Applying RNL's 2021 Graduate Student Research

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The details:

- ✓ 1,500 respondents (thank you **Plexuss** for your sample)
- ✓ Administered Jan./Feb. 2021
- ✓ Respondent target: those who have searched for a graduate program in the last 12 months.
- ✓ Survey focus:
    - ✓ How they search – in detail
    - ✓ How they make their decisions
    - ✓ Expectations of institutions
    - ✓ Program details

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2021 Graduate Student Recruitment Report

Insights for graduate enrollment and marketing leaders
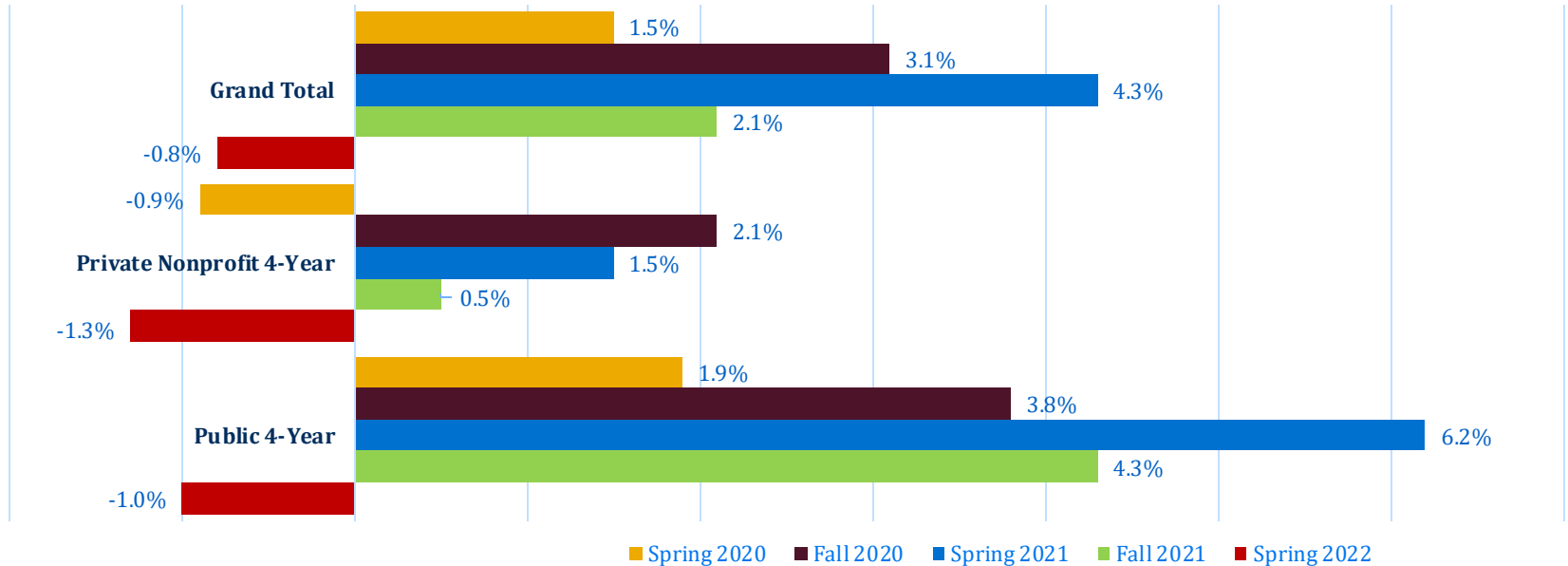
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The Graduate Student Imperative

While undergraduate enrollment contracted in each semester since the pandemic began, graduate enrollment showed growth in the <u>first four semesters</u> when compared year-over-year.

YoY Graduate Enrollment Snapshot*

Legend: ■ Spring 2020 ■ Fall 2020 ■ Spring 2021 ■ Fall 2021 ■ Spring 2022

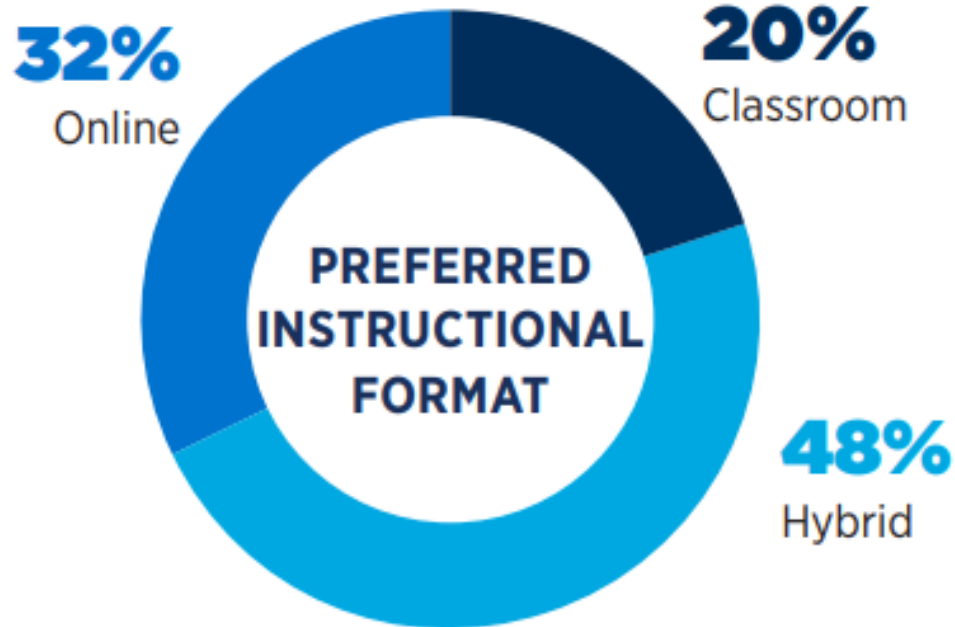*Source: National Student Clearinghouse

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A rising tide will not lift all boats.

Let's talk about how your policies and practices match – or mismatch – student expectations

How they plan to study

Graduate students seek hybrid and online study.

32% Online

20% Classroom

PREFERRED INSTRUCTIONAL FORMAT

48% Hybrid

What are your challenges in growing fully online programming?

What they plan to study

Half of graduate students will enroll in master's programs; 40 percent seek non-degree.
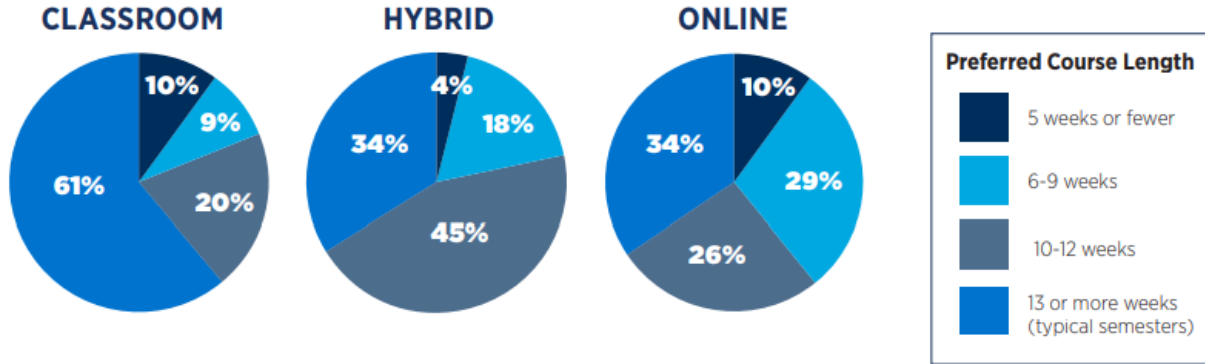
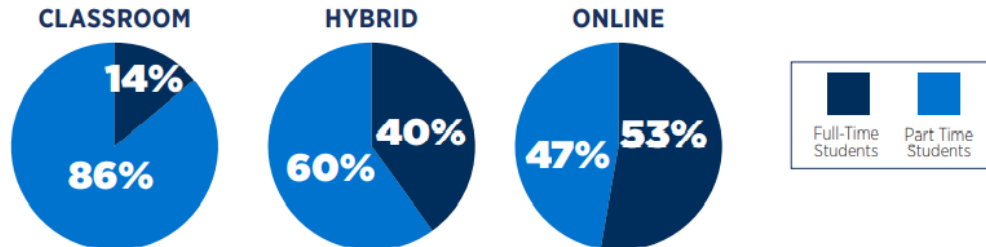| TYPE OF GRADUATE PROGRAM	CLASSROOM	HYBRID	ONLINE
Post baccalaureate certificate	7%	8%	11%
Post baccalaureate certification/licensure	8%	5%	6%
Master's degree	47%	49%	51%
Graduate certificate	7%	18%	16%
Graduate certification/licensure	4%	5%	3%
Doctorate degree	16%	9%	6%
Professional doctorate (JD, MD, DO, etc.)	10%	5%	2%
Other	1%	1%	5%

What successes have you had in certificates? What challenges?

How they plan to study

Only classroom students want semester-length courses and programs.

CLASSROOM

- 10%
- 9%
- 61%
- 20%

HYBRID

- 4%
- 18%
- 34%
- 45%

ONLINE

- 10%
- 29%
- 34%
- 26%

Preferred Course Length

- 5 weeks or fewer
- 6-9 weeks
- 10-12 weeks
- 13 or more weeks (typical semesters)

Online and hybrid programs are making full-time study much more popular.

CLASSROOM

- 14%
- 86%

HYBRID

- 40%
- 60%

ONLINE

- 53%
- 47%

- Full-Time Students
- Part Time Students

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What are the challenges you've faced in moving toward flexible formats?

How do they search/research

Today's graduate students are finding out about graduate programs online.

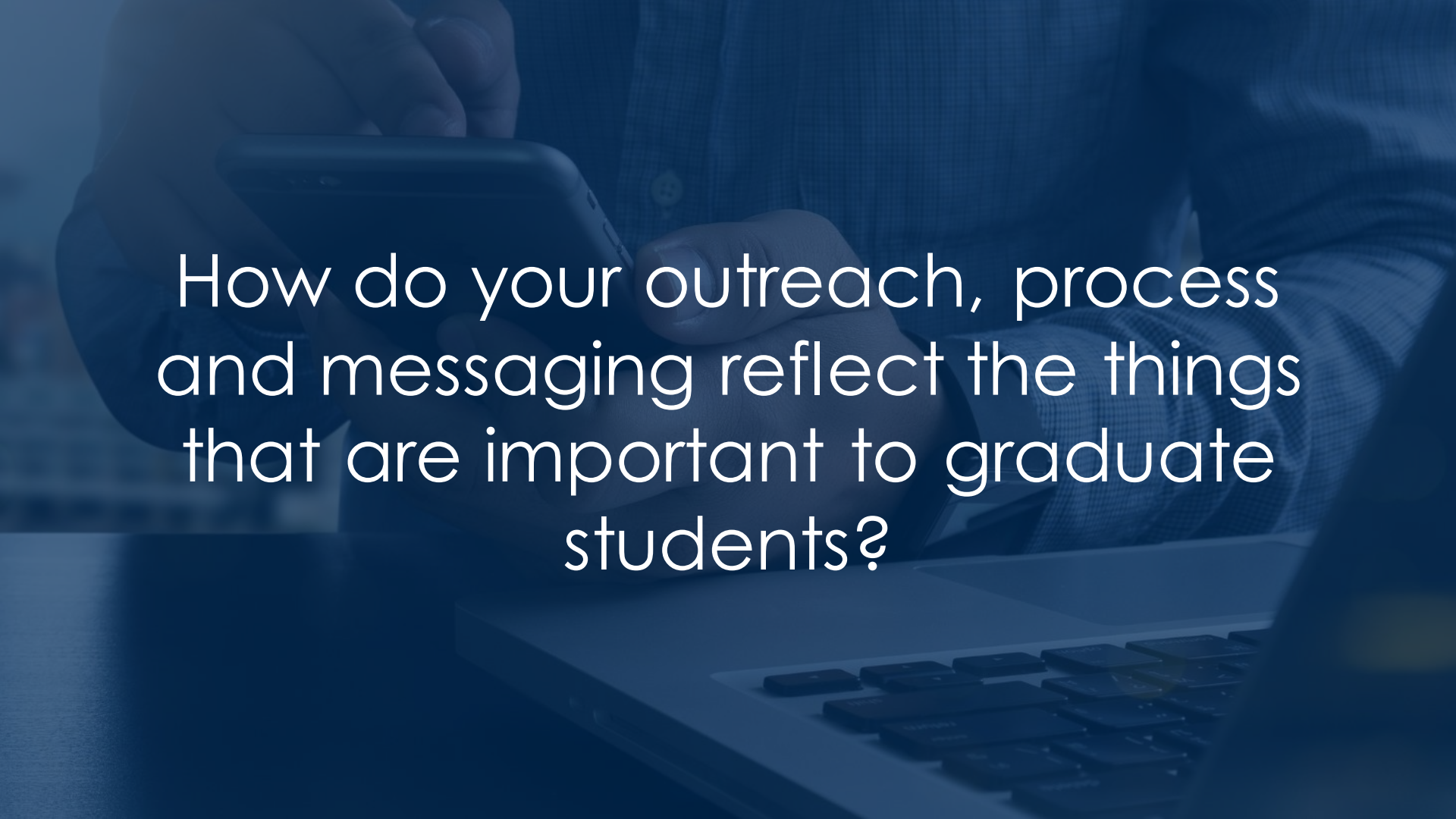| IMPORTANT* INFORMATION SOURCES AT BEGINNING OF PROGRAM SEARCH	CLASSROOM	HYBRID	ONLINE
Search engines (Google, Bing, etc.)	83%	87%	83%
College search sites	83%	86%	80%
Program ranking websites	77%	85%	78%
Printed rankings guides, etc.	66%	78%	66%
Printed view books, brochures, etc.	74%	74%	66%
Social media platforms	69%	74%	62%
Videos on YouTube or elsewhere	67%	71%	62%
Online chat	58%	70%	58%
Ads on websites	54%	61%	54%
Ads on television	43%	59%	46%
Ads in magazines, newspapers, etc.	44%	57%	42%
Ads on the radio	40%	51%	35%

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Does your marketing strategy align with these data? Are there "sacred cows" that you can't stop doing?

Their priorities and concerns

Content "fit," online and hybrid options, and affordable tuition guide enrollment decisions.

MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN ENROLLMENT DECISION* (SELECT THREE)	CLASSROOM	HYBRID	ONLINE
Program content I want	51%	45%	53%
Online/hybrid courses available	8%	28%	47%
The lowest tuition (among programs I am considering)	33%	35%	42%
Positive career opportunity and job placement information	46%	39%	32%
University's reputation	41%	35%	29%
Being able to enroll in courses year-round	17%	16%	23%
Having accelerated (shorter) terms	13%	14%	19%
Having specific faculty with whom you want to study	29%	19%	11%
Their plans for dealing with the pandemic	14%	14%	8%

Respondents chose their three most important factors.

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How do your outreach, process and messaging reflect the things that are important to graduate students?

Their expectations

Post-Inquiry Contact Expectations

RESPONSE TYPE	WITHIN MINUTES	WITHIN AN HOUR	WITHIN A DAY	WITHIN 3 DAYS	MORE THAN 3 DAYS	ACCEPTABLE CONTACT RESPONSE
Personalized email						
Classroom	21%	22%	27%	21%	7%	98%
Hybrid	19%	27%	31%	15%	7%	98%
Online	17%	21%	32%	19%	7%	98%
Non-personalized email						
Classroom	14%	22%	22%	14%	14%	76%
Hybrid	17%	25%	29%	15%	7%	82%
Online	18%	23%	19%	17%	10%	77%
Text message						
Classroom	21%	29%	27%	9%	3%	88%
Hybrid	27%	33%	19%	7%	3%	89%
Online	28%	27%	19%	8%	3%	84%
Phone call						
Classroom	22%	25%	22%	11%	5%	85%
Hybrid	32%	20%	21%	10%	6%	90%
Online	18%	21%	21%	13%	9%	81%

Their expectations

Half of graduate students expect to be notified of acceptance within one week of applying.

EXPECTED TIME TO BE NOTIFIED OF ADMISSION	CLASSROOM	HYBRID	ONLINE
Within 24 hours	7%	7%	7%
1-3 days	16%	20%	21%
4-7 days	18%	23%	23%
7-14 days	15%	21%	21%
14-21 days	13%	17%	14%
Longer than 21 days	31%	12%	13%

What proportion will likely/definitely enroll in the program that admits them first?

82% Classroom

89% Hybrid

83% Online

Give yourself a grade (A-F)
on speed:
Inquiry?
Applicant?
Admit?
Register?
What would it take to move up?

THANK YOU