

OCTANE

VOL. 7, ISSUE 1, 2023

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT
REMARKABLE TOPICS

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INSIDE

The Boomerang Effect—
Circling Back to You on
How to Get that Deposit

How to Use Social Media
to Engage Potential
Students in 2023

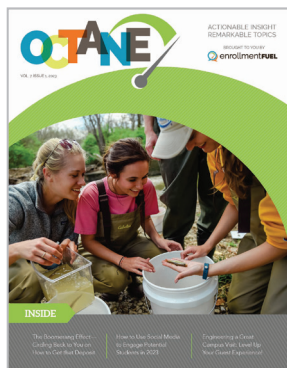
Engineering a Great
Campus Visit: Level Up
Your Guest Experience!

LETTER FROM

OUR PRESIDENT



I believe you must train your admission team to “sell” your institution.



enrollmentFUEL would like to extend our gratitude to Centre College in Danville, Kentucky for allowing this photo to be featured on the cover of our magazine.

Dear Octane Booster:

When I was a Chief Enrollment Officer, January was a momentous month filled with data reviews that would determine if I was on track to reach my goal. Then, as now, I would reflect on the importance of training. Training is an essential part of success, which is why I argue that you should train your admission team to “sell” your institution. I first visited this topic in a 2017 Octane article. In “The Boomerang Effect—Circling Back to You on How to Get that Deposit,” I offer an update.

Social media expert Dr. Dustin York contributed “How to Use Social Media to Engage Potential Students in 2023.” He shares eight strategies to engage students, along with a platform overview. And if you are curious about the social platform Twitch, enrollmentFUEL’s Associate Vice President of Marketing & Learning, Dr. Laralee Harkleroad, provides an overview of how to use it for Student Search.

We also have articles from our enrollmentFUEL team, reflecting on topics of interest uncovered during conversations with campus leaders. Jay Fedje discusses how to increase the effectiveness of your campus visit. Nick Balk shares lessons gleaned from his experience recruiting for pre-professional programs, and Tracy Ford writes on the importance of a career track for the admission team.

One last thought... Please take a minute to feel good about all you have done and will do to generate revenue for your institution and make student dreams a reality. As I have said many times, your work matters to many. If there is anything we can do to help you, please reach out to me at jacqui.elliott@enrollmentfuel.com.

Yours in partnership,

A handwritten signature of Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D. in black ink.

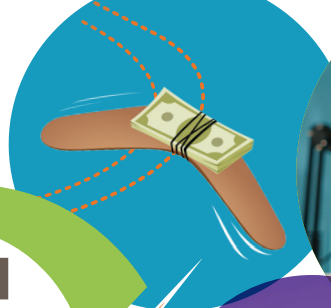
Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.
President

Octane the Magazine: A publication of enrollmentFUEL

A collection of innovative thoughts and ideas from leadership in all areas dedicated to improving your Strategic Enrollment Management and Student Search strategies. Our goal is to fuel creativity and release positive energy among enrollment professionals.

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QUICK TAKES

FAST reads and
INNOVATIVE ideas to
BOOST positive results

The Effort Pays Off, According to Research

Calling or texting recruits often feels like a waste of effort to admission counselors. But new research suggests that reaching out to stay in touch has a positive effect.

"Even sending a brief message reaching out to check in on someone, just to say 'Hi,' that you are thinking of them, and to ask how they're doing, can be appreciated more than people think," said Peggy Liu, Ben L. Fryrear Chair in Marketing and Associate Professor of Business Administration at the University of Pittsburgh Katz Graduate School of Business.¹

Dr. Liu is the lead author of a new study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology that found people underestimate how much others like hearing from them. That's something to keep in mind as you push to get deposits.



1 Pearson, C. (2022, July 11). *Text your friends. it matters more than you think.* The New York Times. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/11/well/family/check-in-text-friendship.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20220712&instance_id=66407&nl=todaysheadlines&i_id=46571321&segment_id=98262&user_id=bd89feb4fb7a35fbb77d8db30dcabc1

Emojis

A Japanese phone company invented emojis. They came up with the name by blending two Japanese words, 絵, pronounced "eh" and meaning "picture," with 文字, pronounced "moji" and meaning "character."¹

Adobe recently surveyed 5,000 participants about current attitudes and usage of emojis.² Of those surveyed:

- 73% believe adding emojis to a message makes you cooler, friendlier, and funnier
- The majority (91%) used emojis to bring levity to conversations
- 68% like it when people use emojis at work, stating that it positively impacts likability (69%) and credibility (59%)

DOWNLOAD
REPORT



U.S. emoji users' top 5 favorite emoji are:



Emojis can humanize communications and increase engagement. Plus, figuring out how to use them is fun, so take the creative challenge and look for new ways to include them in a campaign.

1 Mayer, J. (2020, March 5). *The origin of the word 'emoji.'* ScienceFriday. <https://www.sciencefriday.com/articles/the-origin-of-the-word-emoji/#:~:text=Many%20assume%20the%20word%20emoji,the%20word%20describes%20a%20pictograph.>

2 Adobe Fonts team (n.d.). *The Future of Creativity: 2022 U.S. emoji trend report: How Americans are using emoji.* Adobe Blog. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2022/09/13/emoji-trend-report-2022>

A Third of U.S. College Students Consider Withdrawing, According to a Poll

A Lumina-Gallup poll reported that about a third (32%) of enrolled students pursuing a bachelor's degree considered withdrawing from their program for a semester or more in 2022.¹

REASON FOR CONSIDERING WITHDRAWAL	2022	CHANGE FROM 2020 IN PERCENTAGE POINTS
Emotional stress	76%	+34
COVID-19	33%	-18
Cost of attendance	36%	+3
Coursework was too difficult	34%	+17
Health reasons not related to COVID-19	20%	+6
Childcare/caregiver responsibilities	12%	-12
The degree was taking longer than expected	12%	+5
Education received was low quality	14%	-1
You did not believe the degree/credential would help you achieve your personal goals	12%	+2
The courses were not relevant to your future career	11%	+3
You got a new job	5%	-6
You did not believe the degree/credential would help you achieve your career goals	12%	+5
You lost your job	6%	-6
No longer interested	15%	*
*Not asked in the 2020 survey; the total percentage may not sum to 100 due to rounding.		

The number one reason for considering withdrawal, emotional stress, points to the importance of having a solid support program for students who experience challenges.

¹ Marken, S. (2022, April 19). A third of U.S. college students consider withdrawing. Gallup.com. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/391823/third-college-students-consider-withdrawing.aspx>



Predicting Student Retention in The Admission Stage

In Episode 43, Enrollment Edge host Jay Fedje talks to Dr. John Borum, Head of Engagement at Degree Sight. John has spent much of his career in Student Services and is an expert in building models to predict student retention. He believes schools can do retention modeling during a prospective student's application stage. It's an

intriguing proposition and a strategy worth investigating in this entertaining podcast. This episode will get you thinking about what you are doing now—and what you could do in the future.

LISTEN ONLINE



CHECK OUT ALL EPISODES ONLINE Available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcast app.

Will Changing Times Lead to More Price Resets?

Enrollment leaders from across the country tell us that students and families are becoming more price sensitive. As a result, we expect to see more institutions considering price resets.

Economist and higher education expert, Dr. Lucie Lapovsky, wrote an article for Octane on the topic in 2019: "Price Reset: Considerations, Concerns, and Implementation Tactics" provides an in-depth overview, including six situations when it is reasonable to consider a tuition reduction.



READ NOW

THE BOOMERANG EFFECT

—Circling Back to You on How to Get that Deposit

Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.





Early in the history of enrollmentFUEL and *Octane*, I wrote an article on the art and science of closing the sale in admissions. While some things never change in sales, the higher education landscape has evolved so much that I thought it might be helpful to revisit this topic, given all the new staff hires. I want to pause right here to thank all the folks who have inquired through REV (our teaching and learning series) asking me to train their new people on this exact topic—you inspired me to retackle this content. Like a boomerang, I am coming right back to you after the perfect throw with exact layover, warp, and flex tuning.

Selling is practically as old as time. Whether through bartering, trading, or buying, selling has always involved persuasion on the seller's part and desire on the buyer's part. The history of selling was defined simply as meeting sales quotas from roughly the 1860s to the 1950s.¹ Beginning around 1900, the seven steps of selling became the leading framework for sales across the globe.²

The seven stages include:

1. **Prospecting**
2. **Pre-approach**
3. **Approach**
4. **Presentation**
5. **Overcoming objections**
6. **Closing**
7. **Follow-up**

1 Dudovskiy, J. (2013). *The evolution of selling: A study of historical and contemporary sales methods and attitudes*. Retrieved from <http://research-methodology.net/the-evolution-of-selling-a-study-of-historical-and-contemporary-sales-methods-and-attitudes/>

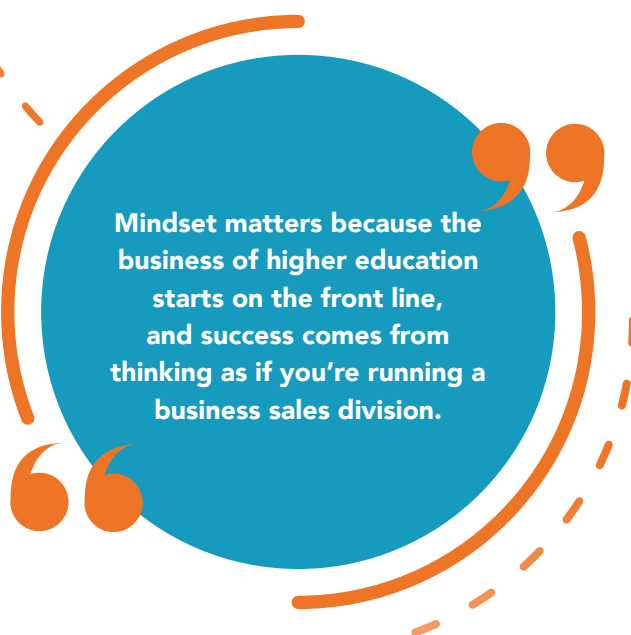
2 Moncrief, W. C. & Marshall, G. W. (2005). The evolution of the seven steps of selling. *Industrial Marketing Management* (34), 13-22.

Old as this framework is, it still reigns supreme in many selling circles.

Over the last five years, I have been on hundreds of campuses. One small nugget I gathered from all my encounters, which I'll keep firmly in mind should I head back to the VP chair for the fourth time, is this: I may not be able to differentiate my institution from others (small class sizes, personalized attention, similar/same majors, new residence halls, athletics, study abroad, internships, 98-100% of students receiving aid, and a high job placement rate), but I CAN differentiate the **process** and experience the student and family have throughout the admission cycle. The way we **sell** can be different.

The sales process works best when you retain leadership and staff, eliminate turnover, and commit to sales training. Mindset matters because the business of higher education starts on the front line, and success comes from thinking as if you're running a business sales division.

While sales in admissions *essentially* follow the historic stages outlined above, some nuances deserve attention, given how the recent landscape has changed.



Mindset matters because the business of higher education starts on the front line, and success comes from thinking as if you're running a business sales division.

The Sales Process

A good starting point for improving the sales process is examining inquiry qualification. I see lots of activity, money, and time invested in improvement initiatives in this area. Still, these efforts aren't often pushed through the funnel in a way that helps the admission staff (your sales team).

Most qualification processes happen at the Student Search stage when we are qualifying **suspects**—not prospects. The VP runs predictive models so they can purchase the “right” names. Inquiries enter the system and are passed to the staff so they can start recruiting. Without training on the sales process, your staff can struggle to identify which leads are the hottest and where to focus their attention.

Many schools have a ranking system that uses a predictive model to identify which students are most likely to enroll. This information is often shared with counselors, but needs to be enhanced by behavioral scoring. Engagement occurs **after** the student is in your system as an inquiry. When you look at qualifying leads, you must assess engagement throughout the process, not just at a singular point in time. As you go deeper into the funnel, another challenge comes from the volume of applications, some of which were generated simply to get numbers up because it is a monitored data point. How are counselors supposed to know which applicants are **genuinely interested** and have self-initiated an application? And how can they tell which applications fit the white noise category because they were generated by students who were nudged to apply because they **might** matriculate?

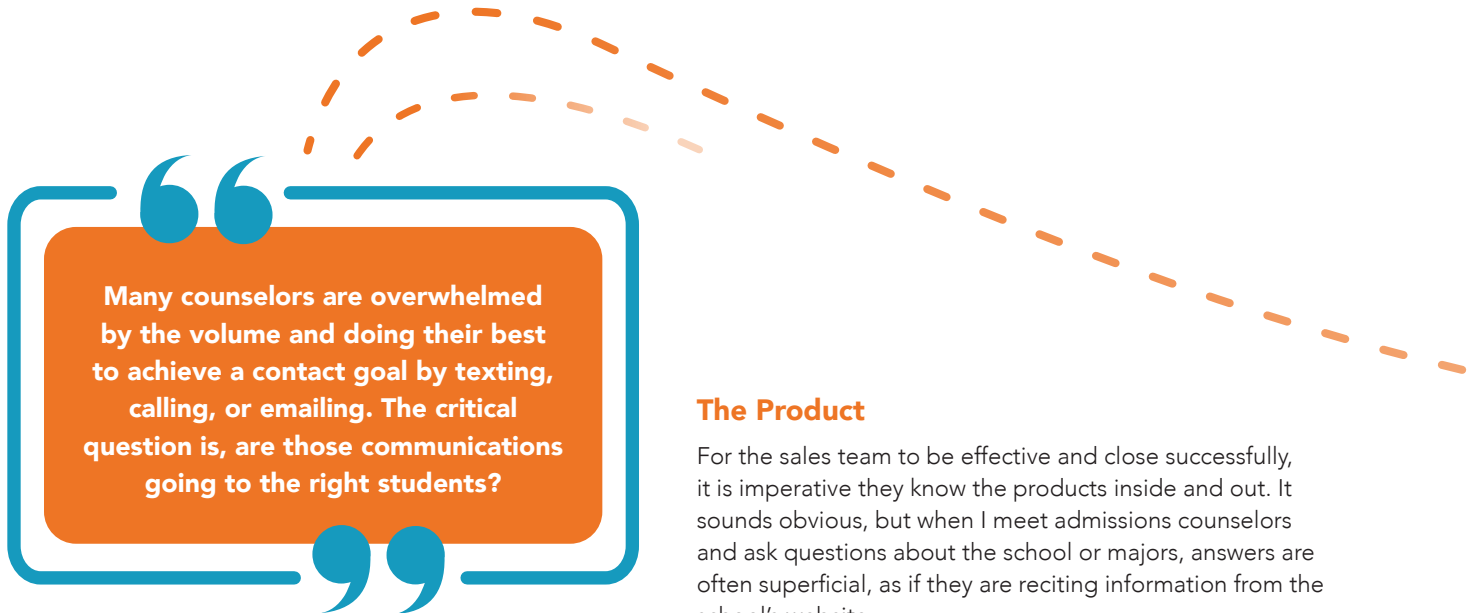
First, invest in a behavioral scoring system or platform that is dynamic and active in the funnel from the point of inquiry through matriculation. FUEL spends a lot of time focusing on this area and training people to use it.

Second, train staff to run reports from the CRM and query to find the best leads in the system. (If you don't have time to train, hire a company like FUEL that offers Slate help desk hours, taking the burden off your internal team.)

There are only so many hours in a day. With higher lead volumes, counselors must be hyper-focused on the students they can actually enroll—unless you have a big enough budget to staff and keep up with the volume in the funnel. Training your team on where to fish in their territory will pay off.

Many counselors are overwhelmed by the volume and doing their best to achieve a contact goal by texting, calling, or emailing. The critical question is, are those communications going to the right students?

If we want our sales team to have a fighting chance at going after the right students, here is what we can do.



Many counselors are overwhelmed by the volume and doing their best to achieve a contact goal by texting, calling, or emailing. The critical question is, are those communications going to the right students?

Goal Setting

You may be surprised to learn that when I ask Vice Presidents of Enrollment Management to share their goals in August or September, many offer a tentative number that is still under discussion or tell me no number has been set. This creates challenges for the sales team. The sales cycle is approximately ten months during students' senior year. If a counselor doesn't know the goal until one-third of the way through the cycle, they are set up to miss the goal from the start. When there is an office goal, but individual counselors don't know their territory goal, that is also a problem. How can a sales team be effective if they're expected to meet a deposit goal in May without having individual goals early on?

So, what can be done? If the institution sets the goal and you are waiting, don't. Set an internal goal with your team with the caveat that it might change slightly. There is value in going through an exercise with your team to review the past year's numbers and using them as a springboard for the current goal.

Involving the team deepens understanding and removes mystery—it lets them know how the sausage is made. Once the overall goal is set, identify and share individual goals to achieve the collective result. And don't stop there. Have a weekly 15-minute kickoff meeting with the team on Monday mornings. Identify how many applications, acceptances, and deposits you need that week to keep pace with last year (or surpass it) and how that breaks out by territory.

Goal clarity helps keep all eyes on the prize. On Fridays, do another 15-minute recap to take a pulse check and promote accountability, both individually and for the office. Consider visual scorecards so everyone sees the progress. These simple steps can help you meet your enrollment goal for the year.

The Product

For the sales team to be effective and close successfully, it is imperative they know the products inside and out. It sounds obvious, but when I meet admissions counselors and ask questions about the school or majors, answers are often superficial, as if they are reciting information from the school's website.

Here is the rub—your student and family have already visited your website and read your viewbook. They are asking the salesperson questions because they want deeper information so they can make an informed decision about whether to buy. When information isn't forthcoming, they usually walk away without confiding they are no longer interested.

So, how do you ensure that your frontline sales force is armed with information and ready to sell? It's all about their desire to lean in combined with access to information and training. If you hire someone who isn't self-directed or intrinsically driven, I guarantee you this person is not the right fit for the job, and you will have to make hard decisions for the good of the office and the institution. Meeting the overall goal is imperative to making the budget. You can't allow one person to stand in the way or to negate the other team members' hard work and effort.

When you have the right person, training helps them reach their potential along with access to curated and recorded information. Create the space to train over time—treat their entire first year as a training period, not just the first week after they're hired.

Secrets for Building Relationships

Your team needs to know how to build relationships to get the deposit. It isn't hard—it's just that many of us aren't skilled at doing it from a sales perspective. The real secret is to ask questions and listen.

Admission counselors don't know the students, so they frame their outreach as a cold call to sell their institution. Instead, consider the call as an opportunity to get to know someone. Most people **love** to talk about themselves, so you have an easy setup.

Focusing on getting to know your students and their families moves your team from transactional to relational selling. Ask questions, listen, show you care about them, stay in contact, and gather information about the following topics:

- What does my student/family fear about this process, and what do they desire? When you gather the information here, you can quell that fear by addressing it and confirming you have what they seek regarding their desires.
- What is driving them? After all, how can you tailor the sale to their specific needs through the sales cycle without knowing this?
- What is their goal for the purchase? Knowing the answer to this question confirms their choice with information, thus helping overcome future objections. Doing this up-front work strips away objections so they are confident when it is time to deposit.
- What is something unique or special about the student as a person? This knowledge allows you to build deeper trust and use the information in an authentic way that says, "I heard you and appreciate who you are as an individual. You are not just a sale to me."

Asking these meaningful question does no good if you don't have good listening skills. Repeating what a student says is a straightforward way to show you are listening. You can use their words as a springboard to help them envision their own campus experience, or use a story or analogy to share information. It is an effective technique to re-engage the student and help them hear what they said differently.

Caring and *demonstrating* care are fun to me. But when I work with counselors on this, many struggle with the concept. Let me share an example. The other day, I was on the phone with a friend dreaming about retirement. In the conversation, she mentioned she didn't know how to structure her time. When I got off the phone, I ordered a book on this topic and had it sent it to **my** home so I could send it to her with a personal note, showing that I had been listening and cared.


Demonstrating care requires action. When you glean information from a conversation, listen for opportunities to display caring. Then do something with the information in a way that takes special effort.

Listening and acting go a long way to building trust and ultimately lead to an easier close when you ask for the deposit. You have to invest time and effort to build relationships. Investing is hard for some people because they don't want to take the time to go the extra mile.

If you take nothing else from this article, take this as gospel: Relationships are built over time and with effort. It's true in our personal lives, and it's true in sales.

Staying in contact with prospects can also be difficult for the sales team in admission. Communication often feels like a waste of time and energy. Targeting the right students (as mentioned earlier in this article) means efforts are more effective because the team can focus on the student most likely to read, absorb, and act on the information.

And it helps when leaders provide perspective. No one, including your admission staff, responds to every text and call. Texting or calling to remind students about a deadline or to invite folks to a campus visit is similar to a text or call from your doctor's office with an appointment reminder. Once information is relayed, busy people don't respond unless they have a question or need to cancel or change. Tuck this away and keep going. Recognize that students are subconsciously thankful for the information, even when they don't acknowledge it.



Demonstrating care requires action. When you glean information from a conversation, listen for opportunities to display caring. Then do something with the information in a way that takes special effort.

Overcoming Objections for the Win

The final concept to review is overcoming objections. Often, this skill won't be needed when the admission counselor and student build a strong relationship. The student's questions have been answered. They understand how your institution fits their dreams and aspirations and why you are different. With a strong relationship, asking for a deposit is often enough to close the sale.

Sometimes, asking for the deposit triggers new questions, prompting the student and their family to share concerns that have not previously been discussed. There are generally four reasons a family will object:

1. **Lack of need/want**
2. **Lack of trust**
3. **Lack of urgency**
4. **Lack of money**

If the relationship is strong, objections one and two shouldn't exist—the staff did their homework, built trust, demonstrated caring, and sold the product effectively. Urgency doesn't

usually enter until the deposit deadline looms. Lack of money is the most challenging because we sell a big-ticket item, so let's spend a little time on this one.

Many price objections at closing time can be eliminated by addressing all investment issues early in the sales development process. The choice of words here, as in "investment," was intentional. Think of education that way, and sell it that way.

Early on, talk to the student and family about the price. Learning about the prospect's budget expectations and limitations is a foundational building block for developing trust and providing an appropriate solution.

Even if you've done this work, price often comes up again. Still, it is not an insurmountable roadblock to closing the sale. Knowing what to say and how to phrase it is helpful when you confront price concerns at the point of close.

Remember, an objection is a good sign. It means you are still in the running to make the sale, and the family is talking it out with you. Families who are not interested don't engage or object; they walk away. If a family is having this conversation with you, they are likely doing it with at least one other school because they want to get the best price and lock it in. You have all the cards you need to win if you engage in the conversation and problem-solve.

At this critical point, you only have to be better than one school, not nine. To be better, engage in the conversation by asking questions, listening, and continuing to build trust. Instead of framing price concerns as an objection, consider them an invitation from the family to finalize the sale. It's that simple.

In closing, admission counselors throw out their best pitch using the techniques we discussed and their efforts return like a boomerang, getting results. The best way to get that deposit is to recognize you are selling and be prepared.

If you are an office leader and have not thought of doing this type of training, now is the best time to do it. If you are an admission counselor and need training on this, ask your leadership to help you. Remember, we are all on the same team with the same goal: meeting the net tuition revenue required to educate our students.

Dr. Jacquelyn D. Elliott is the President of enrollmentFUEL. Her admission, retention, and financial aid strategies have led multiple institutions to reach record enrollments. She continues to consult with multiple institutions, but her passion is training young professionals to consider Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) as a career, not a job. She can be reached at jacqui.elliott@enrollmentfuel.com.

Here is one basic response framework for responding to price concerns from my training:

YOU SAY:	PURPOSE:
Mr. Johnson, I hear what you are saying.	Let the person know you are listening and welcome the discussion.
It sounds like you are close to making a final decision.	Make an assumption. Watch for non-verbal agreement or push-back on the assumption.
My guess is that the other schools you are considering have similar cost structures and aid packages, but the fact you are trying to negotiate the price with me means you are leaning toward us, and feel we could be home to Janetta for four years.	More assumptions where you offer a chance to either agree or bring forth other information.
You see the value of what we offer and want to feel good that you got the best price for Janetta's education.	This statement also confirms you want to partner with the family to find a solution.
I understand—I often feel that way when I negotiate for a salary going into a new job. It really isn't all that different. So, using that analogy, tell me what salary you are seeking and why.	Letting the family know you see their concerns as legitimate expands trust and leads to questions about specifics. What do they want? Why do they want it?



HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

to Engage Potential Students in 2023

By Dustin York, Ed.D.

Picture this: your university or college is seeing fewer students enroll, and they need you to come up with a solution to turn the tide. What do you suggest?

Did a new or evolved social strategy cross your mind? If not, it's time to add it to the list.

With more than 4.26 billion people using social media daily¹ and most users bouncing between seven social networks on average², the opportunities to reach potential students are vast. This is especially true since the pandemic has changed the consumer mindset, pushing more and more people to research and shop online.

As an advertising channel, social media surpassed paid search in scale, growing by 25% in 2021.³ Consumers are six times more likely to purchase an item from a product page linked to pictures on social media.⁴ While your institution may not sell a physical product, it does offer consumers (i.e., students) an important commodity: an education.

So, how do you put this knowledge about the state of social into action? Start by getting your school on the platforms where your students are!

1 Dixon, S. (2022, September 16). *Number of worldwide social network users 2022*. Statista. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>

2 Gwi. (n.d.). *The biggest social media trends for 2022*. GWI. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.gwi.com/reports/social>

3 Barnard, J. (2021, July 23). *Ecommerce and online video to fuel 11% recovery in global adspend this year*. Zenith. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.zenithmedia.com/ecommerce-and-online-video-to-fuel-11-recovery-in-global-adspend-this-year/>

4 Petrovic, D. (2022, September 23). *Guide: Creating authentic shoppable content experiences*. Stackla. Nosto. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.nosto.com/blog/guide-future-of-ecommerce-creating-authentic-shoppable-content-experiences/>

YouTube

YouTube is the most-used platform across all generations, including 95% of teenagers in the United States.⁵ One in five teens say they watch YouTube constantly,⁶ while 81% of adults enjoy the site.⁷ Online video content is becoming the future of social media marketing, so maintaining a consistent presence on the platform is a necessity for successful engagement.

An additional area to keep an eye on is YouTube Shorts. There is a good chance this relatively young video-sharing platform will take off in the next few years with the next generation of content creators.

TikTok

If you intend to reach a traditional student audience, do not overlook the power of TikTok. It is Generation Z's platform of choice, even over the cross-generational popularity of Instagram. In fact, 39% of Gen Z consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced directly by what they see on this platform.⁸

TikTok does require platform-specific branded content to connect with its users. Repurposed content from other social media sites will not bode well for your engagement numbers! Don't be intimidated, though—influencers on TikTok with less than 5,000 followers see higher engagement rates than influencers with up to one million followers.⁹ All the time and strategic thinking you put into creating and sharing unique content? It will be well worth it in the end.

5 Atske, S. (2022, August 10). *Teens, social media and technology 2022*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>.

6 *ibid.*

7 Dixon, S. (2022, October 17). *U.S. adults who use selected social media 2021*. Statista. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/246230/share-of-us-internet-users-who-use-selected-social-networks/>

8 Lashbrook, J. (2021, June 17). *Gen Z touts high purchase influence of TikTok videos*. Marketing Charts. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.marketingcharts.com/brand-related/brand-loyalty-117438>

9 Statista Research Department. (2022, July 22). *Engagement rate among TikTok influencers worldwide 2021*. Statista. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1251099/engagement-rate-tiktok-influencers-worldwide/>



Instagram

If you're still hoping to snag followers and attention, your efforts would be put to better use if you make the switch from Facebook to Instagram. Organic reach and engagement are practically nonexistent on Facebook, but Instagram continues to pull high engagement rates, primarily through stories (83%) and grid posts (93%).¹⁰ Overall, the platform sees 81% engagement compared to Facebook's 8%.¹¹ Instagram is also consistently growing in usage among U.S. teens,¹² young adults, and adults ages 35 – 44¹³—all potential student audiences for your institution.

Snapchat

While Snapchat may not be the best platform to connect with an older, non-traditional student audience, more than 75% of those ages 13–34 use the platform.¹⁴ A recent study found that Gen Z users spend less time watching organic and advertised content but maintain a higher recall rate.¹⁵ This data means it may be time to develop different creative strategies to get your content's message across as quickly as possible.

10 Williamson, D. A. (2021, July 21). *Marketing with stories 2021*. Insider Intelligence. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/marketing-with-stories-2021>

11 *State of streaming social guide for streaming 2021*. Conviva. (2021, December 7). Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.conviva.com/state-of-streaming/convivas-state-of-streaming-social-guide-for-streaming-2021/>

12 Atske, S. (2022, August 10).

13 Editors, I. I. (2021, May 11). *More Gen Zers now use TikTok than Instagram in the US*. Insider Intelligence. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/more-us-gen-zers-now-use-tiktok-than-instagram>

14 *Investor relations*. Snap Inc. - Investor Relations. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://investor.snap.com/overview/default.aspx>

15 *Time is money: Kantar analyzes gen Z and skippable video*. Snapchat for Business. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://forbusiness.snapchat.com/blog/time-is-money-kantar-analyzes-gen-z-and-skippable-video>

As a branding consultant to universities across the nation, I recommend a series of several research-backed steps to get the most out of your social media presence and overall engagement. Here are eight ideas that you can implement today to nurture the relationships that lead to applications:

Eight Ways to Engage

1. **Follow trends—and use them!** Remember the Little Miss memes floating around Instagram? Or how about the “If I Was A...” trend to the catchy tune of “Run Boy Run” by Woodkid? TikTok and Instagram trends are an opportunity for your institution to show off its personality. If you can get students or staff to participate, you may have a viral video on your hands. Just beware of copyright issues with trending audio tracks.
2. **Take advantage of direct messaging (DM).** Social media is no longer just a tool for brands to get content to the masses—it’s also a way for consumers to connect with businesses, so it’s a guarantee that your target audience will expect a response when they reach out via your DMs. Offer this customer service, and you’ll build relationships that encourage applications.
3. **Keep investing in long-form video content.** Think of it this way: you don’t immediately marry the person you’re interested in. You take them on a first date, agree to a relationship, and then somewhere down the road, you decide you’re in it for the long haul. Long-form video content is the dating stage of your relationship with potential students. Use it to encourage them to keep exploring your school and follow the funnel to enrollment (a.k.a. the long haul).
4. **Lean into student creators and user-generated content (UGC).** Did a student tag your school in a post? Reshare it! Peer-created content is excellent for connecting with students, because they’ll see themselves in the shared media. It gives them an inside look at your university or college and an idea of what they may experience.
5. **Two words: audio social.** Keep an eye on upward-trending audio spaces like Twitter Spaces, Clubhouse, TikTok LIVE, and Instagram Live. Make that podcast and use audio to your advantage. This content format is the only kind students can engage with while doing something else. The Air Pods and Beats headphones you see so many students wearing? They are your connection gateway, so make content your audience can listen to while traveling, studying, or walking to class.
6. **Pursue live streaming.** Most social algorithms push live-streamed content to the forefront. Use this to your advantage to reach a broader audience! Learn how to use products like Streamlabs or the free Open Broadcaster Software (OBS) and combine them with graphics to create engaging and unique virtual events.
7. **Change the way you communicate on social media.** It’s important that your university has and maintains a social identity that connects with the school’s overall brand. When building this identity, three key words to keep in mind are relevancy, differentiation, and sustainability. Are you talking about relevant majors and skills employers are seeking? Are you showcasing the qualities that truly make your institution stand out? This kind of branding isn’t about focusing on things like the standard “small class sizes” but more about offerings like live chat features that make the university more accessible, modern, and interactive. Is what you’re doing on social enough to keep you top of mind for the next three to five years?
8. **Lastly, have a crisis plan in place.** Do you know what you’ll post when there’s a threat on your campus? What’s your response when the university website inevitably crashes? People often think about creating crisis management but fail to follow through. Having a plan in place is an absolute necessity—your response will make or break your social media presence and how your audience views the school. Take the time to formulate a game plan with steps to address specific situations your institution may face and templates you can quickly implement when the need arises. It’s not a matter of if—it’s a matter of when.

Dustin York, Ed.D. is an Associate Professor at Maryville University in St. Louis. Before entering academia, Dr. York worked in public relations for the 2008 Obama Presidential campaign and served clients including Pepsi Co. and Nike.



Dr. York’s specialties are two-sided: interpersonal leadership communication and digital transformation in marketing, which he now brings to life in the classroom. Beyond his primary passion for teaching, Dr. York is a subject matter expert for CNN, Entrepreneur.com, and Forbes, a contributor for Harvard Business Review, and serves as a national keynote speaker and consultant. Dr. York was one of the St. Louis Business Journal “30 Under 30” and received the President’s Award for Strategic Leadership and Transformation Innovation. He was recognized by the American Marketing Association as one of their “4 Under 40” and is an Apple Distinguished Educator. Contact Dr. York at dyork1@maryville.edu.

ENGINEERING A GREAT CAMPUS VISIT:



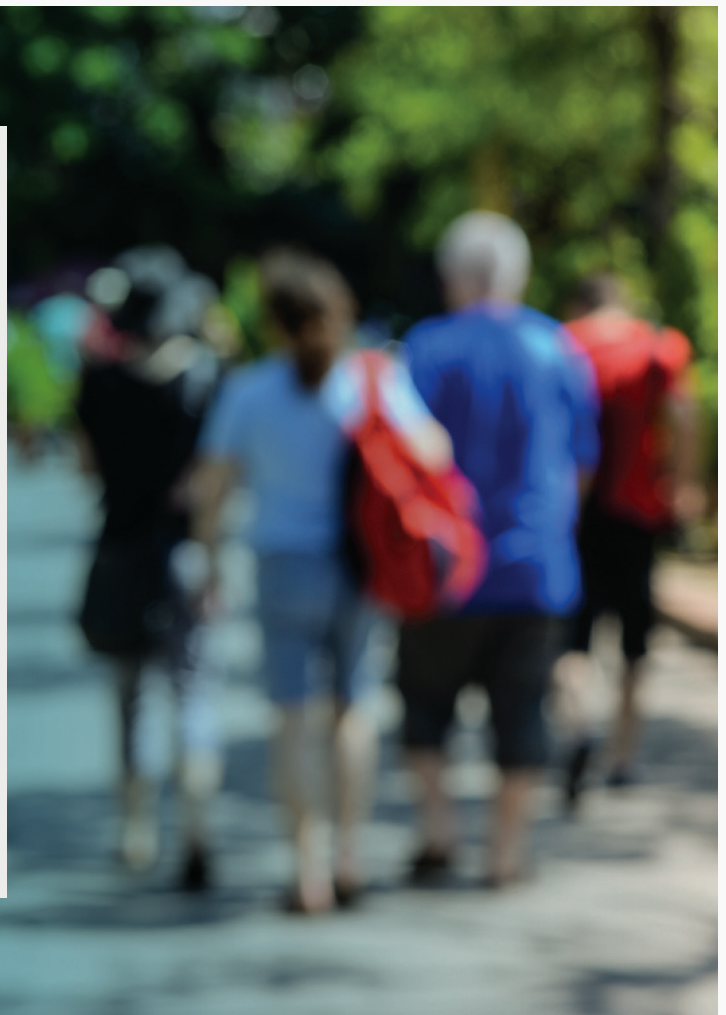
By Jay Fedje, M.A.

“

MAGIC IS MADE BY
OPTIMIZING THE MUNDANE.

— WALT DISNEY

”



Walt Disney believed the most critical function in perfecting visitors' experience was creating a system that delivered consistent quality. The Disney approach melds constant repetition and perfect practice of small tasks to make a guest's overall experience magical.

Engineering a great campus guest experience doesn't require theme park props and displays or budget-breaking technology. Nor does it require the "Disney" brand name. However, engineering and maintaining an excellent campus guest experience does take consistency, thoughtful planning, campuswide engagement, and continuous monitoring and adjusting. As an enrollment leader, I believe the budget and time investment into the campus experience provides the most significant ROI of any tactic at our disposal.

Learning From Experience

In 2017, during my tenure as the VP of Enrollment at a college, my youngest son was deciding what school he wanted to attend. A Midwestern school interested him. He decided to check it out, and I traveled with him to tour the campus. In terms of visual impact, the institution was not much to look at: the facilities were quite plain, and there were no great water features, impressive statues, climbing walls, or bell towers—none of the things that would take center stage on a brochure.

However, they did one thing my son still remembers these many years later: they displayed his name on the parking sign and every video monitor on campus. Everywhere he turned, something or someone welcomed him and acknowledged his presence on campus. This little school preached about its strongly bonded community, and the evidence was demonstrated everywhere!

When my older son visited campuses, we had another memorable experience—but it was not a positive one. We were on an urban campus in the heart of a large city, standing in the main lounge of a residence hall. As the tour group of students and parents gathered to hear the residence hall spiel from the tour guide, my son noticed two giant posters on the wall right behind where the tour guide stood. One was titled "What to Know about Local Gangs." The other read, "Avoiding and Surviving an Assault." While this was important information for those living in the building, it may not have been the best idea to showcase the posters to prospective students and their parents. As we walked away, all around me there was chatter from parents who now felt fear and anxiety at the thought of dropping their child off at this "very unsafe school." Their perception may or may not have been accurate, but at that moment, it was reality for those parents.

After each learning moment, I returned to the campus where I was the enrollment leader and reassessed our campus tour. I looked at every aspect of the guest experience and led my team through changes to reset the status quo. Eventually, I saw this process like gamers see video games—attack a level, conquer it, and level up!

LEVEL 1: Campus Experience Essentials

Without vigilance, it is easy to let foundational elements of a campus experience slide into mediocrity. I embraced the Disney mantra—mastering the mundane was essential. I focused on these areas:

- **The campus visit journey:** Where on campus are we taking our guests? What are we standing by or next to, and does it support or contradict our tour guide and brand message?
- **The true "start" of the guest experience:** The guest experience begins on the school's website or on the phone with a visit coordinator. If that process is clumsy or awkward, it could cast a shadow over the rest of the guest experience. In contrast, if the guest's interaction with our website or staff member setting up the visit was friendly, intuitive, thoughtful, and personal, by the time the visit rolled around, we had already won favor with some of the most influential people in this college search process—the parents!
- **The experience cast:** Continuing with the Disney metaphor, there are clear "cast members." They are the admissions staff, financial aid staff, tour guides, faculty, and coaches. I also recognized several other highly impactful individuals who could make or break an experience. These individuals included the head of groundskeeping, our food service manager, and the campus receptionist. Each of these people had an opportunity to make an impression of kindness and care when they encountered a potential student and their family.
- **The ideal experience:** Many enrollment leaders too often view this tactic in a size mindset—in other words, many enrollment people believe a *bigger* experience is a *better* experience. I don't believe that. It is your job to find the perfect mix of guest experience elements highlighting your unique college in the best possible way. A bigger or longer campus visit may not be the "ideal" experience for your campus—find out what makes your campus genuinely shine.

LEVEL 2: A Solid Framework

When crafting a planned campus guest experience, after a prospective student visits your campus, they should have answers to four key questions:

1. How is your college different and special?
2. Why is a degree from your college worth the investment?
3. How will they fit into your college community?
4. How will you help ensure they will be successful at your college?

If the answers to these four questions are unclear after a visit to your campus, you've missed the best opportunity to recruit a student. Parents and students must know why they are choosing your school over the dozens of other options in front of them.

Be honest with yourself. Your campus has impressive attributes you want everyone to experience—the dazzling quad, the majestic auditorium, the marble statue of a really important person, and the beautifully expensive water feature. But there are also places on your campus that won't "sell" your institution—the oldest dorm, a crowded tech lab, classrooms with dusty chalkboards, or the beat-up pool tables in the student center. A well-designed campus tour is a curated experience where you put your best foot forward when welcoming prospective families. Be honest, but don't feel obligated to overshare.

Just as you invest in your physical campus, invest in your tour guides. Like admission counselors, they are on the front lines, working to make impressions. Training provides direction on how to present your institution in the best light. It also enhances confidence when your ambassadors are on their own, sharing information with students and families.

Similarly, set aside a portion of your campus experience budget yearly to show appreciation for those giving their time, expertise, and passion to your campus experience. Faculty, coaches, janitorial staff, food service workers, and administrators are helping you recruit students to your college. Show genuine appreciation for their efforts.

A coffee gift card, a handwritten note, a lunch, or an admissions water bottle will go a long way in keeping people motivated and committed to the service of recruiting students.

Finally, understand the journey to the admissions office. Consider these elements:

- Start with the "travel experience" to your campus. If Google or Apple Maps is sending them to the unappealing "back door" of the campus, you need to fix the issue. Provide extra insights into those directions, so guests will arrive where you want them.
- Design easy ways for visitors to navigate campus. How far is their parking spot from the admissions office? Are there signs along the way to direct them? Are those signs understandable to a person who has never been on your campus? In other words, is everything on the campus map insider language—abbreviations, historical donor names, or cryptic college code? Directions on your campus must be helpful for people who don't know your college.
- Who is waiting for those travelers when they finally land in your admissions office? The first person these prospective families engage with should be your most friendly, energetic, and "on-brand" campus representative.
- What is your Welcome Center or Admissions waiting area vibe? People always appreciate tasty treats, hot coffee, apple cider, comfy tea, or something the college is known for—special cookies, muffins, freshly baked bread, and so on. Sights, sounds, and smells can be positive game changers. Pay attention to the feel of your waiting area and its regular foot traffic. Visiting a college is stressful enough—adding heavy traffic and befuddling directions amplifies anxiety levels. It takes intentionality to counter those effects and bring people into the right frame of mind to experience your college at its very best.



LEVEL 3: Purpose and Preparation

Finally, be sensitive *and* prepared to accommodate the needs of your visitors. Ask your guests if they have any special needs while setting up their visit. Consequently, it would help if you had a resourced plan to accommodate those needs. Providing accommodations isn't inexpensive, but it might be the most important thing you do to engineer a great guest experience. These planned accommodations include but are not limited to the following:

- Alternate tour routes for inclement weather
- Alternate tour routes depending on the physical abilities of your guests. An adaptive and accessible tour should have elevators, rest stops, available wheelchairs, golf carts, and other accommodations
- Interpreters for other languages, ASL signers, and guides trained to tour visually impaired guests

Having experienced countless college campuses, I firmly believe engineering an amazing guest experience is a

formula—equal parts planning, preparation, empathy, appreciation, commitment, and love. **Yes, I said love.**

If you love your college, your colleagues, and the guests who will experience your campus, you will want everyone to have a wonderful and impactful experience when they are in your care, even when it comes to small things. Care and attention starting with the basics will help you level up and win the game.

Jay Fedje, M.A., is the Vice President of University Partnerships (Midwest, Rockies, & West) and host of the Enrollment Edge podcast. Before joining enrollmentFUEL, he worked in higher education for three decades. Jay is a seasoned leader with expertise in enrollment management, strategic planning, funnel development, university branding, targeted student search, CRM implementation, predictive modeling, financial aid leveraging, communication plan development, retention modeling, and market expansion. He has helped multiple institutions design campus tour experiences, and welcomes conversations on all topics. Contact Jay at jay.fedje@enrollmentfuel.com.



Tour pictures of UCLA and UNC-Chapel Hill from Shutterstock

What Higher Ed Should Know About

twitch

By Laralee F. Harkleroad, Ed.D.



You've gone through the usual social media checklist for your college or university: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn. You try to keep up with new features: Reels, Spaces, Lives. But if you really want to elevate your social media game, it's time to think outside the box—and one such solution might be exploring how to use Twitch to reach and recruit future students.

What is Twitch, and Why Does it Matter?

Let's start with the basics: what is Twitch, exactly?

Launched in 2011, Twitch is a platform for live streaming videos. Although it can host a wide variety of streams, including music, other creative content, and personal live streaming, it is best known as a platform for video game streaming. The most popular use of Twitch is for gamers, either as individuals or as part of esports leagues, who broadcast their gameplay live, often with commentary, and can respond to live comments from viewers. Currently, Amazon owns the company.

Although other streaming platforms target a similar demographic, Twitch (so far) seems uniquely powerful in its niche. It holds nearly three-fourths of the entire market share, far outpacing competitors like YouTube Gaming and Facebook Gaming. In 2020, the platform saw its concurrent viewership grow from 1.5 million to 2.6 million over just nine months.¹ It has also expanded beyond its reputation as a gaming-centric platform, with live streams of board games, sports, music performances, art, funny animal videos, and much more.

- Twitch's own internal statistics offer a few more insights into the platform's reach:²
- Nearly 75% of Twitch users are between 16 and 34
- Viewers watched 1.3 trillion minutes of streaming in 2021
- Twitch averages 31 million daily visitors
- Eight million unique streamers go live every month

The fundamental appeal of a Twitch stream is a personal, interactive feeling, which also is a big part of its marketing potential. Audiences are attuned to "obvious" marketing ploys and they also spend considerable time on social media, where advertising has become increasingly integrated into actual content. Twitch may be a little more niche than traditional social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, but because it's a video-only platform, it's a terrific way to highlight interactive, live video content and create a more "in-the-moment" feeling that appeals to young audiences.

How to Use Twitch

Twitch is all about creating memorable live video experiences, so the most straightforward application of the platform for higher education would be live streaming to give prospective students a sense of campus life. Because the platform allows viewers to leave comments and questions, it could work for a live Q&A session or an interactive virtual panel.

The live streaming function also works for giving a campus tour or showcasing admissions events, all with the ability to monitor comments and answer questions in real time. Twitch has a younger, more informal feel than other platforms, so admissions teams should work to keep that tone. For that reason, one solution might be to have students, not just administrators or admissions team members, contribute significantly to the institution's channel.

While those can be a starting point, a multi-faceted Twitch strategy can also lean into what the platform is known for: gaming. For instance, college channels could invite admissions counselors, professors, administrators, and other school-affiliated professionals to a live stream with a college-affiliated gamer. The gamer could host a Q&A, a panel, or even a more casual hangout. Remember: you're looking to reach a young, savvy audience that knows all the advertising tricks—and dislikes them. Organic content that feels more like an "about my life" video is going to get much more traction, as is content that seems like it deliberately winks at popular tropes and memes.

Depending on what's available, your institution may already have a likely ally: an esports team or club. Esports teams are growing at many colleges and universities. Consider reaching out to collaborate on content that markets the college. As a bonus, gaining a reputation for supporting esports will raise a college's reputation in the minds of gamers and fans watching Twitch streams.

Finally, it's worth keeping an eye on Twitch users themselves. The Twitch Students program allows students to participate while gaming and link back to the university.³ Students who participate in the program and stream can earn revenue via subscriptions and promote college-affiliated events. It gives viewers—a.k.a. prospective students—a chance to see what life (and gaming) are like on your campus, and to hear directly from current students, who they're more likely to perceive as honest, trustworthy sources.

While it can feel exhausting to tackle one more social media platform, Twitch is a creative way to reach prospective students where they already are. Leveraging Twitch's unique ability to create interactive live experiences means you can also reach demographic groups that tend to be wary of direct marketing with an organic experience that shows them what your college can offer.

Dr. Laralee F. Harkleroad serves as enrollmentFUEL's Associate Vice President of Marketing & Learning, overseeing REV: FUEL's Learning Series and FUEL's marketing strategy and execution. Her career spans enrollment management, strategic planning, marketing, advancement, and programmatic design. Dr. Harkleroad enjoys working with tomorrow's leaders in the classroom, and has served at various universities as an adjunct professor and guest lecturer. She holds a Doctor of Education degree in leadership and learning in organizations from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College. Contact Laralee at laralee.harkleroad@enrollmentfuel.com.

¹ Kelly, W., & Bradford-Jennings, R. (2022, November 2). *Using twitch to reach ad-averse audiences*. Ologie. Retrieved November 13, 2022, from <https://ologie.com/full-circle/2022/01/twitch-higher-ed-marketing/>

² Twitch Advertising, <https://twitichadvertising.tv/audience/>.

³ Twitch Students, <https://www.twitch.tv/p/en/students/>.



BUILDING A CAREER TRACK

FOR ENROLLMENT PROFESSIONALS

By Tracey Dysart Ford, MBA

Like most people, I did not go to college thinking I would be an admissions counselor. The profession attracted me because I wanted to help people, but when I took my first job, I didn't know it would launch a lifetime career!

Today's new admissions professionals are likely no different. Many may have never considered admissions as a career, simply seeing it as a great place to land after graduation. In light of the Great Resignation, I find myself wondering: Are we missing an opportunity? As a teaching-learning organization, FUEL believes we should be recruiting admission counselors with more focus on their future careers and how their talents and gifts may help the institution in new and unexpected ways in the years ahead.

Finding Your Leaders

The Great Resignation has been a real problem for institutions. Many enrollment vice presidents struggle to

find staff, and once a new employee does come on board, it takes several months of training.

Think about the wide range of topics and skills required to succeed. Admissions counselors need to know about academic programs, student life, financial aid, academic support, and athletics. They must be excellent public speakers, relationship builders, and even data analysts capable of assessing prior results when planning travel schedules and plotting a course to reach goals. Counselors need tenacity, perseverance, and resilience. When you find a good employee, showing them there is a path forward encourages them to stick around.

Nurturing those right in your own office also helps you develop "home-grown" talent with deep loyalty to the institution. Consider questions like: Who are the potential leaders in your office? Who has a can-do attitude and thrives when given more responsibility? These folks are valuable; you don't want to let years pass before noticing

them. If you help them see enrollment management as a long-term career from the first day of work, they will benefit, and so will you.

Recruiting Enrollment Talent

So how can you get started? We all know that NACAC does not allow you to pay by results in terms of enrollment. So, why not offer a career track of possibilities in the first year? Show how starting as an admissions counselor can lead to growth and more responsibility. With each title change, demonstrate what someone would take on and how that would lead to a fulfilling and thriving career.

Talking to admission counselors about their personal strengths and goals helps you groom them for the next step. Discuss compensation because more responsibility warrants higher salary levels. Potential areas for additional responsibilities can include:

- Coordinating student ambassadors
- Acting as the campus visit liaison
- Coordinating telecounseling
- Leading the digital marketing team
- Coordinating communication flow

All professional associations need great leaders and volunteers to achieve their goals. Getting admission counselors involved within your state or region will also bring benefits. Encourage admission counselors to volunteer and build their professional network.

There is a replacement cost every time you lose a counselor. The loss can also impact your ability to meet your enrollment goals. If your cabinet is not fully aware of the current hiring challenges, educating them can benefit you. If you take a long view, expanded career opportunities promoting retention will also support succession planning for your institution. When you build a pipeline filled with promotable candidates, you may fill critical roles faster and more easily.

The typical career track for admission counselors often includes these positions:

- Admission Representative (Road Runner)
- Admission Counselor
- Senior Admissions Counselor
- Assistant Director
- Senior Assistant Director
- Associate Director
- Senior Associate Director
- Director
- Assistant Vice President
- Associate Vice President

As the leader, you benefit as your team members' roles expand. Your trust in your team members to do the job well and with great enthusiasm will deepen. Developing your staff will ultimately take some of the work off your plate and allow you to see your team shine as they progress!

Gen Z: What They Want in a Career

As they begin their careers, Gen Z employees are confident and capable of handling rapid changes in the world. They're resilient, adaptable, creative, and passionate about building a better future. Often in search of a true sense of purpose in their work, they're attuned to issues of fairness; DEI, pay transparency, and overall respect are very important to them.

Gen Z-ers are also looking towards the future from the very beginning. They're interested in career development, training, and advancement opportunities—and they're willing to leave positions that don't offer these things for ones that do. Autonomy and respect are important to them, and they're looking for roles where they can feel a sense of reciprocal investment between them and their employers.

Gen Z-ers may be drawn to a career in enrollment management because of its sense of purpose. Only a few years removed from college themselves, they're attracted to the idea of having a real impact on students today. Offer them a clear path forward from the beginning so that they know they can build expertise, understand the potential career track, and advance in their careers. Commit to them, and you'll be amazed at the loyalty and dedication you'll get in return!

When you invest in your team and promote career tracks, think about the impact you can make. About ten years ago, I was at a conference and had the chance to thank the dean who gave me my first promotion—and I got the chance to apologize for thinking his job was easy! I knew better once I spent some time in the role.

It was empowering to talk to a mentor who believed in me and saw my potential, as well as others who had worked with me and for me, many of who are vice presidents and deans today. And what an amazing feeling it is when you know you helped spark the same passion in them for enrollment management that your mentors sparked in you!

Tracey Dysart Ford, MBA, serves as enrollmentFUEL's Vice President of University Partnerships (South). With three decades of experience, she has served in multiple leadership roles in enrollment, admissions, financial aid, and marketing. During her career, Tracey has worked with schools as small as 550 students to those with 10,000+ students, leading initiatives to increase enrollment for undergraduate and graduate programs, online and on campus. She has also presented at NEACAC and SACAC and served as the Co-Chair for Memphis Area NACAC College Fairs. If you would like to discuss recruiting or retention challenges, contact Tracey at tracey.ford@enrollmentfuel.com.



WAYS TO WIN:

SEGMENTATION, PERSONALIZATION, AND TRIGGERED COMMUNICATIONS

By Nicholas Balk, M.S.

When I served as Director of Admissions for pre-professional programs at Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (ACPHS), we had a top-of-the-funnel advantage that few schools have. ACPHS is a small private college with only six undergraduate programs, all related to the health sciences. With a narrow field of degree choices, there was no need for sophisticated modeling to help identify right-fit potential students. The desired academic program was our top-level predictive attribute, and this made our name-sourcing strategy relatively straightforward.

When you offer few degrees, the pool of leads quickly shrinks to those students who are looking specifically for what you offer. That means you can focus less on selling the school and more on selling the academic program of interest.

Trying to be everything to everyone is a quick way to burn through limited resources with few results.

Trying to be everything to everyone is a quick way to burn through limited resources with few results. When one of enrollmentFUEL's client-partners is marketing 30, 50, 70, or more programs, I recommend we strategically tackle Student Search by focusing on the students most likely to apply and deposit. Segmentation, personalization, and triggered communications help you identify the leads who are most likely to convert.

Pluses, Minuses, and Pay-offs of Segmentation

Segmentation is the process of separating a broad group into sub-groups based on shared characteristics. Academic interests, athletics, and location are examples of top-level categories often used for institutional segmentation.

Segmentation enhances the focus of Student Search marketing by making it easier to understand a targeted group's motivations. Deeper understanding of what prompts members of a group to act helps improve messaging, and better messaging increases conversion. When I recruited students for health science degrees, messages built around a narrative like, "Picture yourself as a future nurse, and we'll help you get there," helped potential students understand how we would help them achieve their specific goal.

Are there any downsides to segmentation strategies? Yes, and they should be considered when developing a Student Search strategy.

Segmentation increases costs. When you differentiate, you need to consider the needs, interests, preferences, and attitudes of each group. They probably require different messages, creative assets, campaigns, and landing pages. Distribution for multiple segments is also more complicated.

Take a hard, realistic look at revenue projections before investing time and money fleshing out your strategy. What is your expected payoff? Do you have the right data (keeping in mind that similar demographics, behaviors, or attitudes do not always imply similar needs or motivations) to identify people who fit within the segment?

For example, would segmentation pay off for Student Search communications sent to students in their sophomore or junior years, especially those who have not decided on an academic major? For these audiences, it can be difficult to pinpoint the shared characteristics that propel effective segmentation. A better strategy may be a compelling campaign communicating broad-based benefits—all delivered in a way that feels authentic and personalized.

Increasing Relevancy and Generating Leads Through Influencer Marketing



In her *Octane* article "3 Reasons Higher Ed Needs Influencer Marketing", Tori Simon, FUEL's Director of Social and Influencer Strategies, shared this data: "61% are likely to trust recommendations

*from a friend, family member, or influencer on social platforms, and only 38% are likely to trust recommendations from a brand on social platforms."*¹

Tapping into your current student community, especially those with significant numbers of followers on social media, to curate content and share it with their networks is a strategy to consider. Content created by students often resonates with prospective students as more relevant, compelling, authentic, and *personal* than institutional communications.

¹ BusinessWire.com. *Matter Survey Reveals Consumers Find Influencers More Helpful and Trustworthy than Brands During the Pandemic*. (2020, May 26) Retrieved December 11, 2022, from <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200526005058/en/Matter-Survey-Reveals-Consumers-Find-Influencers-More-Helpful-and-Trustworthy-than-Brands-During-the-Pandemic>

Behavioral Data to Support Personalized Messaging

Several years ago, I attended a session at an industry conference where the presenter shared data from Gen Z focus groups who were asked what personalization meant to them. One study participant said, “Personalization is sending me communications that contain content about the things that are interesting to *me*.” That simple quote stuck with me because it hit the mark.

Some students are interested in academic programs and career outcomes. For others, it’s athletics or student life. The challenge for enrollment professionals is to identify what is relevant to whom and communicate accordingly, segmenting by interests.

Technology makes it possible to identify behavioral data. Email campaigns are effective, affordable, and the simplest way to collect data. Send an email, see who opens it, see who clicks, and use clicks as behavioral indicators of interest.

Early on, interested leads often prefer to fly under the radar. Instead of opening emails and clicking links, these stealth visitors check out your website to see what you offer. Knowing who visited and what they looked at is invaluable for institutions that want to capture every viable inquiry. You can capture this information with technology. There are many solutions available, including enrollmentFUEL’s Forensic Lead Generation™.

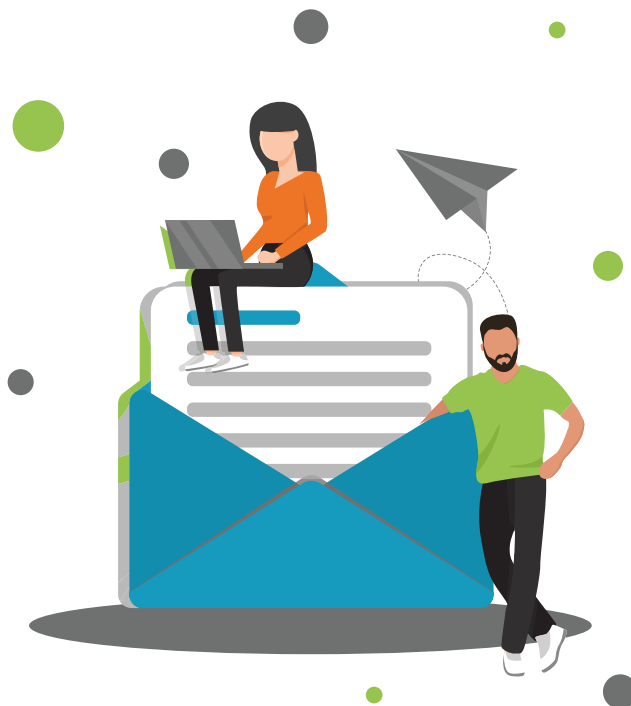
With Forensic Lead Generation, you can also capture leads generated by organic search traffic. These leads didn’t come from a purchased list. They landed on your site because a search engine query directed them to you.

Digital advertising also generates leads. Sometimes an ad clicker lands on a page and fills out a form. In other instances, they land on a page and then proceed to look around your website.

Whatever the source—email, a visit to your website, or a digital ad—the actions taken by a lead provide clues and using these clues as a signal to trigger a response can increase lead conversion.

Triggered Responses

Consider this situation. Emina was a high school senior. She was excited about going to college, but not sure about the degree she wanted to pursue. Emina was also interested in meeting new friends and trying new things. Her parents would provide some monetary support, but Emina also needed financial aid to attend the college of her choice.



One Sunday afternoon, Emina plopped on her bed with her laptop and a stack of postcards sent by colleges around the country. She looked at each postcard, scanning the copy to determine if the school appealed to her. If she liked what she read, she checked out the school online, looking at information about different degrees, student life and financial aid.

Emina visited websites for seven different schools. Three looked interesting, so she also looked at their campus tour page, but didn't fill out any forms.

Every school Emina visited online had also sent her emails. She had opened a few, but hadn't clicked any links.

On Monday afternoon, Emina was working at the desk in her bedroom when she got an email from a college. It arrived about 24 hours after her Sunday web research. This email was different than the other emails sent by the institution. There were no fancy graphics, and it came from an admission counselor named Josh.

He introduced himself and provided a link to a web page where Emina could find an in-depth explanation of the college's financial aid process and work-study options. Josh's message felt authentic and was relevant to Emina, so she clicked the link and read the content. She found it helpful, which reinforced her interest in the school.

Josh also extended Emina a personal invitation to tour the campus. When she visited, he promised to set up a meeting so she could talk directly to the college's financial aid experts.

Emina found her mom, who was working in her home office. They discussed touring the college. Her mom thought it was a good idea, so Emina returned to her computer and replied to Josh, telling him she was interested in visiting.

None of the other schools reached out after Emina's website research, giving Josh's institution a slight but important lead in the race to recruit.

Communications triggered by behavioral actions can be powerful persuaders. When communications align with a student's self-directed actions, they feel personal because they are relevant. Self-directed actions can also offer segmentation by interest opportunities.

If you have automated email marketing technology, find ways to insert triggered communications into your communication flow. When you send the right message from the right person at the right time, you can increase conversion, by encouraging the recruit to take the next step or ultimately choosing your institution.

Four Thoughts to Consider

In this article, we have covered a lot of ground, touching on segmentation strategies, behavioral-based data, and triggered content. As you think about what will help you, I want to share four final thoughts:

1. When you have data for an intended major and can segment based on academic experience, customizing your communications can be a worthy investment, especially for pre-professional programs and for new programs where you want to stand out and grow.
2. Use behavioral data, such as where a lead clicks, to identify interests, academic or otherwise. When feasible, place leads into segmented campaigns or trigger relevant communications. When you communicate about topics that matter to an inquiry, the information feels more personal.
3. Potential students vote on relevancy when they click or look at specific pages on your website. If you feel your standard communications aren't generating enough interest, look at expanding your stable of content contributors. Source content from and make sure it's disseminated by various sources—in particular, your current students. Consider dedicated professors, successful alumni, and coaches as well.
4. Intelligence helps you win. Collect data through email and web channels, and use it to assess and improve.

At enrollmentFUEL, we believe people recruit people, but that is easier when there is a strategy in place to identify which people are your best-fit recruits, and when you have the right technology to support the tactics that bring success. If you would like to learn how enrollmentFUEL can support your efforts in those areas, please reach out.

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