Transformational Success:

Managing 'Up and Across' Leadership Silos to Drive Sustainable Enrollment and Revenue Growth in Graduate and Online Programs

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Your Presenters

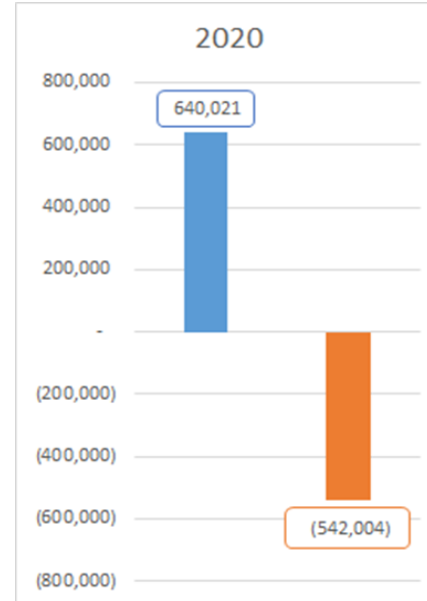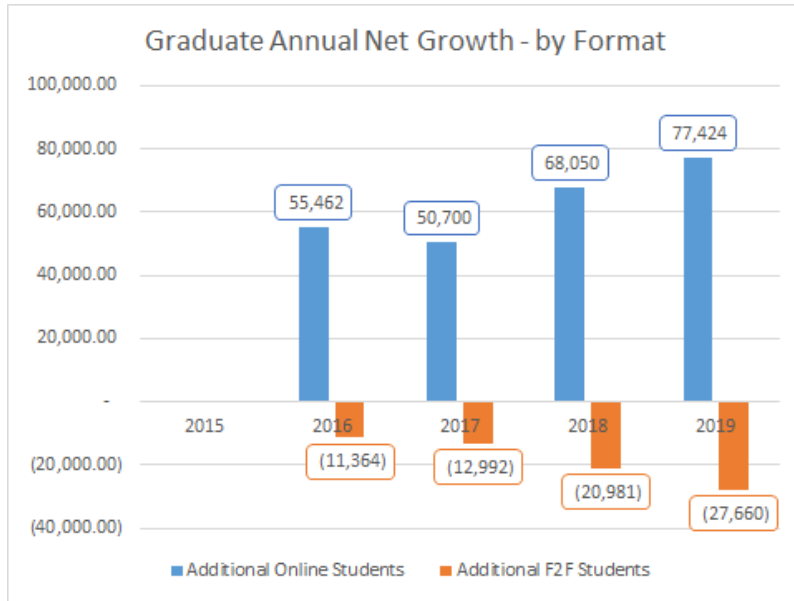**Charles Ramos**
VP, Graduate and Online
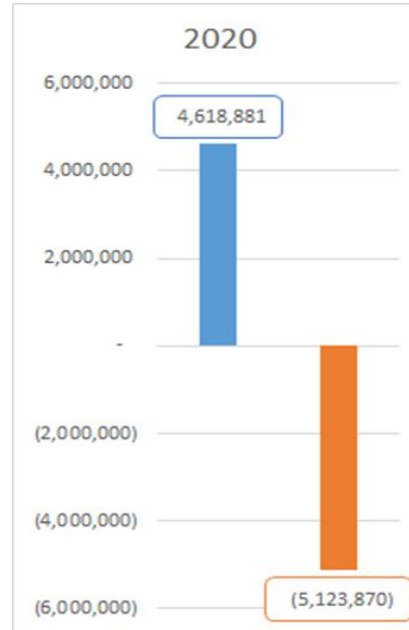RNL

Susan Aldridge
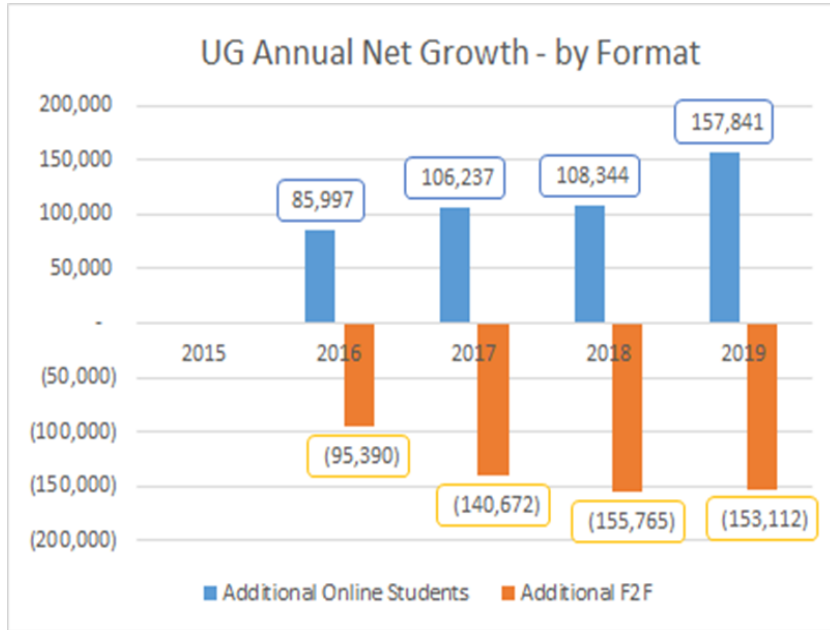Senior Higher
Education Consultant

First – Why Graduate and Online?

ALL net <u>Graduate</u> growth has been in Online Programs

Graduate Annual Net Growth - by Format

2020

Graduate: Over the last five years, there has been a net decline in graduate F2F students (orange), while there has been a significant expansion each year in online students (blue). 2020 represents an anomaly, but the dramatic growth is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels.

ALL net UG growth has been among online students

UG Annual Net Growth - by Format

Year	Additional Online Students	Additional F2F
2016	85,997	(95,390)
2017	106,237	(140,672)
2018	108,344	(155,765)
2019	157,841	(153,112)

2020

	Additional Online Students	Additional F2F
2020	4,618,881	(5,123,870)

Undergraduate: Just like the graduate data, over the last five years, there has been a net decline in F2F students (orange), while there has been a significant expansion each year in online students (blue). 2020 represents an anomaly, but the dramatic growth is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels.
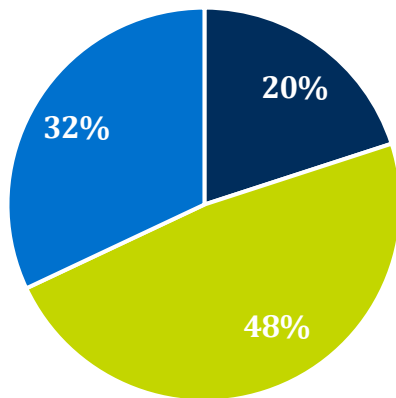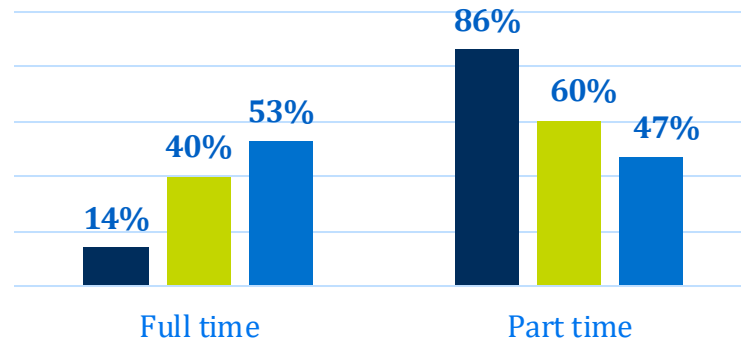
Source: NCES. RNL analysis of numeric changes in total enrollment in "all classroom courses (orange) and "all distance courses" (blue).

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Understand what students want in terms of their program format

Preferred Format

- Classroom
- Hybrid
- Online

20% Classroom
48% Hybrid
32% Online

Enrollment Status

Full time: 14%, 40%, 53%
Part time: 86%, 60%, 47%
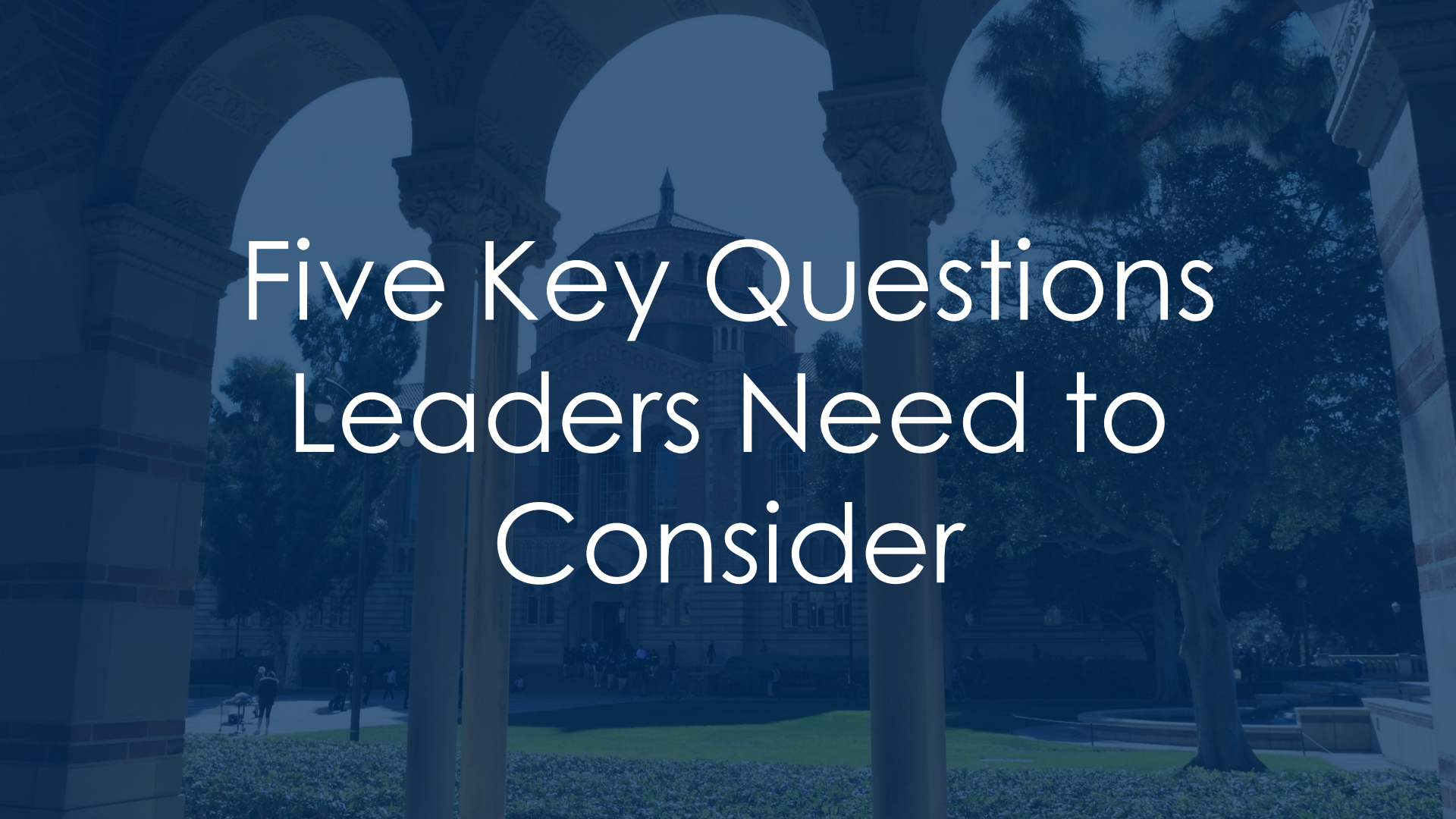
Preferred Course Length

5 wks. Less: 10%, 4%, 10%
6-12 wks.: 29%, 63%, 55%
13+ wks.: 61%, 34%, 34%

YoY Graduate Enrollment Snapshot*

Grand Total
- Fall 2021: 2.1%
- Spring 2021: 4.3%
- Fall 2020: 3.1%
- Spring 2020: 1.5%

Private For-Profit 4-Year
- Fall 2021: -16.6%
- Spring 2021: 4.0%
- Fall 2020: 4.2%
- Spring 2020: 6.5%

Private Nonprofit 4-Year
- Fall 2021: 0.5%
- Spring 2021: 1.5%
- Fall 2020: 2.1%
- Spring 2020: -0.9%

Public 4-Year
- Fall 2021: 4.3%
- Spring 2021: 6.2%
- Fall 2020: 3.8%
- Spring 2020: 1.9%

Legend: ■ Fall 2021 ■ Spring 2021 ■ Fall 2020 ■ Spring 2020

In each semester <u>since</u> Spring 2020 (the last pre-pandemic semester), graduate programs have grown.

Five Key Questions Leaders Need to Consider

Key Questions to Drive Culture and Success

1. How do you know what success looks like? What are your goals, and are they the right one(s)/realistic?

2. How do you influence the change needed for transformational success?

3. What are the top 3 factors that drive success? That drive failure?

4. How do you invest in success?

5. What is the cost of political expediency?

If you want what you're saying heard, then take your time and say it so that the listener will actually hear it.

– Dr. Maya Angelou

How do you know what success looks like?

What are your goals, and are they the right one(s)/realistic?

What does success look like?

- How do you define success?
  - Revenue
  - Net Tuition Revenue
  - Number of Programs
  - Number of Students
  - New Markets Created
  - Corporate Partnerships
- What is/are your quantifiable target(s)?

What goals are you aiming for, and do you know you are on track to achieve them?

- Are there clear and defined KPI's?

- Does market research support the goals?

- Would current economic conditions suggest these goals would move the institution forward financially?

Key areas to consider

- There are a great deal of 'sunk costs' that institutions incur due to:
  - Taking on too many programs in the hope that quantity will provide financial growth/success
  - Lack of discipline and focus
  - Decisions not grounded in research/data
- KNOW what success looks like
- Establish expertise and experience
  - **10 years or more** in adult and online is a MUST

Understand Your Market

- Invest in robust market and program demand research to identify opportunities within your current portfolio - along with potentially a few new programs – where demand is high for online and/or graduate growth.

- Determine if your price point is competitive.

- Know job market projections for graduates of proposed/identified programs.

- Understand your value proposition and areas of differentiation and how it aligns with market trends, needs, and expectations.

Understand Your Market - Continued

- The grad/online market is VERY different and nuanced, and your approach needs to 'meet the market where it is'

  – Expedient, personal, and authentic outreach and marketing that is also heavily value proposition-centered – along with quick turnaround on admission decisions

  – Time zone sensitivity

  – Multi-modal communications

  – Extended hours

  – Transfer credit evaluations

  – Financial aid awarding

Identify Resources Needed to Succeed

- Instructional design development and/or leveraging 3rd party support

- Marketing expertise and capabilities in online and graduate

- Online/Graduate recruitment experience <u>and</u> bandwidth

- Advising and Student Support development for adult, online, and graduate students

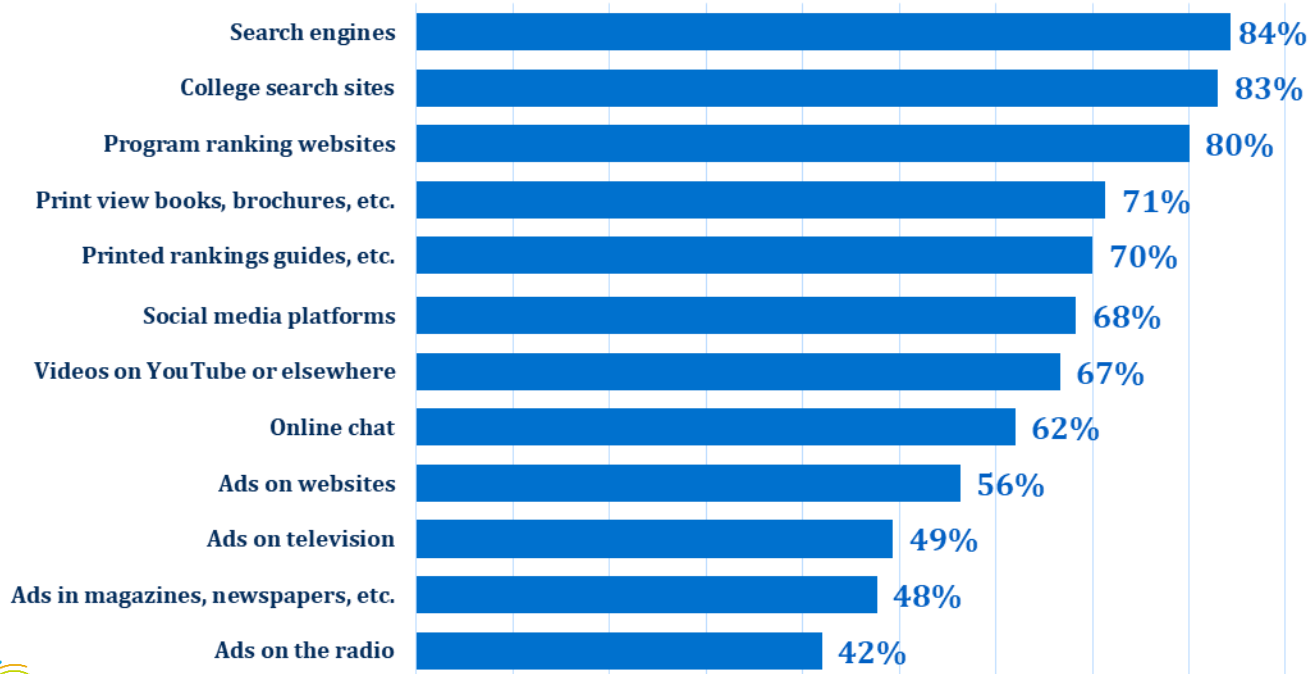# Understand the demand dynamics in your service area

TOP Master's	ALL FORMATS			ONLINE			Related Occupations	
	2020 Degree Production	5-Year Growth #	5-Year Growth %	2020 Degree Production	5-Year Growth #	5-Year Growth %	Total Jobs	Growth (2020-30)
Registered Nursing	14,030	1,603	13%	6,430	2,379	59%	495,542	19%
Business Administration	15,862	(597)	(4%)	4,722	409	8%	2,209,314	6%
Psychology	15,259	(2,044)	(12%)	2,677	1,199	81%	133,939	16%
Business/Commerce, General	2,795	(324)	(10%)	1,771	(162)	(8%)	1,223,148	7%
Information Science/Studies	4,117	1,652	67%	1,640	182	12%	433,676	17%
Accounting	7,470	(811)	(10%)	1,473	597	68%	760,179	5%
Liberal Arts /Liberal Studies	3,465	222	7%	1,183	668	130%	3,192,666	2%
Criminal Justice/Law Enf. Admin.	3,004	(483)	(14%)	1,084	(303)	(22%)	159,639	9%
Marketing/Marketing Management	4,253	592	16%	855	373	77%	191,067	15%
Social Sciences, General	1,458	391	37%	850	332	64%	342,057	8%
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	2,627	(265)	(9%)	680	259	62%	196,750	6%
Computer and Information Sciences	4,858	1,930	66%	670	121	22%	831,698	12%
Information Technology	1,658	574	53%	666	88	15%	801,203	12%
Health Care Admin./Management	947	181	24%	608	271	80%	382,733	8%
Human Resources Management	1,124	317	39%	594	231	64%	472,479	7%
Computer/Info. Sys. Security...	909	88	11%	562	(42)	(7%)	663,415	9%
Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies	1,460	(107)	(7%)	449	(3)	(1%)	2,558,314	(0%)
General Studies	644	(191)	(23%)	384	222	137%	3,192,666	2%
Criminal Justice/Police Science	1,136	342	43%	293	131	81%	172,785	8%
Health Services/Health Sciences	2,582	894	53%	289	256	776%	111,476	15%
Fashion Merchandising	977	(69)	(7%)	284	67	31%	957,375	1%
Finance, General	7,358	1,517	26%	204	63	45%	341,431	10%

Understand what drives and motivates students in their enrollment decisions
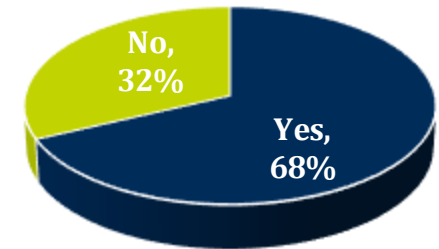
Three Most Important Factors in Enrollment Decision	F2F	Hybrid	Online
Program content matches my interests	51%	45%	53%
Positive career opportunity/job placement info.	46%	39%	32%
The lowest tuition (among programs considered)	33%	35%	42%
University's reputation	41%	35%	29%
Online/hybrid courses available	8%	28%	47%
Being able to enroll in a mix of formats, types and lengths	9%	20%	4%
Having specific faculty with whom you want to study	29%	19%	11%
Being able to enroll in courses year-round	17%	16%	23%
Having accelerated (shorter) terms	13%	14%	19%
Their plans for dealing with the pandemic	14%	14%	8%

Digital media are the most effective awareness-raising vehicles and information sources, and graduate students DO click on online ads.

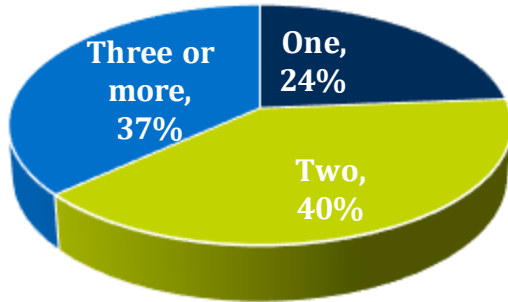## Most Effective Search Sources – Percent Rating Most Effective

Source	Percent
Search engines	84%
College search sites	83%
Program ranking websites	80%
Print view books, brochures, etc.	71%
Printed rankings guides, etc.	70%
Social media platforms	68%
Videos on YouTube or elsewhere	67%
Online chat	62%
Ads on websites	56%
Ads on television	49%
Ads in magazines, newspapers, etc.	48%
Ads on the radio	42%

Clicked on Ad in Digital Platform

No, 32%

Yes, 68%

Speed Wins

Number of Applications

- One, 24%
- Two, 40%
- Three or more, 37%

Inquiry/Contact Response Expectations				
	Within			
	Minutes	An hour	A day	More than a Day
Personal email	19%	23%	30%	26%
Text message	26%	29%	21%	11%
Phone call	24%	22%	22%	18%
Note: No significant differences by intended format				

Expected Notification of Acceptance

- 22+ days
- 14 to 21 days
- 8 to 13 days
- 4 to 7 days
- 1 to 3 days
- 24 hrs

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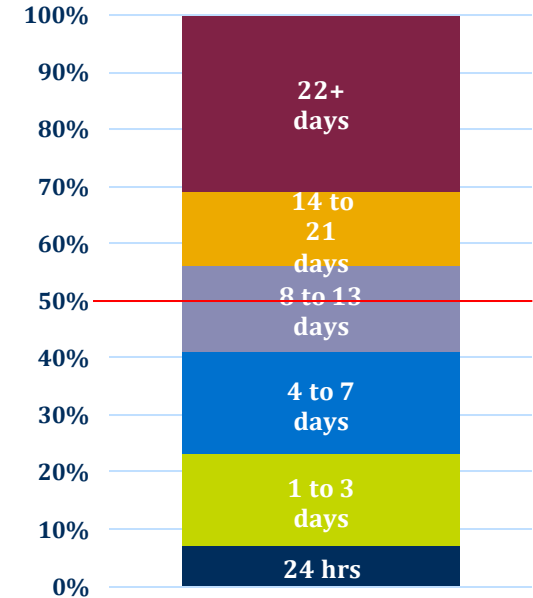
Clearly Articulate Return on Investment

- Research-based identification and prioritization of program(s)

- Benefits of in-house versus outsourcing – establishing grad, adult, and online expertise in:
  - Instructional Design
  - Marketing
  - Recruitment
  - Advising/Student Support

- Phase the process to realize revenue, and reinvest in future phases

- Don't shoot for the moon – start with 2-4 programs

- Align market demands/needs, institutional mission, and future margin

What are the top 3 factors that drive success?

3 Keys to Success

- Research-based decision-making that identifies and prioritizes key programs that will drive enrollment and revenue growth

- Shared involvement and accountability across all key stakeholders

- Investment-minded culture

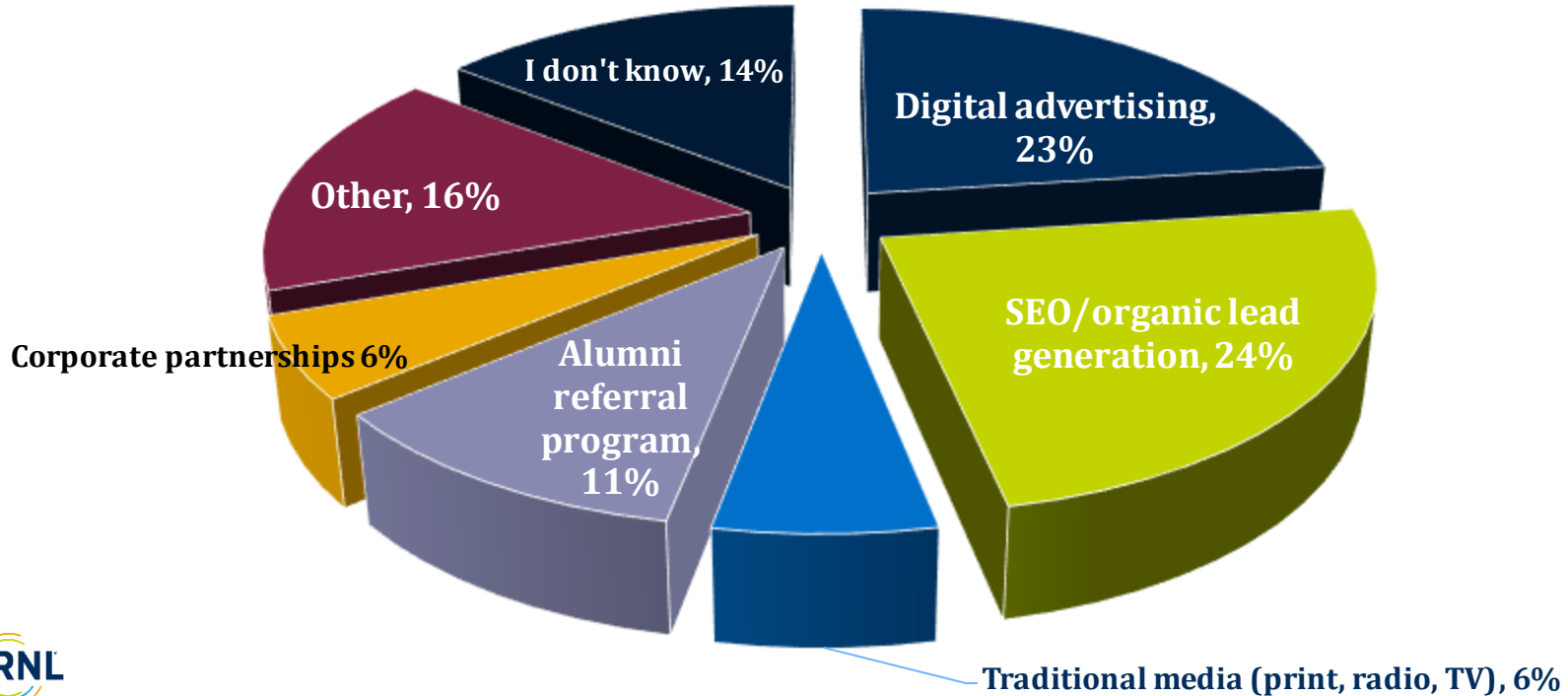- Long-term experience and expertise in adult, graduate, and online

What are the top 3 factors that lead to failure?

The Road to Perdition

- Leaning on methodologically light research, and/or benchmark-based research to inform and affect strategies

- Lacking expertise and experience in the online and adult market

- Minimal investment made to scale marketing, recruitment, and support efforts
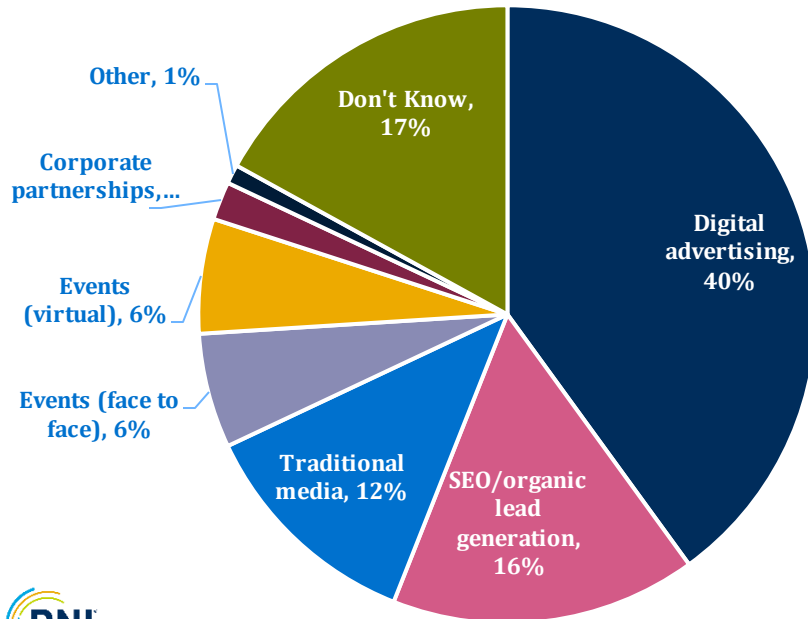
Graduate Leads by Source

Digital Channels Lead in Graduate Marketing Efforts
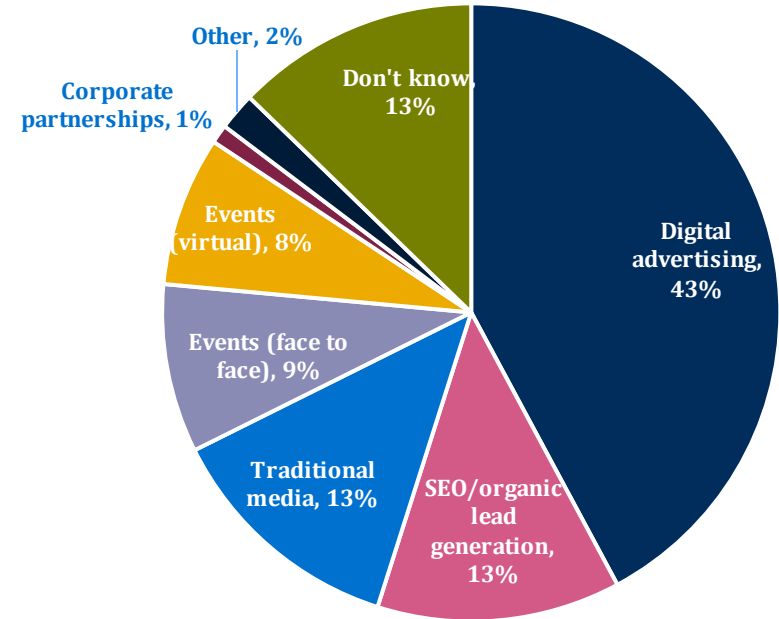

Graduate Student Leads by Source

- I don't know, 14%
- Other, 16%
- Corporate partnerships 6%
- Alumni referral program, 11%
- Digital advertising, 23%
- SEO/organic lead generation, 24%
- Traditional media (print, radio, TV), 6%

How the typical marketing budget is being spent

Private
Allocation of Marketing Dollars

- Digital advertising, 40%
- SEO/organic lead generation, 16%
- Traditional media, 12%
- Events (face to face), 6%
- Events (virtual), 6%
- Corporate partnerships,...
- Other, 1%
- Don't Know, 17%

Public
Allocation of Marketing Dollars

- Digital advertising, 43%
- SEO/organic lead generation, 13%
- Traditional media, 13%
- Events (face to face), 9%
- Events (virtual), 8%
- Corporate partnerships, 1%
- Other, 2%
- Don't know, 13%

How do you invest in success?

Culture of Investment

**Culture of
Investment**

The Case for Growth

Case for Growth

Investing Strategically

**Investing
Strategically**

Remember Your Mission

Remember Your Mission

What is the cost of political expediency?

Political expediency can be costly

- Minimal to no research-based decision(s) made that are aligned with true market demand

- Short-term solutions for long-term issues --- leading to no plan for sustainable enrollment and revenue growth

- Lack of program prioritization drives up costs/expenses and minimizes and more often negates revenue potential

Bonus Question:
What if your institution has already taken the wrong approach and failed/is failing?

How do you pivot?

- Reclarify goals from Board and President

- Recommunicate goals to the rest of the leadership and the university

- Rework your institution's business model (online and adult) so that it is heavily informed by market research/data -

- Focus and Discipline
  - Identify high-performing/high-potential programs
  - Isolate low-performing/low-potential programs
  - Where are your 'sunk costs'?
  - Invest in strong potential, but in a planned and phased approach

- Don't blame the competition – your success depends on competing
  - Understand your competition

- Generally - Follow the recommendations provided through this presentation!

Thank You

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