



PRESENTATION HANDOUT



What Do Graduate Students Expect? 10 Things Graduate Students Expect of Institutions

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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



2021 Graduate Student Recruitment Report

Insights for graduate enrollment
and marketing leaders

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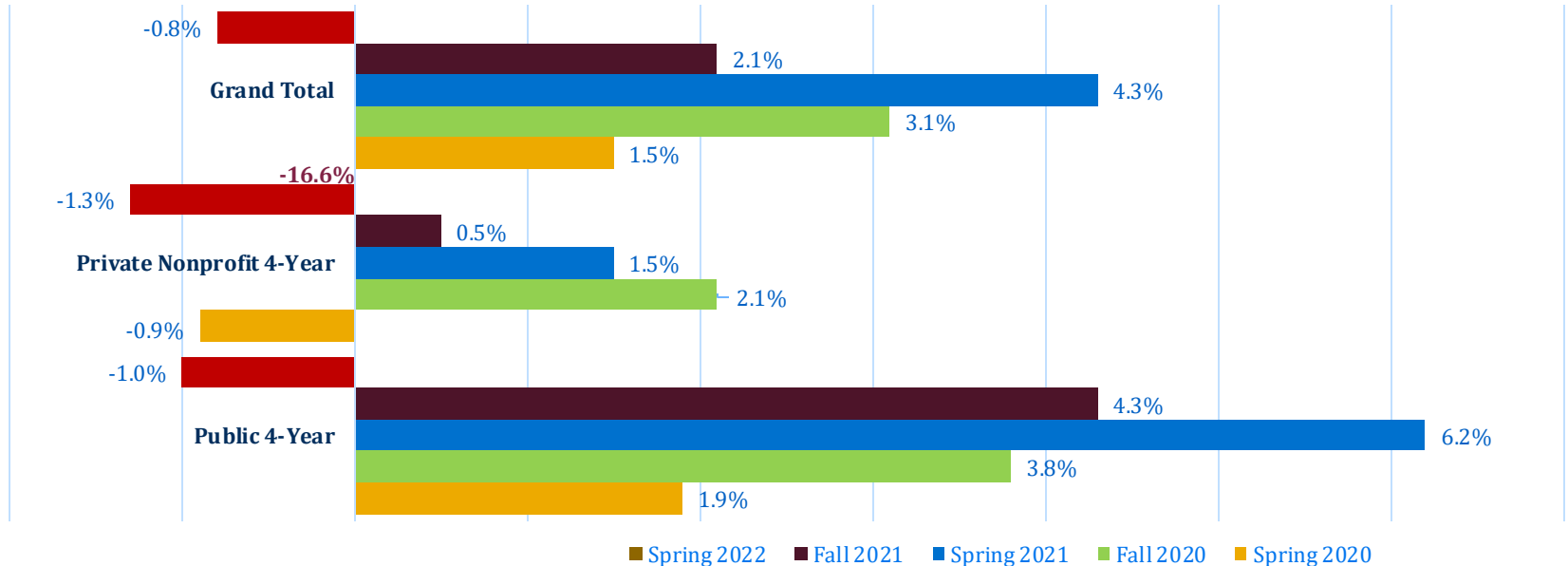
PLEXUSS[™]



The Graduate Student Imperative

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

YoY Graduate Enrollment Snapshot*



The Graduate Student Imperative

All net growth at the graduate level – since 2012 – has been derived from fully online or partially online students.

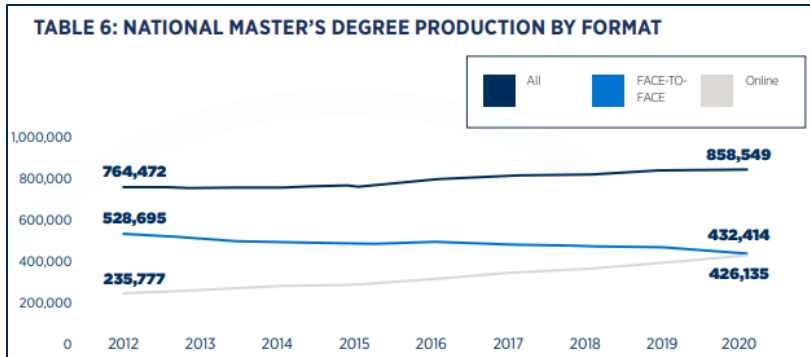
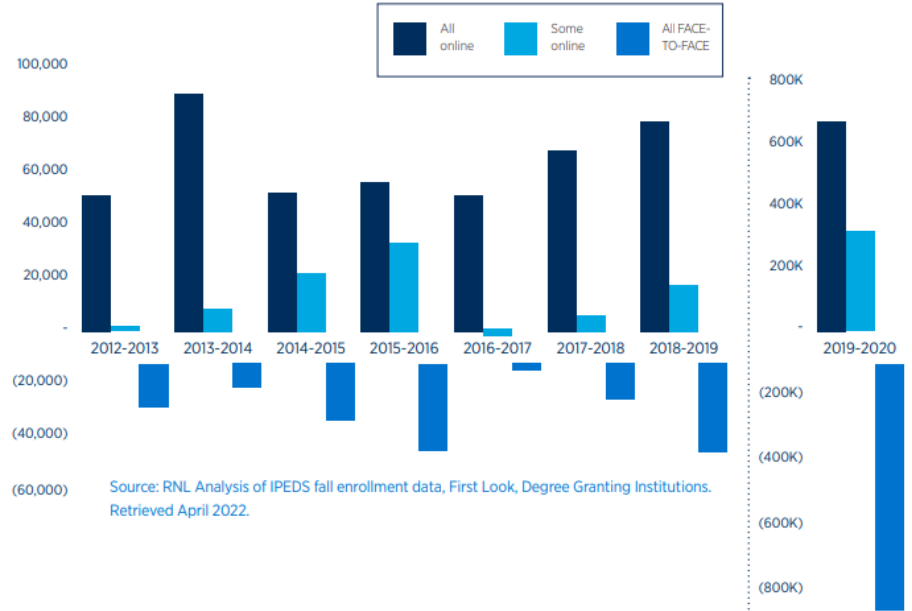


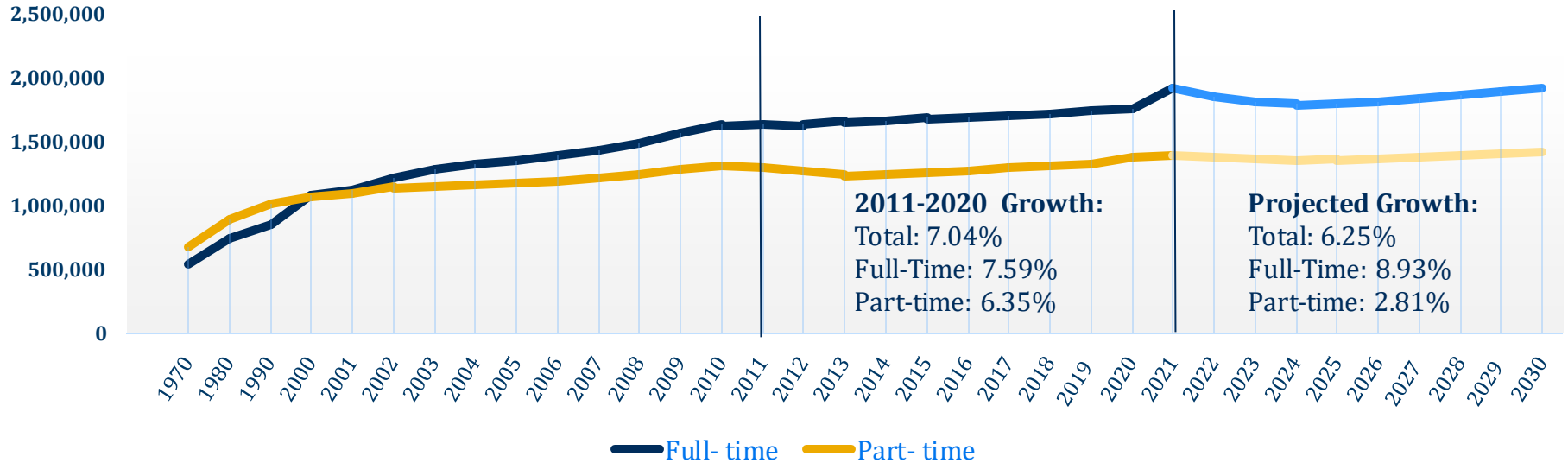
TABLE 5: GRADUATE - YEAR-OVER-YEAR FALL ENROLLMENT CHANGE BY FORMAT



The Graduate Student Imperative

Projected growth in graduate education has been stronger – and will continue to be stronger – among full-time students than part-time, but this does NOT mean traditional full-time students.

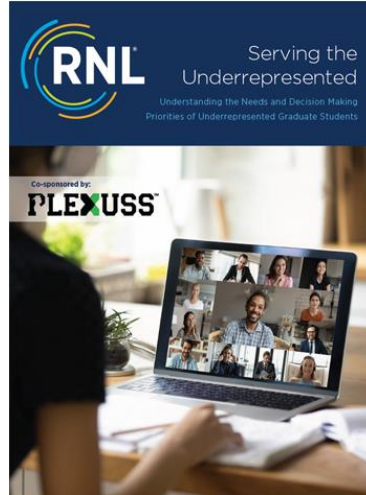
Graduate Enrollment – Projected to 2030



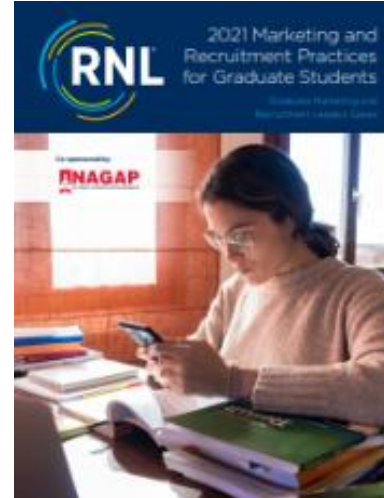
RNL: An Increased Focus on Graduate



Survey of 1500 prospective graduate students



Survey summary of 645 prospective graduate students of underrepresented backgrounds



Survey of nearly 100 graduate marketing and recruitment leadership



New white paper discussing how one institution built one of the most successful online graduate program ever – leveraging employer relationships.

A rising tide will not lift all boats.

**What do you need to
ensure they come
to you and not
somewhere else?**

Here's how you proceed:

Think in this order:

1. Understand what they want.
2. Understand how they want it.
3. Understand who they are.
4. Understand how they search.
5. Understand their priorities and concerns so you can speak to them.
6. Understand what they expect of you

What they plan to study

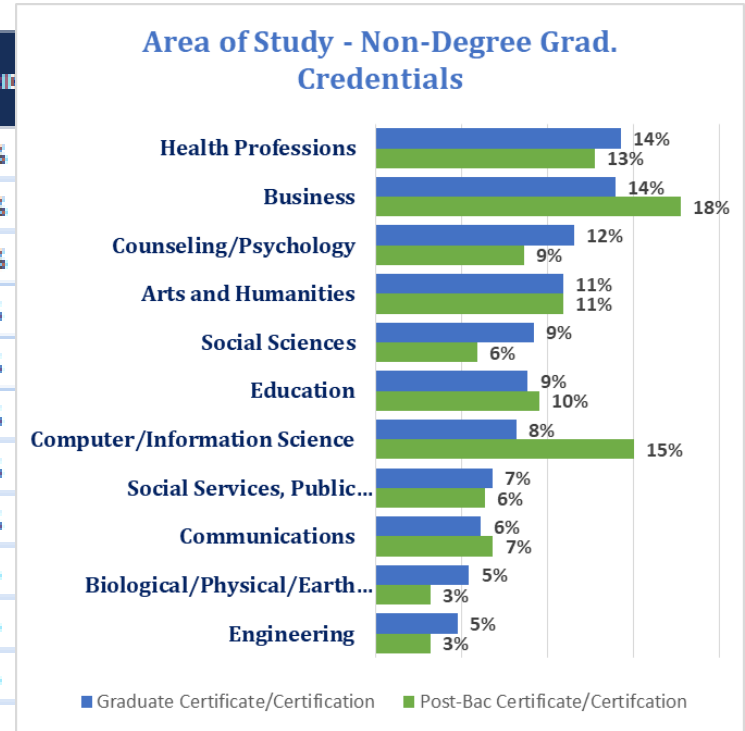
Half of graduate students will enroll in master's programs;
40 percent seek non-degree.

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 they plan to study

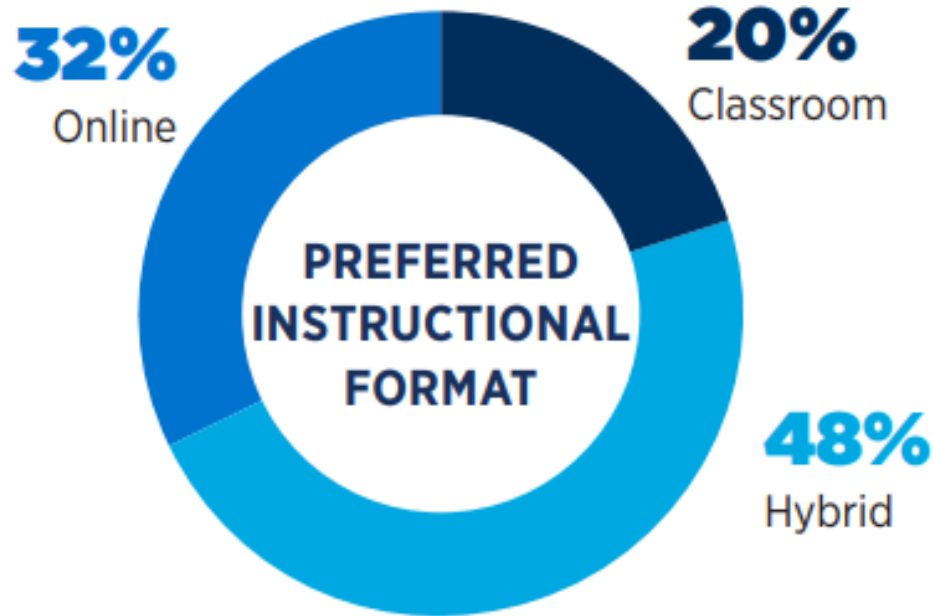
Business programs still lead, but health care and computer/information science fields are on the rise.

INTENDED AREA OF STUDY	CLASSROOM	HYBRID
Business	12%	15%
Health Professions	18%	15%
Computer/Information Science	8%	13%
Education	7%	9%
Social Services, Public Administration, Criminal Justice	5%	6%
Counseling/Psychology	9%	9%
Arts and Humanities	11%	9%
Communications	6%	4%
Social Sciences	9%	8%
Natural Sciences: Biological/Physical/Earth Science	7%	6%
Engineering	8%	6%



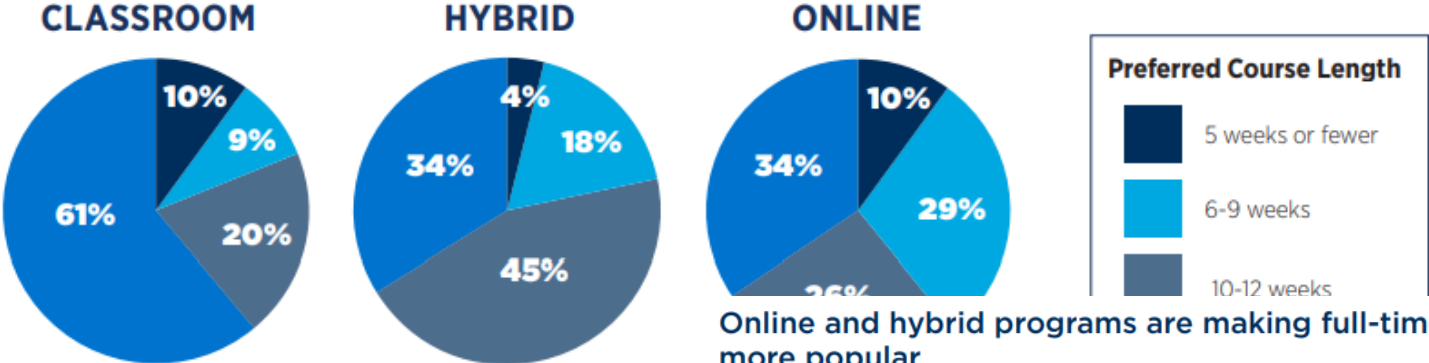
How they plan to study

Graduate students seek hybrid and online study.

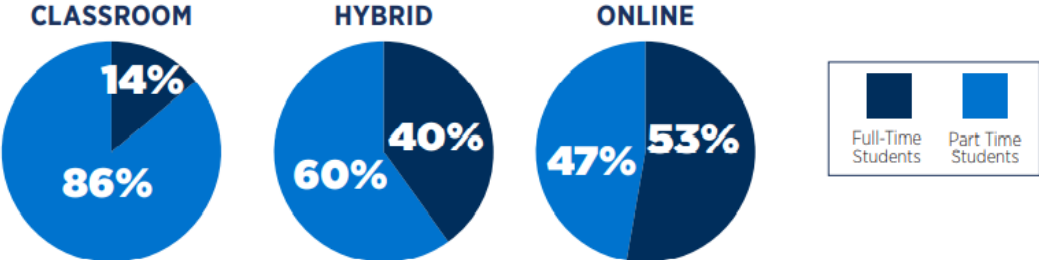


How they plan to study

Only classroom students want semester-length courses and programs.



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



How they plan to study: Classroom v. Online

Classroom and Hybrid Preferences

Graduate students who want to learn in the classroom want to do so on the main campus.

PREFERRED LOCATION OF STUDY

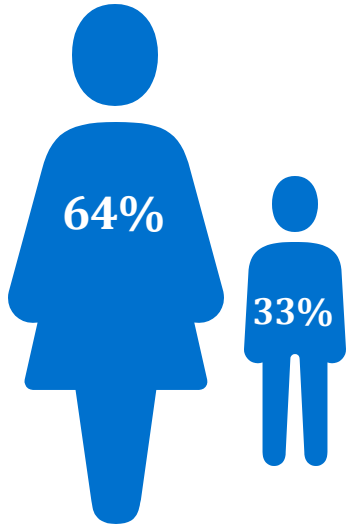


PREFERRED TYPE OF PROGRAM	CLASSROOM	HYBRID
Cohort program (move through program with same group of students)	50%	36%
Weekday program (weekday prior to 5 p.m.)	35%	31%

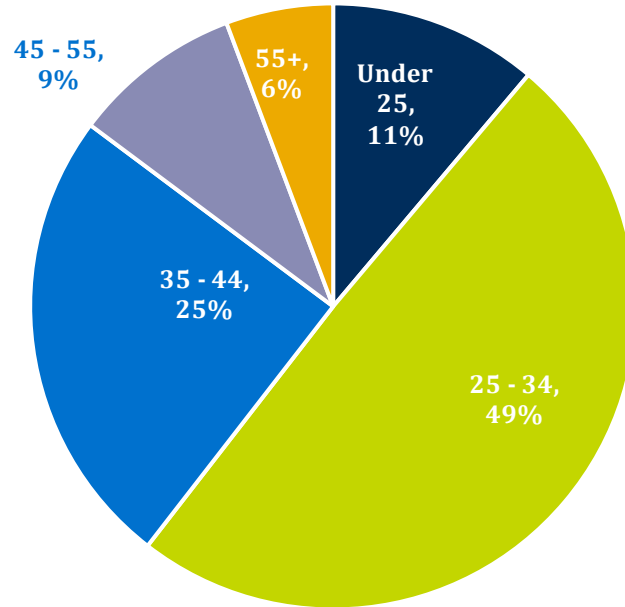
PREFERRED TYPE OF PROGRAM	ONLINE
Evening programs	
Weekend program	
Online, with periodic scheduled virtual meetings with the instructor and classmates	45%
Online, where you work at your own pace and finish as fast or as slow as you can complete the material	44%
Online, with no scheduled virtual meetings with the instructor and classmates	12%

Who they are

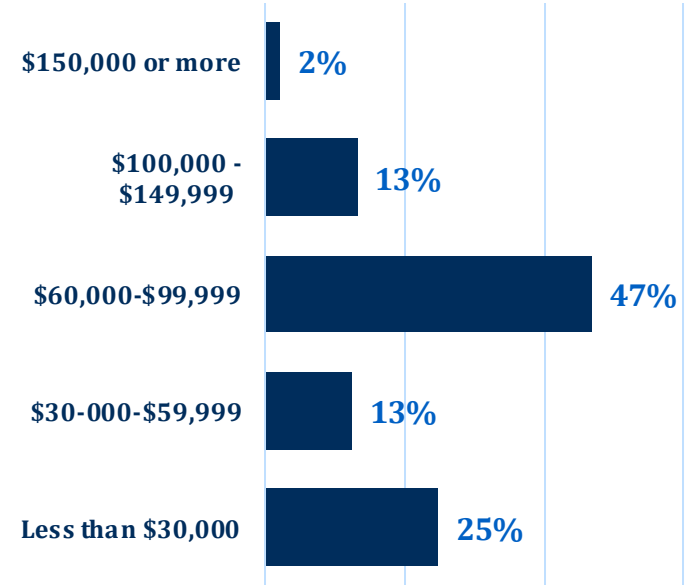
Gender



Age



Household Income



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%

How do they search/research

Half of graduate students prefer Facebook and LinkedIn as social media channels for learning about graduate programs.

PREFERRED SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LEARNING ABOUT GRADUATE PROGRAMS	CLASSROOM	HYBRID	ONLINE
Facebook	53%	60%	53%
LinkedIn	32%	46%	47%
YouTube	40%	51%	35%
Instagram	30%	32%	27%
Twitter	23%	28%	20%
Pinterest	12%	16%	11%
Snapchat	9%	7%	5%
Tik Tok	7%	6%	4%
None	15%	12%	19%

How they search/research and contact

Graduate students will click on digital ads on a wide variety of platforms.

Clicked on Advertisement on a Website or Social Media Platform

66%

Classroom

69%

Hybrid

69%

Online

Top 3 things students click to do

60% Review program details

50% Watch a video

30% Complete a form

How they search/research and contact

Graduate students find virtual recruitment events highly effective.

EVENTS THAT ARE EFFECTIVE IN HELPING MAKE AN ENROLLMENT DECISION	CLASSROOM	HYBRID	ONLINE
Face-to-face information sessions, open houses, or campus tours	Institutions need optimized information request forms.		
Virtual information campus tours			
Virtual one-on-one			
Video call/interview			
METHOD OF FIRST CONTACT	CLASSROOM	HYBRID	ONLINE
Filled out an information request form on the school's website	51%	64%	68%
Email the school	53%	58%	48%
Attend a recruitment event at the school	31%	30%	31%
Call the school	23%	26%	21%
Attend a virtual recruitment event at the school	26%	28%	11%
Schedule a visit to the campus, virtual or in person	16%	18%	8%

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.*

Their priorities and concerns

Graduate students prioritize information on cost and academics when visiting institutional websites.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON INSTITUTIONAL WEBSITES*	CLASSROOM	HYBRID	ONLINE
Cost/tuition information	47%	54%	63%
Specific academic program details	43%	42%	51%
Financial aid/scholarship options	47%	45%	46%
A list of graduate programs or degrees	33%	34%	40%
Career information/statistics on job placement	33%	39%	35%
How to apply for admission	27%	26%	32%
Virtual tours	8%	10%	15%
Contact information for admissions	10%	17%	13%
Videos featuring faculty	11%	8%	11%

Are these available within 1 click?

How they prefer to make contact

Contacting Schools and Programs

Institutions need optimized information request forms.

Method(s) of First Contact	Classroom	Hybrid	Online
Filled out an information request form on the school's website	49%	60%	65%
Email the school	49%	55%	45%
Call the school	22%	25%	19%
Attend a recruitment event at the school	24%	26%	10%
Schedule a visit to the campus, virtual or in person	15%	17%	7%
Submit an application	30%	29%	30%

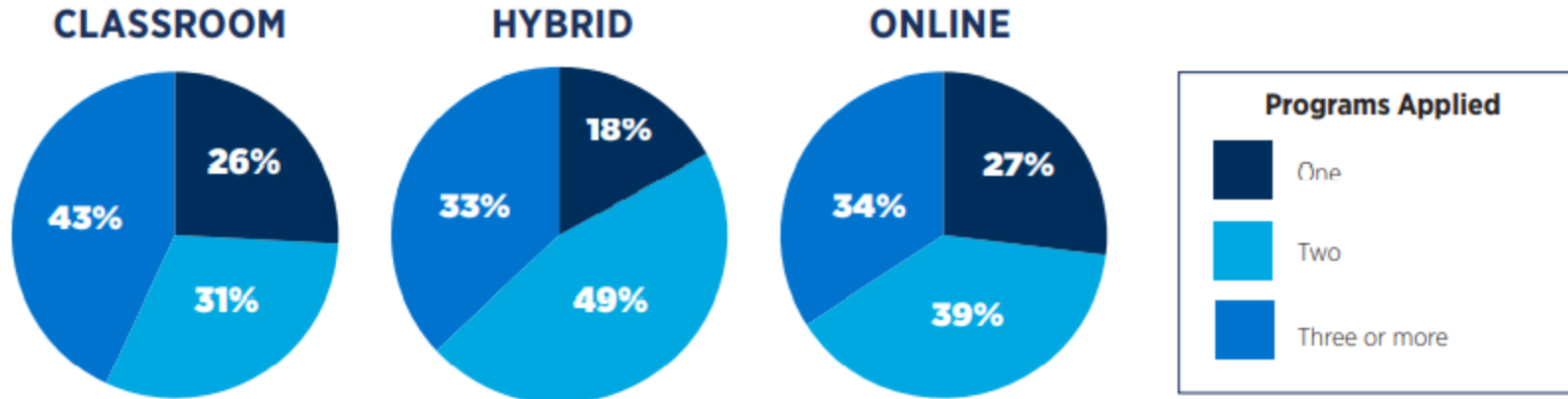
Their expectations

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

Most programs are competing with others for their graduate students.



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%

Their expectations

STUDENTS WHO SAID THEY DEFINITELY OR VERY LIKELY WILL ENROLL AT THE FIRST PROGRAM TO ADMIT THEM

82%

Classroom

89%

Hybrid

83%

Online



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THANK YOU

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