromarketing in action. <https://imotions.com/blog/neuromarketing-examples/>

1 USE VISUALS.

Of your five senses, the Lizard Brain responds most strongly to the visual sense. Half the processing power in the brain is devoted to things you see! When you work with your marketing team or an outside vendor, understand the importance of color. Research indicates color evokes a wide range of emotions. Neuromarketing experts who specialize in color have divided colors into subgroups as a guide to how to use color effectively. For a quick review of color use in marketing, you can download FUEL's PDF available at enrollmentfuel.com/colorchoice.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: Research more about the effective use of color and apply it to your print material. Use pictures and props to help you sell visually. This can be an exceptional opportunity when scheduling one-on-one video meetings with students where you can tailor your props.

2 CREATE CONTRAST.

Show prospective families staying where they are today—the status quo—is not the best decision for them. Help them see deciding to go to college (and your college in particular) is a safe decision.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: Help the family see the *before* story where they choose a different school is not as good as the *after* story where they choose your "product." Use comparison to demonstrate your solution to their life goals is the better option.

3 USE FIRST AND LAST.

The Lizard Brain, linked to survival, is always alert for the unexpected—anything that breaks the pattern it is used to. The beginning of a message is when this part of your brain is most alert. End with a conclusion that satisfies your audience and supports the choice to select you.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: Start with something that grabs the attention of the student and prospect, and close with something really hot. Never end with, "Contact us if you have questions." Try an ending like, "As you can see, we are one of the only schools to do A, B, C. Your next step to getting closer to this opportunity is to submit your application in the next few weeks so we can finalize your admission and financial aid."

4 CONNECT WITH THE EMOTIONAL SIDE OF THINGS.

Connect with the emotional side of things. The Lizard Brain remembers events connected to emotions. This explains why you remember small details about your wedding, your first date, or your last birthday party, but can't remember what you had for lunch last week.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: Connect what you are selling to the prospect's emotions. As part of an in-person campus visit, give them a small gift creating positive feelings. Or open a video-meeting with a funny story that makes people relax and anticipate an enjoyable event. You win more when people have positive memories of interactions with your school.

5 DON'T MAKE THINGS TOO COMPLEX.

Overloading your prospect/family with too much information can have the opposite effect of what you want to accomplish. Too much information causes them to shut down, so instead, focus on engaging and connecting.

Other responses are boredom, irritation, or "So what? Why are you telling me all this?" (It happens when the tour guide talks about the science labs on the campus tour, and your prospect already shared they intend to be a theatre major.) Worst of all, complexity often leads to people being trapped by decision paralysis,⁸ which is the worst outcome when the recruiter's job is to move students through the various stages of the funnel and close the sale.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: Keep things simple. Share information in small sound bites that can be easily processed to prevent decision paralysis. Help students understand the benefits (not features) of what you have to offer. Align messaging to the interests of the student, rather than sticking to a scripted presentation. Focus on what is different about your product (and if you don't know, make this a priority, and get help from colleagues in charge of the appropriate areas). Use easy-to-comprehend analogies and metaphors.

⁸ Schwartz, B. (2006, June). More isn't always better. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2006/06/more-isnt-always-better>

6 TAP INTO FOMO.

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a major psychological phenomenon in Generation Z. Neuromarketers have found that people are just as worried about what they might lose as what they might gain.⁹ Framing an option as a loss could actually encourage a student to buy (deposit).

Neuromarketing Takeaway: Message to students about deadlines, the limitations of institutional aid awards, the number of bed spaces available, the possibility of classes filling, and not having the first pick of an intended choice, or any other creative idea that implies they could miss out if they delay their decision. A deposit clock where the days, minutes, seconds count down is an effective tool on your deposit page. If your numbers are strong, show a tally of how many students have deposited to-date. This helps other students visualize they are behind and need to take action.

⁹ Farnsworth, B. (2019, March). 15 powerful examples of neuromarketing in action. <https://imotions.com/blog/neuromarketing-examples/>

COLOR Influences Actions

Every institutional brand has a color palette. When you want to influence actions, think beyond routine choices to a color's deeper meaning. Learn more at enrollmentfuel.com/colorchoice



7 MAKE IT CONCRETE.

The Lizard Brain does not deal well with abstract ideas. It understands concepts based on previous experience. In the case of your prospective freshman, this is all new, and not something they have experienced before.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: It's not enough for your prospect to *intellectually* understand a benefit. Use visuals to make a complicated concept easier to understand (draw out a chart to show the financial aid process, for example). The admission process, which is abstract to most students, needs to be converted to a concrete process. A simple checklist can easily accomplish this. Counselors should send this checklist to each of their hottest prospects after their initial interaction.

8 MAKE IT PERSONAL.

The Lizard Brain cares about survival and self-preservation. The Lizard Brain processes and sorts information into "part of my tribe" or "part of other" buckets.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: You don't want to be seen as "other" because those in this category will not be able to persuade students or their families. You have to engender a quick feeling that they are part of your tribe. Use the word "you." Use preferred names instead of legal names. Ask questions of students to get to know them, and then, using that information in subsequent conversations, emails, and printed variable data communications are all great techniques.

9 ANCHOR.

The first pieces of information students receive are critically important because they set the tone for subsequent comparisons and decisions. Neuroscientists have discovered humans rarely evaluate value based on *intrinsic* worth. Instead, they make value decisions through comparisons with surrounding options.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: Look for ways to create information anchors by creating *value-add contrasts*. These could be things like no application fee, no test required, no essay required, an actual deposit applied to the account rather than a fee to enroll, free graduation gowns, computer upon enrolling, etc. Use these incentives early to create easy-to-understand points of contrast to get students interested.

10 THE VALUE OF YOUR WEBSITE.

Your friend or enemy—the value of your website. Neuromarketing techniques are also being deployed to assess site design and customer preferences. Color schemes, layouts, and font size are all critical to how the brain processes the information. One interesting finding is that newer horizontal style layouts are less effective than traditional vertical styles because reading the pages from top-down engages the brain—by encouraging people to scroll.

Neuromarketing Takeaway: Use research about font and colors to help you make website decisions. Go deeper to determine what your brand standards are communicating. If you use your school colors on the website, and they don't send the right message, you could lose "sales."

By using scientific neuromarketing techniques, you can encourage students to deposit, enroll, and persist. And the day will come when residence halls fill once more, and students benefit from the important aspects of learning that take place outside the classroom.

In the cycle ahead, make Lizard Brains welcome, even if no other pets are allowed!

Dr. Jacquelyn D. Elliott is President of enrollmentFUEL. Her admissions, retention, and financial aid strategies have led multiple institutions to reach record enrollments. She can be reached at jacqui.elliott@enrollmentfuel.com.



THE YEAR AHEAD:

3 Fundamental Drivers for Recruiting Success

By Mike Wesner, M.Ed.

Think ahead. It's the first week in November, and you are moving into reading season. You're in a meeting with your team, and you ask, "So where are we? How are we advancing toward our goal?"

If silence greets you, you wait. Eventually, someone starts talking about what everyone has been thinking. How are we going to meet our goal if fewer high school students take standardized tests? How do we know if the leads from virtual college fairs are legitimate? What if my inquiries never visit campus? The floodgates open, and that's a good thing because if you and your team are going to solve these problems, everyone must first acknowledge them.

Success in May 2021 will come from the choices and decisions you are making now. Talking to enrollment leaders around the country, I have identified three significant areas where you may want to consider a new approach. They are:

- How will your school be found by new leads?
- How will you get enough leads to meet your goals?
- How do you convert your leads to increase yield?

Let's start with a key issue - ensuring new leads find you when they search for an institution like yours.

Getting Found

As part of our approach to Student Search, enrollmentFUEL often performs Search Engine Optimization (SEO) audits. This is especially helpful when we are working on recruiting adults for online programs or graduate students. Our team compares an institution to its competitors and assigns scores for the following:

UR Rating: Using a 1-100 scale (1=low, 100=high), we measure **on-site** SEO strength based on internal SEO, metadata, internal links, and keyword density

Domain Rating: Using a 1-100 scale (1=low, 100=high), we measure **off-site** SEO strength based on external SEO and backlinks (when one website links to another, which creates an inbound link)

Referring Domains: The number of websites with backlinks to a school's domain

Organic Traffic: An estimate of the organic traffic to a domain, calculated by taking keyword search volume and where they rank at the time of the audit

Traffic Value: This is a monetary value derived from the SEO value for ranking keywords

It is the last two metrics - organic traffic and traffic value - that convince schools SEO is a problem they need to address. Organic traffic shows how many people are coming to your site. Traffic value is a monetary amount that speaks to the success of your current strategy and shows how you rank compared to competitors.

If you are getting less organic traffic, and the dollar value of the traffic is significantly smaller than your competitors, you have a problem because you are less likely to be found by potential students.

In the past, many institutions fixed the "How do we get found?" problem by running Student Search campaigns. Here's good news. It is still a good strategy for the 2021-2022 cycle. But we all recognize there are forces at work that will cause fundamental shifts in the years ahead.

These forces, such as the movement to eliminate standardized test scores as admission criteria, will make it harder to purchase data, which will impact top-of-funnel outbound marketing. To reach goals, you need better strategies to find and magnetize leads, and the best place to start is SEO because you can do it economically and your success is measurable.

Some institutions are lucky enough to have a team of people dedicated to optimizing the website. Others even have a dedicated webmaster who is also an SEO expert. If that is not the case at your school, it is time to consider hiring professional management to fix this problem.

Today, a student in your local area will search for a degree you offer. An adult who works within five miles of your campus decides it is time to return to college and complete their degree. A sophomore who took a gap year goes online to figure out what to do next.

1 DRIVER NUMBER ONE FOR RECRUITING SUCCESS: When people are searching for what you offer, be found.

Getting Leads

Getting leads starts with demand generation marketing. Demand generation covers all the activities your institution uses to attract and find leads, including Student Search.

Leads (also called prospects) are the people who indicate interest in your school through their actions. In previous cycles, a sampling of these actions included:

- A visit to your campus
- Stopping by your table at a college fair
- Opening multiple Student Search emails – or clicking to request information

None of these interest-indicators have gone away completely, but all have changed, and rapid change rewards those who are nimble and willing to adapt.

At enrollmentFUEL, we have demand generation experts on our team. Some have backgrounds in higher education, while others come from corporate America. The mix is a deliberate choice because we believe our client-partners benefit from "cross-pollination" in our thinking.

We have had several brainstorming sessions to discuss how schools like yours can expand the lead pool. Here are ideas to consider:

- Monitor who is coming to your website. At enrollmentFUEL, we do this with matchBACK™ technology, providing visitor data that is more useful for enrollment leaders than the type of traffic data you get from Google Analytics



Rapid change rewards those who are nimble and willing to adapt.

- Use programmatic digital advertising (IP targeting and remarketing ads in multiple channels) to build a lead generating machine that hums relentlessly in the background supporting all other efforts
- Challenge your social media team to come up with posts that attract leads and showcase what makes your school special
- If your website is a turn-off instead of a turn-on, create landing pages for the singular purpose of attracting leads
- Use video pre-roll and Connected TV ads to find families where they are now.

Americans, who are often captive at home, are cutting the cord and binge watching TV more than ever. Today's programmatic advertising lets you serve commercials into homes in a way that is similar to delivering banner ads to smart TVs and gaming devices. In my opinion, Connected TV is the one new channel that can transform how we nurture leads in your communications flow.

One other thought . . . According to research by the Pew Research Center, 85% of teens look at YouTube.¹ And the price to have a YouTube channel is free!

¹ Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>



In my opinion, Connected TV is the one new channel I think can transform how we nurture leads in your communications flow.

ARE YOU READY TO REACH CORD-CUTTERS?

In November 2019, an article in the *Harvard Business Review* online blog made a definitive and dramatic statement: "The traditional video marketplace is no more. Driven by a combination of technologies including high-speed internet access, billions of mobile devices, and falling prices for high-resolution displays, television as we have known it for decades is undergoing a radical reinvention, one that will reshape the media ecosystem."¹

The article refers to the cord-cutting revolution that is taking place in homes across America. It started with people ditching landlines for mobile phones, and evolved into a movement where people of all ages have cancelled cable, and switched to lower-cost alternatives such as Hulu or Sling on devices connected to the Internet.

Here is the good news. Programmatic advertising to connected devices is affordable, unlike traditional TV advertising.

Want to learn how you can reach cord-cutting leads while they are enjoying their favorite program at home? Contact Mike Wesner at mike.wesner@enrollmentfuel.com.

¹ Retrieved from: <https://hbr.org/2019/11/for-streaming-services-navigating-generational-differences-is-key>

2 DRIVER NUMBER TWO FOR RECRUITING SUCCESS: When faced with big changes to old lead generation methods, restructure thinking and processes to find new sources of opportunity.

Converting Leads to Increase Yield

Some years, success is built on what you can achieve. In other years, success results from what you can overcome. This cycle comes with more than its fair share of obstacles to overcome, but I am convinced many of the same fundamentals still apply.

As more and more schools are opting out of testing services that produce the bulk of today's suspect lists, the conversations I have with enrollment leaders center more frequently on their worry about where data lists will come from in the future. Look-alike modeling techniques deliver a promising way for schools to generate leads without purchasing a list. Today, you can serve digital ads directly into homes with students similar to your currently enrolled class. Models are created by analyzing enrolled students from the last few years. These models can also be supplemented by your organic lists, such as your current inquiry pool. We use these to find you more leads! Then, these new suspects can be served ads and Connected TV commercials. Along the way, we use many techniques to learn who they are so you can begin building rapport with your best recruits.

In the future, those who have command over this space will be the most successful at lead generation by using a combination of purchased lists and leads that are model-generated. Graduate and non-traditional programs have used these techniques for years—and they work! Undergraduate leaders will need to start using these proven methods more.

To be successful in this space, the savvy enrollment leader will need to correlate web visitor IP addresses with known addresses and reverse engineer those with unknown addresses. This is where capture pixels, marketing automation with triggered mailings, and landing pages all help to convert this new and exciting method of lead conversion.

Additionally, today's progressive marketers know how important identifying micro-influencers is on social media sites. Finding that super-mom group of influential tweeters and social media posters provides some of the best word-of-mouth marketing. Why? Because it can cause good ideas to go viral and become great ideas.

Remember, top-of-mind awareness helps you win, so don't hit pause on digital advertising too early in this stage. As people move through your funnel, change the ads so they remain relevant. Don't stop until you know your lead is off the market when it comes to looking at other schools and is entirely sold on your institution.

3 DRIVER NUMBER THREE FOR RECRUITING SUCCESS: Focus on fundamentals, starting with identifying right-fit leads. Use look-alike modeling, banner ads, and social media influencers as ways to start new relationships. Stay top-of-mind with digital advertising, and invest in your team, so they are effective at selling your school.

Inside the FUEL Innovation Lab

I love talking to enrollment leaders, discussing the challenges you face, and sharing that information with our "innovation lab" team. At our company, there is no designated product development team. Everyone is involved.

In both external and internal discussions, one thing is becoming clear about the future of enrollment management and Student Search marketing. Digital solutions will play an important and increasing role, and to win the hearts and minds of your leads, you must be found on computers, phones, smart televisions, and gaming devices.

Our revamped package of services include ongoing SEO support, social media strategies, landing pages to aid lead capture, digital advertising, matchBACK™ to identify stealth website visitors, and inquiryDETECTOR™, a new solution to identify organic leads. These comprehensive programs collect data, build engagement, and support your goals. Feel free to reach out to me for a private consultation about the best technology from enrollmentFUEL to help solve your most nagging challenges.

Massive change accelerates timelines. It is not a year for denial or to stubbornly stick to old ways. Leaders who want to succeed in turbulent times should heed the words of the business icon, Jack Welch, who said, "Lead change before you have to."²

Now, it's back to work on more big ideas to help you get where you want to go. Feel free to contact me if you are excited about these concepts and would like to discuss them further.

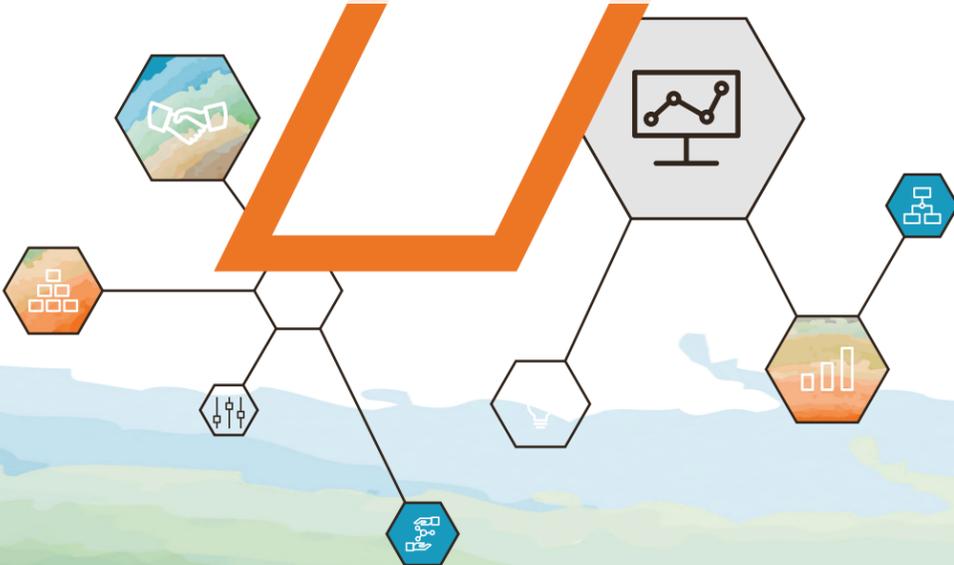
² Retrieved from: <https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/jack-welch-quotes>

Mike Wesner, M.Ed., is the founder of enrollmentFUEL and a passionate student of digital advertising strategies. In his role as Chief Imagination Officer, he works with the team to develop new products to help enrollment leaders bring in their class and set enrollment records. Reach out to Mike at mike.wesner@enrollmentfuel.com to share ideas on where enrollment management is headed in the year ahead.



Reasons Why Your CRM is More Important Than Ever

by Jay Fedje, Vice President of Client Services & Enrollment Jedi at enrollmentFUEL



One year ago, I wrote an Octane article titled, "Staging Your CRM Implementation," for the fall, 2019 issue. At the time, recruitment looked much the same as it had in recent years. When the rest of the enrollmentFUEL team and I attended the NACAC conference, the hot topic was the vote, and resulting change to NACAC's Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP) ethics standards. Then, the upcoming recruiting cycle looked "normal" and generally manageable. Oh, what a difference this last year has made in higher education.

In months, the business of enrollment management has moved from a delicate and somewhat fragile journey to a disconcerting, out-of-control roller-coaster ride. Enrollment professionals are trying to do a job when higher education looks, feels, and behaves like no other time in memory.

Yet, there are elements within the recruiting environment that are familiar, understandable, and manageable--and one is the institutional CRM. Here are seven reasons why your CRM is critical to the success of your recruiting plan.

1. Building Relationships

At enrollmentFUEL, we believe people recruit people. What happens to relationship-building when uncertainty is the norm? For example, how and where will you engage with prospective students? And, what will happen with

tried-and-true standards like campus visits and college fairs?

To build and sustain relationships with prospective students and their families, you need to rethink your resources. I am not recommending you need to turn up the volume and use your CRM to pump out larger quantities of generic emails. Instead, look for creative ways to use technology to support personal relationships and nurture potential students.

For example, let's say an admission counselor invites potential recruits from a single high school to a virtual meeting. Six students attend. During the session, these inquiries share information about their interests. After the meeting, the counselor records the information in the CRM and tags inquiries according to their interests. This practice helps build relationships in two ways. First, information transforms future students from names in a file into real people with aspirations, dreams, and concerns. In future interactions, counselors can reference their notes, using the information to demonstrate they care about the student.

Tagging students by expressed interests is the second way you can use a CRM. Who wants to know more about your institution's track record for internships? Who wants to know when your school plans to resume study abroad? When a segment of students hungers for information on a common topic, think about setting up a communication flow to feed their curiosity.

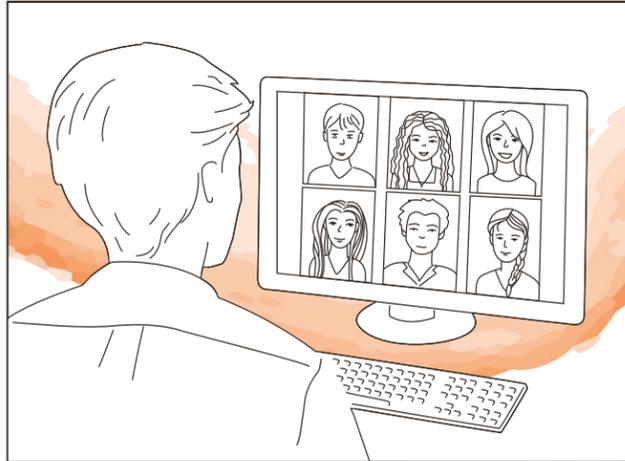
2. A Consistent Institutional Voice

(Even when Information Keeps Changing)

For college-bound students and their families, recruiting messages from countless colleges and universities can feel overwhelming. That is true during the best of times, and I think we would all agree, recruiting in 2020-2021 will not be the best of times.

This year, your prospects aren't looking for a sales pitch. They are struggling to find clarity in the tsunami of information. *Did you open your school for in-person classes? Will you allow prospective students to visit campus? What is your mask policy? What is your school's plan for performance activities like music, athletics, and theatre? What are your health and safety protocols?*

One of the most useful characteristics of a CRM is that it empowers you to manage your institution's voice. Adopting a consistent tone for communications helps to reassure students and families, conveying they can rely on your institution for accurate information.



3. Speak to Everyone Quickly

As changes in policies and procedures happen in the coming months, enrollment managers and institutional leaders will need a rapid-response communication channel for all audiences – including your future students. A high-functioning CRM gives you the power to send messages to the right person at the right time in the right way. Quickly addressing issues builds trust, and these days, *trust is everything*.

4. Tracking Behavior

When resources are stretched, enrollment professionals must use their CRM to capture behavioral data indicating interest. For example, who opens your emails? Who clicks on links? Who is engaged with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat social media pages? Who has visited your web site, and what pages are they viewing?

In an era where fewer students are willing to click a “Tell Me More” or “Request Information” button, you need other methods to gauge engagement and interest. By setting up your CRM to monitor and score, you create real-time data to assess the strength and health of the admissions funnel, so you can quickly shift tactics when necessary to reach goals.

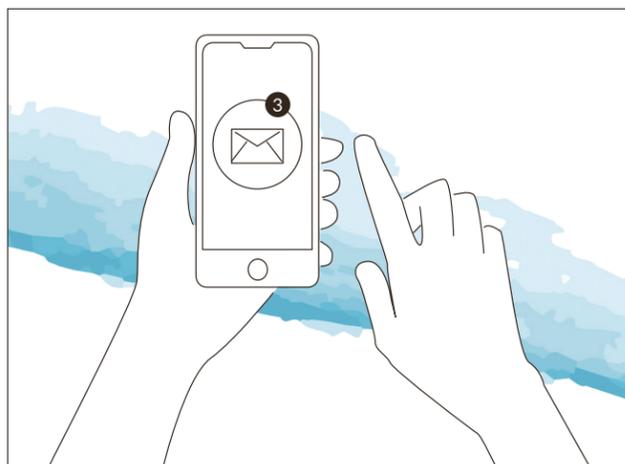
5. Harmonizing Multi-channel Messages

Email, text messages, direct mail, phone calls, and social media. Enrollment managers have many communication channels at their disposal. However, harmonizing your communication flow is essential for managing timing, message loads, and clarity.

By planning your flow within a CRM, you harmonize all elements to orchestrate a cohesive communication strategy. Well-timed communication channels in unison help to create synergies instead of information overload.

In a recent enrollmentFUEL student focus group, new incoming students said they preferred their college of choice to communicate with them weekly. In general, they said many colleges use email way too often. Once students have deposited, they prefer all transactional communications to be conducted by email communication as it pertains to the next steps. They said this makes actions easier to track, and they have records.¹

¹ Elliott, J. D. Focus Group. (Lenoir-Rhyne University) October 25, 2019



6. Managing Fluid Situations

In the upcoming cycle, expect to see increased delays in decision-making, more indecision, and more students vacillating about whether they should take a gap year.

It is common for adult and graduate recruiting to keep prospects alive from term-to-term until they choose to opt-out of communication from a school. For the 2020-2021 cycle, the same approach may make sense for traditional inquiries and transfer students as a strategy to cope with increased levels of volatility within a lead pool.

When there is ambiguity, you need fluidity. A highly functioning CRM provides it. It simplifies the process of managing changing data. When a student’s plans shift, your CRM lets you make quick moves to change messaging. You can continue to keep in touch with students who say, “Not ready now,” but will be ready to commit to your institution in the future.

7. You Already Invested

If you experience budget cuts and are asked to do more with less, it makes sense to take a hard look at existing resources and find ways to use them better. If you feel like your CRM chugs along at a respectable pace, but believe it should be taking you further and faster, give it a tune-up. Investing in the system you already have is a smart spend that will pay off in many ways, big and small.

Same Tools, New Situation

For many years, we’ve known a well-built CRM system can have a positive impact on a strategic recruitment plan. Now, more than ever, this technology will be a difference-maker when it comes to identifying the right prospects, building lasting relationships, monitoring responses to your messages, and giving you the flexibility you need to modify messages as situations change.

Take a tip from Tony Zambito, who is credited by many as the creator of the buyer personas concept. He said, “Instead of using technology to automate processes, think about using technology to enhance human interaction.”² Good advice for all CRM users.

² Retrieved from: <https://www.gorspa.org/new-member-spotlight-atdec/>

Jay T. Fedje, MA., is the Vice President of Client Services at enrollmentFUEL. Prior to joining enrollmentFUEL, he worked in higher education for 28 years. He was instrumental in selecting, implementing, and supporting four different CRMs, including Slate. enrollmentFUEL is a Slate Technolutions Preferred Partner, and Jay works with schools to effectively use this tool to grow enrollment. Contact Jay at jay.fedje@enrollmentfuel.com.



JARED SHELTON'S STORY Choosing an HBCU

According to statistics published by the U.S. Department of Education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) enroll 20% of black undergraduates. However, they award baccalaureate degrees at a significantly higher rate – 40% in total, which is important since all colleges and universities strive for degree completion.¹

Wealthy donors, aware of these statistics, have made the news by writing generous checks to HBCUs. Netflix CEO, Reed Hastings, and his wife, Patty Quillin, donated \$40 million to Morehouse and \$40 million to Spelman College.² Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott donated as well, giving Howard University, Xavier University of Louisiana, and Hampton University record-breaking contributions.³ Oprah Winfrey attended Tennessee State University and has contributed millions of dollars to this HBCU.⁴

1 Retrieved from <https://www.marketo.com/ebooks/elements-of-engagement-marketing/>

2 Retrieved from: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/17/business/netflix-ceo-hbcus-donate-trnd/index.html>

3 Retrieved from: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hbcu-record-donations-schools-histories-howard-hampton-xavier/>

4 Retrieved from: <https://theundefeated.com/features/oprah-winfrey-donates-2-million-to-hbcu-tennessee-state-and-its-surrounding-community/>

Philanthropists and enrollment leaders know education can be transformative. Often, transformation starts when a student meets a teacher who makes an impact. It happened to Jared Shelton, a sophomore at Xavier University of Louisiana. While attending Warren Easton Charter High School, he met teacher, Rozetta Millner. “She saw something in me that I didn’t know I had,” Jared said. “It gave me confidence and pushed me forward.”

“I’ve lived in New Orleans my whole life,” Jared said. “I love my city and my people. The term ‘southern hospitality’ is more than an idea or a custom; I believe it is the embodiment of being your neighbor’s keeper and helping everyone prosper.”

Jared is motivated, forward-thinking, and focused on learning. Early on, he knew he wanted to go to college at an HBCU.

In 2015, the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) published a blog written by Dr. Michael Lomax, the organization’s CEO, titled, “Six Reasons HBCUs Are More Important Than Ever.”⁵

Dr. Lomax is often asked if the country

5 Retrieved from: <https://uncf.org/the-latest/6-reasons-hbcus-are-more-important-than-ever>

still needs HBCUs. He answers with a resounding “Yes” for these six reasons:

1. HBCUs produce outsized impact at a lower cost, equaling a “best buy” in education. Even today, the majority of African American graduates in all fields, including STEM, graduate from HBCUs.
2. HBCUs meet the needs of low-income first-generation students, supporting them with the resources they need when they come from disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. HBCUs provide the best value in education, which helps students eliminate (or reduce) student debt.
4. The campus climate fosters student success.
5. By expanding opportunity, HBCUs address the nation’s underemployed and unemployment crises.
6. HBCUs offer a true value/values proposition where they bring great value to their students and produce students who possess *great values*.

Meeting dedicated educators, many who had studied at HBCUs, inspired Jared to pursue a degree in teaching. “In school, I saw *others like me helping people like me* get to where they wanted and needed to be. I was in an

environment where role models and teachers showed me how to get where I want to be in life, and they could also relate to where I come from.”

Reflecting on how he wants the world to look in the future, Jared said, “There are kids in this world who are in difficult situations, like foster care. They do not see positivity. They do not see opportunities to better themselves or better their situation. I want to become an educator who creates a safe place for those students in the classroom so they can dream of a better tomorrow. I want to help as many people, as many children as I can, because I was once in the same position. I want them to know *you can change your situation*.”

With graduation approaching, Jared knew he needed to make a choice. “During my senior year [of high school], I still was undecided about where I would go to school. However, I knew my choice had to have that same supportive atmosphere as my high school, where I could get the help I needed, as well as assist other people to get the resources they needed. The way I see it, knowledge is both wealth and power, and I needed to be in a space where I was constantly learning.”

Jared decided that an HBCU would be the right fit for him. He applied to multiple schools and was accepted to all of them. Digging in and doing more in-depth research, he discovered the first-ever degree offered by Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA) was an education degree. As he began to talk to trusted advisors about Xavier, he



Special thanks to Jared Shelton, currently a math education major and a sophomore at Xavier University of Louisiana, for his written and oral contributions to this article.

was surprised to find that many of the influencers in his life had graduated from XULA. He also learned that Xavier was on a mission. “It promoted education for African Americans, as well as betterment by working toward a more just and humane society,” Jared said. “The people I looked up to – *Xavier was a place where I could become them*, and help others in my position. I knew Xavier was where I belonged.”

Jared also sees another differentiator when it comes to HBCUs. “At HBCUs, there is a sense of camaraderie, not just competition. It’s not just everyone looking to advance their position. People are looking to help each other get where they want to go. There is more of a feeling that ‘I am my brother’s keeper,’ and not just a competitor for a position, like an internship. There is good sportsmanship. If I ask for help from a professor or a peer, I don’t have to worry that it will be viewed negatively, as if helping me is going against someone else.”

In these words, Jared echoes the sentiments of Booker T. Washington,

who had a positive impact on millions of lives through his teachings, writings, speeches, and actions. Washington said, “If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.”⁶

Today, there are 101 HBCUs located in 19 states.⁷ The great thing about our nation’s education system is the variety of school choice, and clearly, for many like Jared, an HBCU can be the best choice. Both empirical and anecdotal evidence leads to the conclusion that for many students, HBCUs provide a pathway to educational excellence that fosters a community of support, mentors and role models who are invested in their students’ future, and often— a more fiscally prudent structure for students looking for a best buy value for higher education today.

If you have ideas for student stories, please share them with Linda Bishop, Octane Editor at linda.bishop@enrollmentfuel.com.

6 Retrieved from: <https://tomjoynerefoundation.org/top-15-quotes-to-remember-by-booker-t-washington/>
7 Retrieved from: <https://hbcufirst.com/hbcu-list-map>



LIFE CHOICES

Three Students Share Thoughts on Returning to College This Fall

By Amanda Prahl, MFA

A Note from Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D., President of enrollmentFUEL

Earlier this year, I spoke at a virtual conference for Academic Impressions. As you might guess, my presentation discussed the difficult decisions institutions everywhere were being forced to make. That topic got me thinking about the flip side of the

equation – your students. What was going through their minds as they made choices for the upcoming academic year?

This article focuses on choices made by three students. One returned to campus. Another chose an online option. The third took a gap year while waiting for on-campus classes to resume.

I hope you find value in the shared thoughts in Amanda's article below, and they help you prepare for new questions in the current cycle.

Fall semester 2020 is unlike anything we've seen before. Universities are adjusting to the new demands resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Institutions, instructors, and students are struggling to figure out what's next. Students everywhere have had to make tough decisions, going only off of the best information available at the time.

Kaleigh Feuerstein is a rising senior at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona.¹ When we talked, the upcoming fall semester was a source of uncertainty and concern, especially because Arizona was one of the summer's biggest virus hotspots. Although Kaleigh planned to return to on-campus classes, it would not be without worry.

¹ Feuerstein, Kaleigh. Phone Interview by Amanda Prahl. June 16, 2020.

Universities and students alike need to be flexible and understanding. These are strange times, and not every class (or every student or instructor) is well-suited to online learning.

"I am definitely hesitant," Kaleigh said. "As much as I miss people and human interaction, I am concerned for the safety of so many. Common areas are frequently packed, classes are overfilled, and we spend a lot of time indoors due to the heat outside. I've been reading a lot of the procedures my university has put in place, and while I feel they are strong, I don't know how feasible they will be. I expect many changes as they continue to read the situation, but COVID-19 is spreading like wildfire here, so I can't lie and say I'm NOT worried."

As a student studying marketing and management, Kaleigh is doing her best to craft a schedule to help her stay a little safer. "I will be taking smaller in-person classes and leaving my larger courses (40+ people) online," she said, also noting that she "doesn't learn well online, hence [her] reasoning for choosing on-campus classes."

As a senior with an eye on working in the travel industry, Kaleigh has some post-school concerns too. "Rather than taking an internship, I will likely focus my efforts on networking and getting my foot in the door at companies where I hope to work, post-graduation. I'm concerned about how the market will look. I anticipate many struggles with starting a career as a fresh graduate in an industry so greatly affected by the pandemic – which is really scary!"

A.G. shared thoughts but asked to remain anonymous.² A.G. is a second-year student at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Following a move to online-only learning at the end of spring, the environmental policy major decided to shift to remote classes for the fall.

"It was decided that classes would be either fully remote, fully in-person, or a hybrid of remote and in-person," A.G. explained. UCSD currently operates on a quarter system rather than a semester schedule, and all of A.G.'s class selections wound up being online.

Talking about the shift during the past spring, A.G. said, "I liked the online shift because I could do work on my

own time, but also, it was draining to be sitting at my computer or on Zoom for several hours a day." There was an extra layer of frustration caused by a move back home with a different time zone. The move created a situation where A.G. had to juggle a new schedule, live synchronous classes, and pre-recorded lectures.

For some students, the uncertainty led to a decision that would have been unthinkable for most typical students only a few months ago: taking the semester off altogether. Carey Gleason is a theater major at the University of Massachusetts Boston.³ She would have started her junior year this fall. After the pandemic wreaked havoc on her spring semester, she made the difficult decision to take a "gap" semester and wait until the situation improved before returning.

The realities of being a theater major played a big part in Carey's decision. "The classes I would be taking this upcoming semester would not be easy to do online. Learning in hands-on classes like acting, lighting, stagecraft, and even costume design had already proved difficult for me and others, so I decided I would be better off waiting. I would hate not to retain important information that I need to know in life and my career," Carey explained.

The spring semester had already been messy, Carey noted. She felt arts students suffered more from the online transition than other, less hands-on majors. "Most of the people I know and speak to often would tell me about how their studies did not really change much after the switch, but these people weren't performing arts majors taking hands-on theatre courses."

Although Carey acknowledges taking a semester off will put a wrench in her original plans – "my chances of graduating on time or even remotely close to on schedule are virtually impossible" – she believes this is truly her best option, given everything.



These are the kinds of decisions students faced as they planned for the fall. It often came down to risk assessment: What kind of risks were they more willing to take – delaying or altering their course of study, or potentially running health risks?

Universities and students alike need to be flexible and understanding. These are strange times, and not every class (or every student or instructor) is well-suited to online learning. This year's situation may force a re-evaluation of remote learning, accommodations, and accessibility in "normal" times as well. What can or should be taught remotely, and how best can we serve a student body with diverse needs? Perhaps this year can help academia look at these considerations with fresh eyes – to the benefit of students and faculty alike.

Amanda Prah is a freelance writer and editor, university instructor, and playwright/lyricist. She holds an MFA in Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University, as well as BAs in English Literature and Political Science. Her work can be seen in many national publications. Contact Amanda at amandaprahwrites@gmail.com.



² Anonymous Source. Phone Interview by Amanda Prah. June 15, 2020.

³ Gleason, Carey. Phone Interview by Amanda Prah. June 18, 2020.

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Our clients who experienced record enrollment in 2020 had one thing in common — they used digital marketing to AMPLIFY their Student Search efforts.

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