



# Building Your Student Enrollment Toolbox

Identify the Right Marketing and Prospect Engagement Services for Your Institution



# 01. Is your college or university effortlessly meeting its enrollment goals?

---

For most universities, the answer is “no”. Instead, you may be watching your enrollment numbers decline or meeting your enrollment goals may seem to get harder each semester. In fact, over the past several years, undergraduate enrollments have fallen 7.8%.<sup>1</sup> If this describes your current situation, you’re not alone.

Enrollments in degree-granting institutions have been falling for years.<sup>1</sup> However, there are still hundreds of thousands of students enrolling at higher education institutions each semester. The evolving trends of student behavior, combined with an extremely complex marketing environment that is growing even more complex everyday, means that institutions need to find prospective students more effectively. Attracting students to your institution is not an impossible task, but you may need to ask for help.

It’s not always easy to tell which marketing and student engagement services you need. This guide will help you ask the right questions and make smart decisions when developing your growth strategy.



## 02. The changing face of enrollment

---



Enrollment peaked in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Since then, fewer high school graduates are matriculating into college. The impact of the pandemic has created a lot of uncertainty for many students and will likely affect enrollment rates for years to come, with some states experiencing a greater decline than others. The one group that continues to experience growth in enrollments is non-traditional, online, and working adult students. According to one of our recent reports, non-traditional students, ages 24 years or older, make up 65% of the undergraduate population.<sup>1</sup> In 2020, students over the age of 24 increased their enrollment at four-year public institutions by 46%. Four-year private, non-profit institutions saw an increase of 32%.<sup>2</sup>

Both non-traditional students and traditional students spend more time online and do the bulk of their college research there. In fact, 85% of students completed at least some college research on mobile devices.<sup>2</sup> That number has continued to grow in recent years. In this environment, your website and supporting digital marketing have become the greatest source of prospective students.

Once you've captured a prospective student's attention, you have to keep it. As Tracy Kreikemeier, Chief Relationship Officer at EducationDynamics, puts it, "We always tell our schools: Inquiries don't matter; enrollments matter."



In the modern, digitally connected world, students expect an engaging student-centered experience, and they expect it quickly. Swift follow-up is a major determinant of whether an interested person becomes an enrolled student.

**According to our research, about 50% of students enroll with the university that calls them back first.<sup>3</sup>**  
**Speed to Lead is a key determinant in recruitment**

Colleges that want to keep their enrollment numbers up, generate interest and then use that interest as a foundation to build a relationship with the prospective student. Doing so requires three essential elements: staff, capital, and expertise. If one element is missing or weak for your institution, it might be time to seek help with marketing or enrollment.



## 03. Deciding where you need help

---

Deciding that you need help might be the easy part. Knowing exactly how much help you need, and where you need it, is a little more challenging. The following scenarios may help you decide how much help, and what kind of help, you need to reach your enrollment goals.

### SCENARIO 1: Lack of Student Inquiries

Your in-house enrollment team excels at moving students through the application and enrollment process, moving them from consideration to enrollment. You have no problem responding to inquiries in a timely fashion. And, a healthy percent of those you respond to end up enrolling. However, even if you significantly improved your already healthy conversion rate, it wouldn't be enough to reach your enrollment goals. You're just not getting enough inquiries. You know students would love your school if you could just get them to notice it in the first place.

If the scenario above describes your institution, you might benefit most by getting help with your marketing. You need help creating a consistent brand awareness campaign that keeps your college top of mind to prospective students and actively generates quality inquiries. As the higher education space becomes more competitive, it is crucial to have an effective marketing strategy to keep your school in the consideration set of prospective students.



Your website, mobile experience and social media have become indispensable parts of the marketing mix. With a sound digital marketing strategy that utilizes machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI), these components can work even better together. You might also benefit from expanding into other next-generation awareness opportunities, like Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms, streaming audio and other digital platforms where your prospects spend the majority of their time. As technology evolves, you're faced with an ever-expanding array of marketing options. The proliferation of platforms and the ever-increasing pace of change makes it difficult, if not impossible, for many internal marketing teams to keep up.

If your team members aren't already experts at all these marketing channels, you may want to seek help from someone who is. Higher education marketing experts, like EducationDynamics, can help you increase your brand awareness, target your campaigns to the right audience, identify the proper marketing channels, and make smart choices about when, where, and how much to advertise. They'll also help you measure and maximize results by constantly adjusting their approach based on the data. Most important, a good marketing partner will optimize your efforts to actual enrollments and improve your cost-per-start.

## **How much should you spend on marketing?**

While budgets vary widely depending on several factors, schools should spend plan to spend between 10-15% of the projected value of new student enrollments on marketing.





## SCENARIO 2: Plenty of Inquiries and Not Enough Enrollments

Your marketing team is bringing in tons of inquiries. They seem to have figured out who your ideal student is and what will capture that student's attention. Inquiries are coming in so fast that your enrollment advising team can't keep up. Sometimes it takes a day or two (or longer!) for you to respond to an inquiry. By the time you do respond, many prospects have already moved on to other institutions.

You can tell your response times are too slow if you get a lot of leads but few enrollments. If you don't have the in-house resources to respond quickly to inquiries, you're probably losing potential students. 80% of non-traditional students express an interest in 2 or 3 schools during their search for college programs.<sup>2</sup> If you're the first to respond, they're more likely to go with you. But how quickly do you really need to follow up?

It's hard to gauge what your competitors are doing. While you can see the marketing that's being done by other schools, you can't see the follow-up. Even so, it's safe to say that if you're taking hours or days to respond to inquiries, you're probably not following up fast enough.

One of the most effective ways to slash response time is through a dedicated enrollment success partner. Look for a specialized team that understands students and the higher education enrollment process and can operate as an extension of your school. The right outbound partner can help you respond to students quickly and identify high quality prospects that are more likely to be a good fit for your program. Outsourcing your initial engagement also helps you scale up or down to match student demand without having to hire and layoff in-house part-time or seasonal staff.



**Measure your response time in minutes, not hours or days.**

If you aren't responding to prospects within a few minutes, they are probably moving on to another school.



### SCENARIO 3: Staffing Constraints

Your team is small. On the marketing side, you're doing your best, but technology is changing faster than you can adapt. The tried-and-true methods that worked a few years ago aren't nearly as effective as they used to be. You don't have adequate staffing to keep up with the constantly evolving marketing tools or to consistently optimize all your campaigns. You know there are students out there who would love to come to your college if you could just get the right resources to attract their attention.

When it comes to following up on inquiries, students seem to drift away and lose interest before your team can get back to them. During peak advising periods, you employ seasonal, part-time or student staff to help out.

You aren't sure how to ask for help because it seems like there's room for improvement everywhere. If your team isn't big enough or doesn't have the expertise you need to properly execute marketing and follow-up on inquiries, you may need a holistic enrollment partner.

The options and tools for marketing have evolved dramatically in recent years and the pace of change continues to increase. Students spend more time online and digital ad buying has become a specialty in its own right. Some colleges simply don't have the on-staff expertise to meet changing demands.



The internet has also changed how students think about customer service. They expect almost immediate gratification. Your response time can no longer be measured in hours or days. Instead, it should be measured in minutes. If your enrollment advising team is part-time, seasonal, or just plain small, you might need help with follow up too.

A holistic enrollment partner that specializes in higher education marketing and provides a robust contact center can assist your internal team in achieving your enrollment goals. They can support both your marketing efforts and quickly follow-up when potential students have expressed interest.



## 04. What to look for in an enrollment partner

---

Once you've determined where you need help and what help you need, there's just one decision left to make: who will you trust as your enrollment partner? Look for these three characteristics to show you that a potential partner can be trusted to help you meet enrollment goals. Your enrollment partner should have:

### 1. TRANSPARENCY

When you choose a partner, you should be able to see the work that they're doing on your behalf. A partner who takes a black box approach leaves you at a disadvantage because you can't monitor or manage the work being done on your behalf.

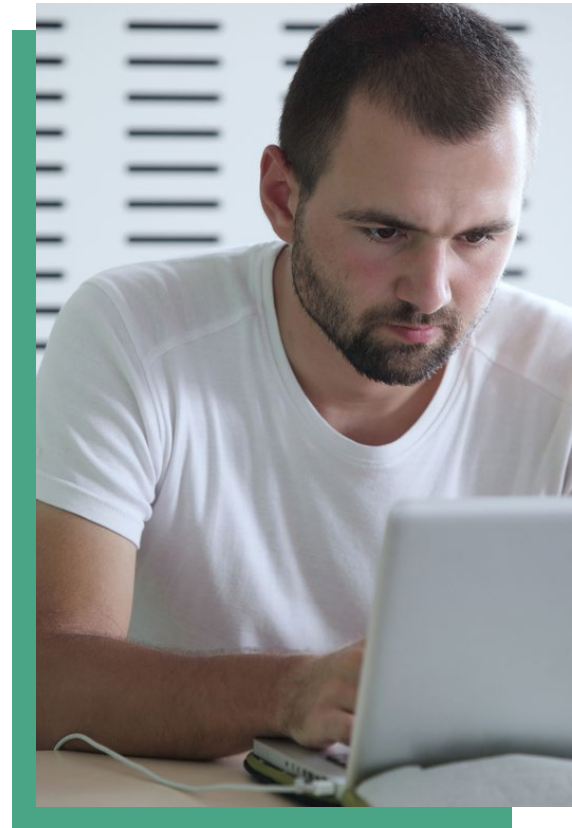
What's working? What isn't? Are you getting any real insight into your ideal student? If you had to cut costs, what changes would have the least impact on results? If you wanted to improve results, what changes would boost outcomes fastest? With a black-box partner, you won't know the answers to these questions. It's all guesswork. Instead, find an enrollment partner who is fully transparent and willing to share their process with you.



## 2. FOCUS ON ADULT AND ONLINE STUDENTS

Higher education is a unique market and online and adult students are a unique audience within the higher ed landscape. They're making a major life decision - one of the biggest in their lives - and most are doing so quickly. Helping students through the higher education process takes a special kind of expertise. Although many marketing agencies offer their services to higher education, and many contact centers follow up on student inquiries, few are focused solely on supporting institutions focused on adult and online students.

For the best results, look for a partner who specializes in higher education marketing and enrollments, and who truly understands the unique challenges and opportunities that face you and your prospective students.



## 3. PERFORMANCE-DRIVEN METRICS AND RESULTS

It's important enough to repeat: Inquiries don't matter. Enrollments matter. An enrollment partner who is only tracking the number of inquiries and not focusing on the percentage of inquiries that result in enrollments, is telling only half the story-and not even the most interesting half. Your enrollment partner should track all results and adjust accordingly. They should be able to tell you what kinds of students respond to particular ads and where those ads perform best. You should be able to track the direct result of any particular campaign from inquiry to enrollment and beyond.



## 05. Conclusion

---

Your institution doesn't have to become a casualty of falling enrollment numbers. By bringing in the right help, you can capture student attention and turn interest into enrollments. While many institutions are focused on marketing, follow-up is the essential next step. EducationDynamics can support you with either or both efforts. You can meet and exceed your enrollment goals with help from EducationDynamics. Set your institution up for success by requesting a free assessment today at [educationdynamics.com](https://educationdynamics.com).

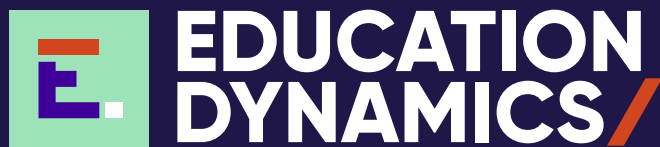
**EducationDynamics provides a comprehensive approach to resolving the challenges many colleges and universities are facing. Find, attract, and retain today's non-traditional students with help from EDDY.**



## 07. Sources

---

1. Marketing and Enrollment Management Benchmarks 2022, Trends in Higher Education Marketing and Student Engagement, EducationDynamics, 2022
2. 2020 and Beyond, Attracting and Serving Post-Traditional Students, Carol B. Aslanian & Steven Fischer, EducationDynamics, 2020
3. Digital Marketing Trends, Aslanian Market Research, A Division of EducationDynamics, 2017



**EducationDynamics.com**