



Executing an Effective Market Research-Based Approach that Drives Sustainable Graduate and Online Enrollment and Revenue Growth

Ashley Miller, Purdue University

Boyd Bradshaw, Towson University

Charles Ramos, RNL



Research Driven Approach



Understanding the Market Trends

Graduate and Online education has become “mission critical” for most institutions seeking to grow.

TABLE 2: UNDERGRADUATE YEAR-OVER-YEAR FALL ENROLLMENT CHANGE BY FORMAT

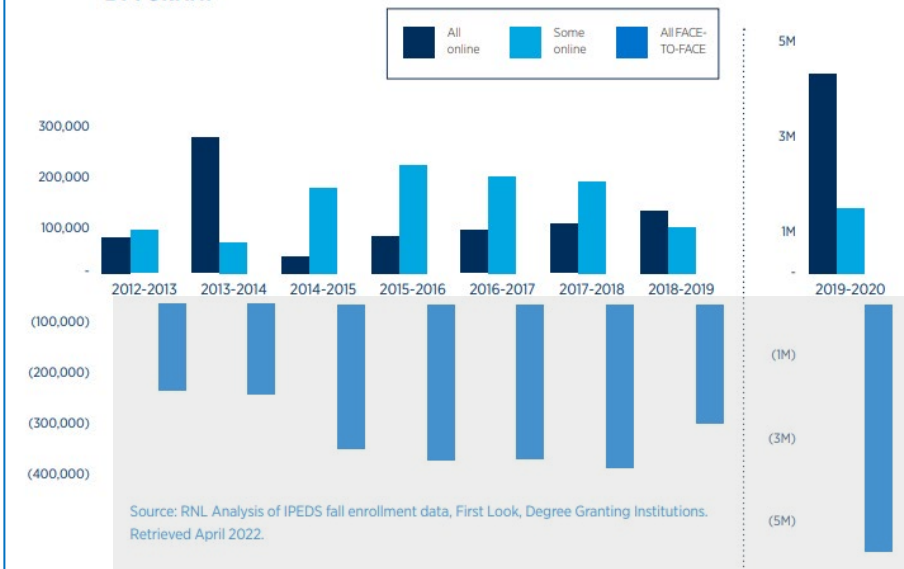
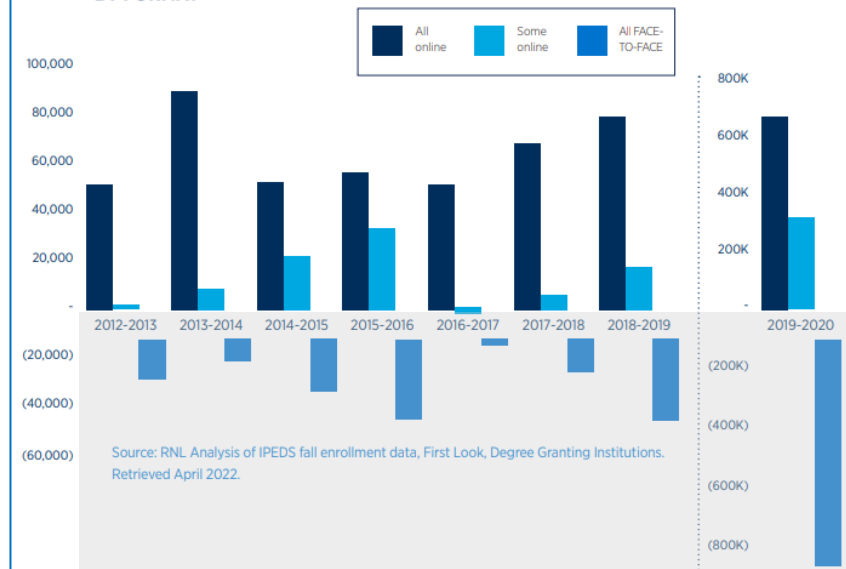
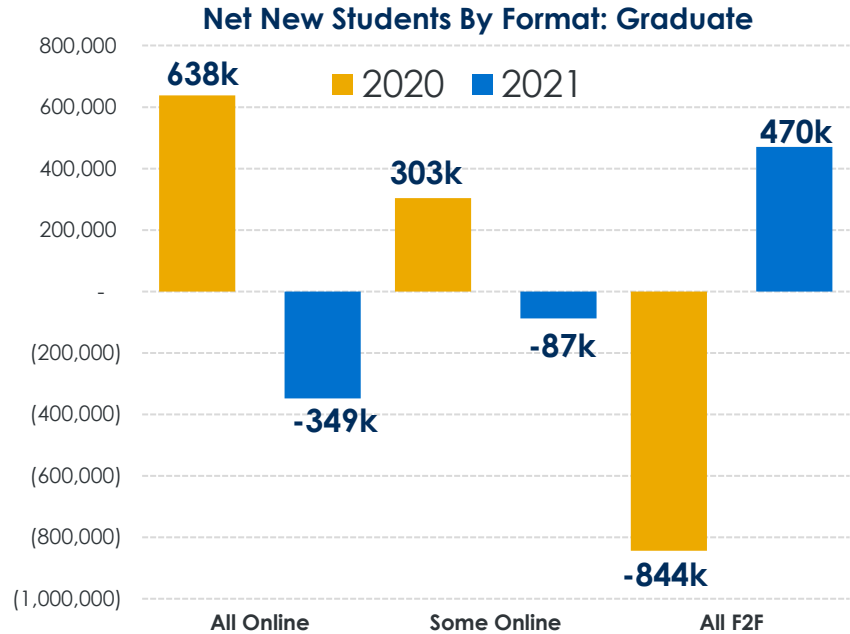
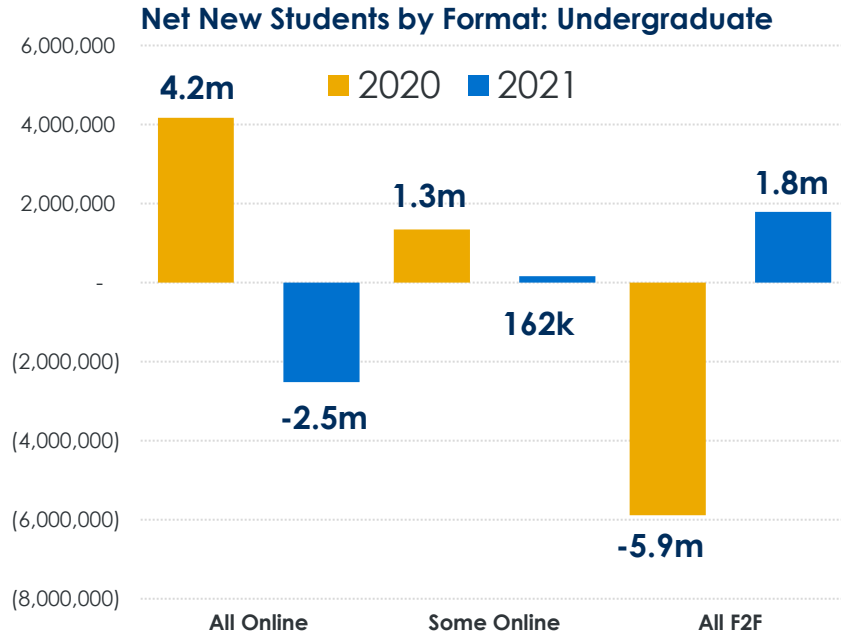


TABLE 5: GRADUATE - YEAR-OVER-YEAR FALL ENROLLMENT CHANGE BY FORMAT



Post-Pandemic Enrollment Choice Correction?

The first post-pandemic data do not indicate the kind of “snap back” to “normal” that some hoped for

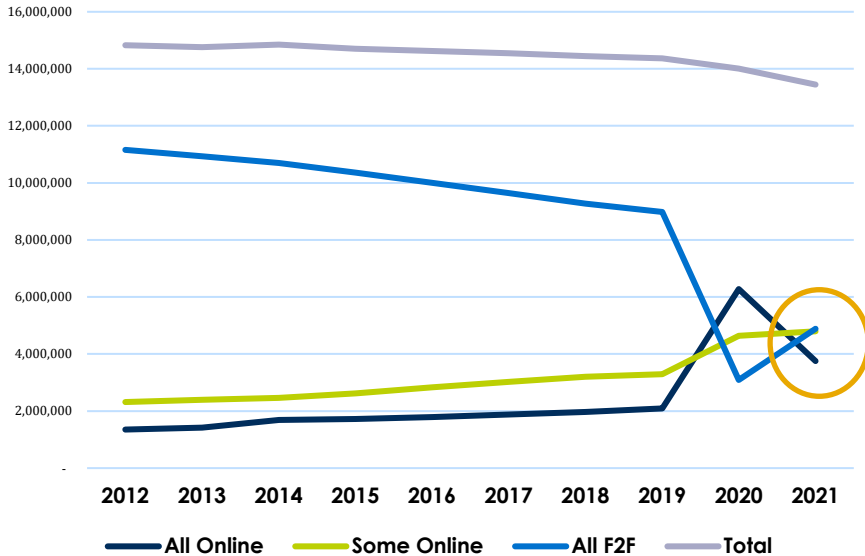


Source: RNL Analysis of IPEDS Fall Enrollment Snapshot data (U.S. degree-granting institutions of at least 2 years.)

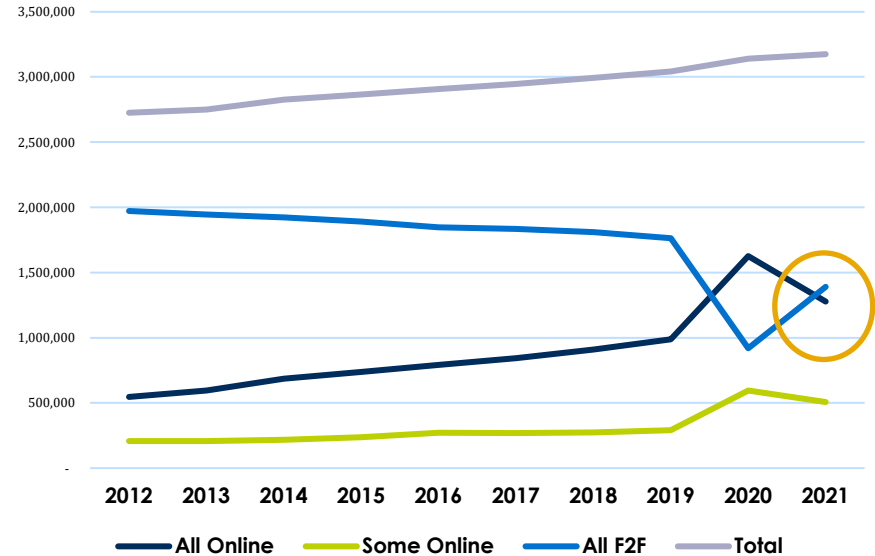
Enrollment trends and format choice since 2012

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, fully online and fully classroom students are now at near parity. Is this the future of higher education?

Undergraduate

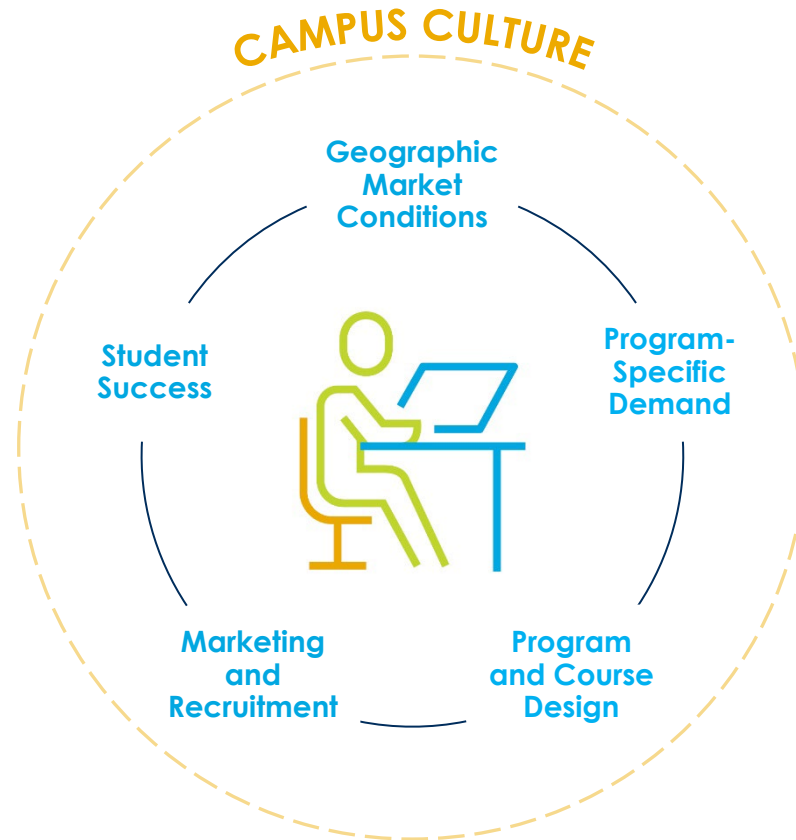


Graduate



Source: RNL Analysis of IPEDS Fall Enrollment Snapshot data. (U.S. degree-granting institutions of at least two years.)

Factors Influencing Enrollment



A blue-tinted photograph of three people in a meeting. A woman with curly hair is in the center, looking down and smiling. To her left, a man in a suit is partially visible. To her right, another man is looking down, possibly at a document. The text "Understanding Market Demand" is overlaid in white, centered on the image.

Understanding Market Demand

25 Largest Online Bachelor's (Example)

PROGRAM	ALL FORMATS			ONLINE AVAILABLE			OCCUPATIONS	
	TOTAL DEGREES 2021	5-YEAR GROWTH #	5-YEAR GROWTH %	TOTAL ONLINE DEGREES	5-YEAR GROWTH #	5-YEAR GROWTH %	ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPENINGS	PROJECTED % GROWTH (2022 – 2027)
Registered Nursing	3,474	549	19%	2,857	541	23%	3,892	5%
Business Administration and Management	5,045	287	6%	2,127	659	45%	33,319	6%
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	1,537	(65)	(4%)	760	222	41%	1,687	(1%)
Elementary Education and Teaching	1,162	(57)	(5%)	560	158	39%	1,858	(1%)
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	751	223	42%	415	278	203%	35,293	4%
Speech Communication and Rhetoric	1,593	92	6%	402	97	32%	861	7%
Psychology	3,225	(353)	(10%)	336	96	40%	968	11%
Sociology	989	(105)	(10%)	327	173	112%	748	3%
Finance	1,178	264	29%	287	164	133%	2,942	8%
Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies	330	201	156%	269	248	1181%	33,070	4%
Business/Commerce	390	163	72%	244	116	91%	11,661	7%
Accounting	1,001	(67)	(6%)	233	148	174%	6,861	4%
Marketing/Marketing Management	1,040	283	37%	223	68	44%	2,027	11%
Political Science and Government	1,687	296	21%	196	194	9700%	1,242	5%
Industrial Technology/Technician	183	34	23%	179	39	28%	219	5%
Exercise Science and Kinesiology	1,104	224	25%	172	172	Insf. Data	1,038	15%
Criminology	208	(21)	(9%)	153	153	Insf. Data	556	0%
Sports, Kinesiology, and Physical Education/Fitness	724	(25)	(3%)	148	42	40%	4,516	4%
Information Technology	329	205	165%	148	83	128%	7,253	8%
Health/Health Care Administration/Management	806	400	99%	141	(17)	(11%)	4,157	5%
Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration	293	(19)	(6%)	120	(10)	(8%)	1,845	(1%)
Hospitality Administration/Management	193	(20)	(9%)	119	28	31%	2,068	12%
Computer Systems Networking and Telecommunications	116	45	63%	116	52	81%	4,355	6%
Logistics, Materials, and Supply Chain Management	115	115	Insf. Data	112	112	Insf. Data	1,125	7%
Kindergarten/Preschool Education and Teaching	141	(24)	(15%)	102	16	19%	1,207	5%

25 Largest Master's (Example)

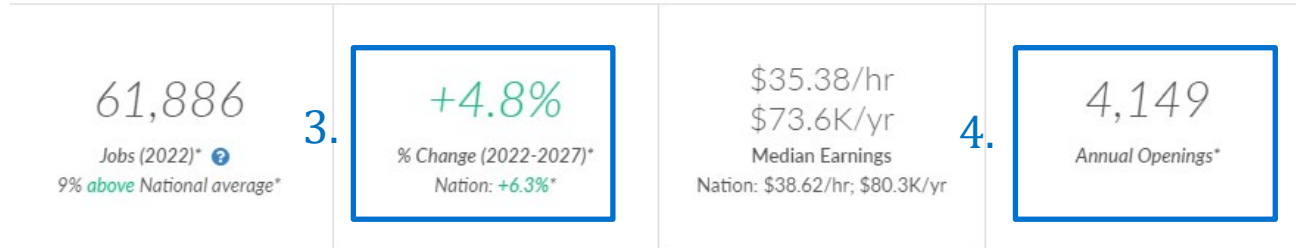
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Business Administration and Management	2,890	(418)	(13%)	1,932	449	30%	18,511	6%
Management Science	1,158	1,153	23060%	1,149	1,149	Insf. Data	2,265	8%
Social Work	823	65	9%	255	255	Insf. Data	712	6%
Computer Science	646	63	11%	283	40	16%	4,346	8%
Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods...	626	602	2508%	75	75	Insf. Data	945	9%
Accounting	569	(156)	(22%)	253	230	1000%	3,812	4%
Physician Assistant	515	28	6%	0	0	0%	127	12%
Teacher Educ./Prof. Dev., Specific Levels and...	502	152	43%	400	226	130%	5,900	2%
Public Health, General	394	233	145%	338	256	312%	731	10%
Library and Information Science	377	114	43%	323	105	48%	1,711	4%
Public Administration	341	45	15%	156	18	13%	2,536	7%
Divinity/Ministry	336	12	4%	242	38	19%	344	8%
Educational Leadership and Administration	305	(89)	(23%)	162	(90)	(36%)	217	2%
Counselor Education/School Counseling...	297	2	1%	148	70	90%	241	5%
Family Practice Nurse/Nursing	297	115	63%	42	3	8%	190	21%
Electrical and Electronics Engineering	289	11	4%	164	54	49%	253	9%
Health/Health Care Administration/Management	278	(48)	(15%)	252	(46)	(15%)	2,309	5%
Theology/Theological Studies	258	(8)	(3%)	0	(6)	(100%)	681	7%
Occupational Therapy/Therapist	180	77	75%	0	0	0%	70	8%
College Student Counseling/Personnel Services	179	22	14%	40	18	82%	241	5%
Engineering/Industrial Management	170	(67)	(28%)	170	113	198%	1,020	4%
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	165	79	92%	165	88	114%	2,162	5%
Statistics	162	93	135%	118	78	195%	300	10%
Registered Nursing, Admin., Research, Clinical	160	(159)	(50%)	160	(71)	(31%)	1,945	5%
Data Modeling/Warehousing/Database Administration	158	45	40%	0	0	0%	2,445	8%

BSN: Online-available programs lead the region



	Completions (2021)	% Completions	Institutions (2021)	% Institutions
● All Programs	3,474	100%	28	100%
● Distance Offered Programs	1. 2,857	82%	2. 19	68%
● Non-Distance Offered Programs	617	18%	9	32%

Related Occupations (at Level)



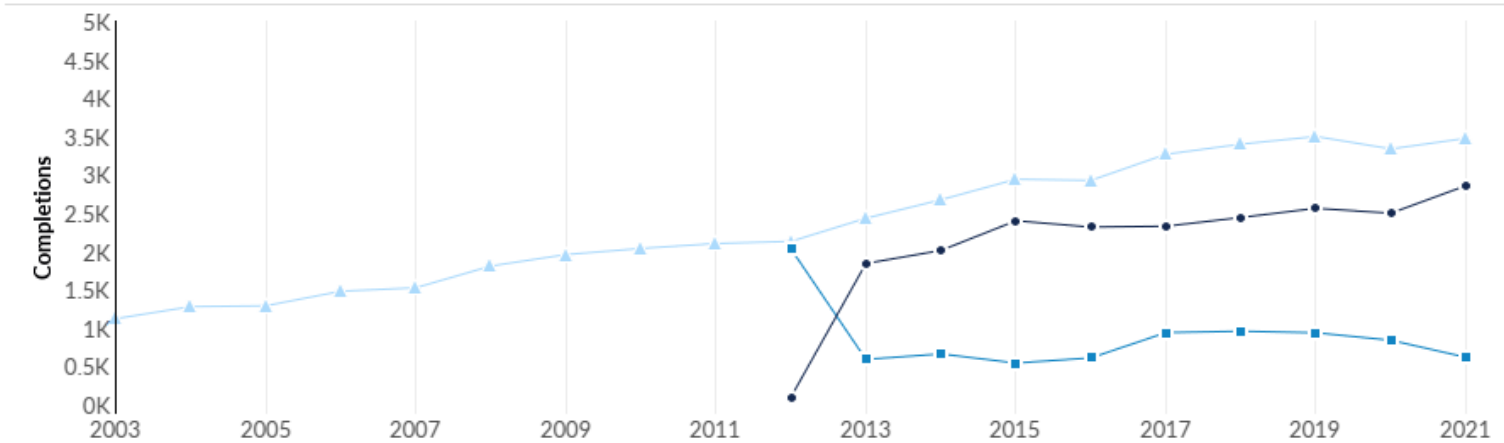
BSN: Top 10 online competitors in the region

10 Largest Online Programs	5. Bachelor's Degree Completions (2021)	Growth % YOY (2021)	6. Market Share (2021) [?]	IPEDS Tuition & Fees (2021)	7. Completions Trend (2017-2021)
⊕ University of North Carolina Wilmington	782	7.6%	22.5%	\$7,238	
⊕ East Carolina University	343	-3.7%	9.9%	\$7,297	
⊕ Winston-Salem State University	262	-2.2%	7.5%	\$6,247	
⊕ Fayetteville State University	220	10.0%	6.3%	\$5,379	
⊕ University of North Carolina at Greensboro	218	16.6%	6.3%	\$7,468	
⊕ University of North Carolina at Charlotte	197	3.1%	5.7%	\$7,188	
⊕ Western Carolina University	167	-6.2%	4.8%	\$4,367	
⊕ Duke University	147	10.5%	4.2%	\$60,244	
⊕ Appalachian State University	143	-21.9%	4.1%	\$7,410	
⊕ Queens University of Charlotte	138	16.9%	4.0%	\$38,726	



BSN: Overall 18-year trend for region

Degree Production Trends – 2003-2021



	2012 Completions	2021 Completions	% Change
● Distance Offered Programs	97	2,857	+2,845.4%
■ Non-Distance Offered Programs	2,032	617	-69.6%
▲ All Programs	2,129	3,474	+63.2%

8-10.



Choosing/Prioritizing Programs

Success is rooted in a balance between market demand and institutional strength. How do you order your internal factors?

INTERNAL

Will



Capacity



Culture



Expertise



EXTERNAL

Market Demands

Trends

Expertise



Fundamental for Success: Market Research

- **Secondary data** can be very powerful...if used in a strategic manner.
 - Compare programs
 - Compare regional trends with national patterns
 - Compare the competitive situation to the employment outlook
- **Recent past CAN inform the immediate future**
 - Student demand lags behind employer demand by as much as 8 years
 - Institutions that are still thinking that they have 2+ years to mount new programs will lose to more nimble institutions
- Focus research on **where growth is happening**: online? classroom?
- Gain intelligence on **specific competitors** so you can **differentiate**
 - Don't differentiate through a long cumbersome program name



Responding to Market Expectations

Student Expectations have shifted. Are you ready?



Need for speed



Rise in consumer mentalities



"Me" centric view of the world



Meaningful connections

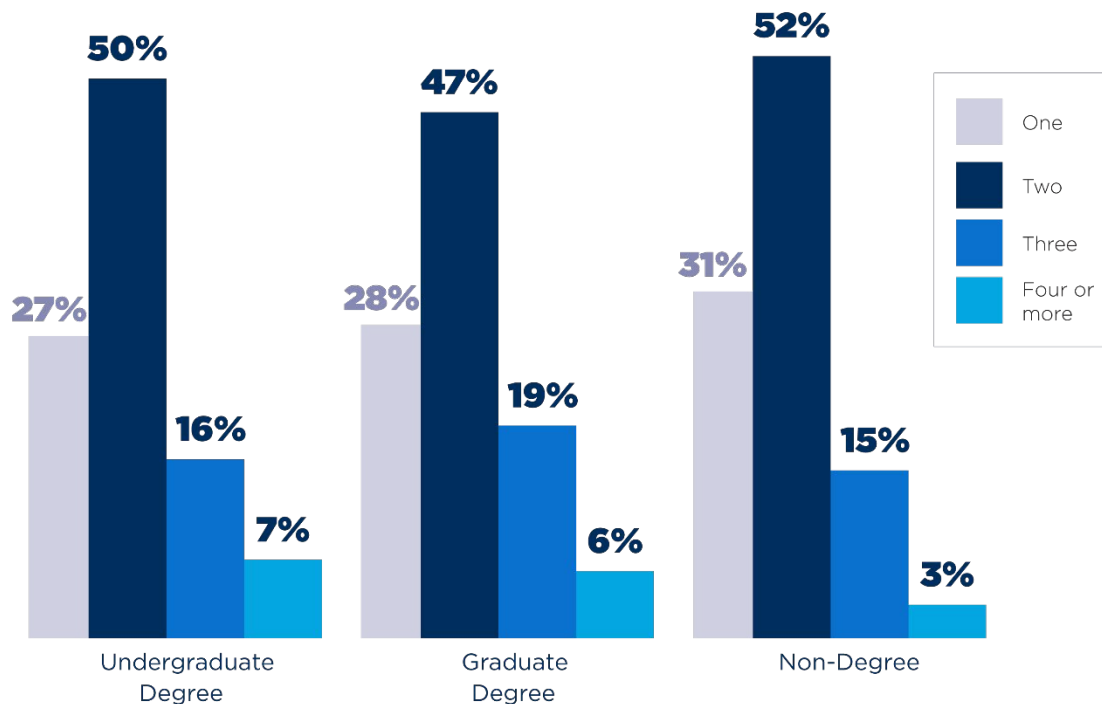
NETFLIX



amazon

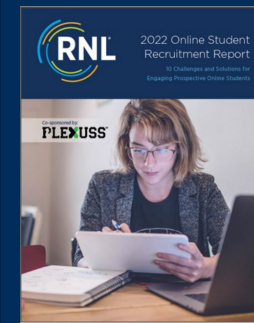
You are competing with more than inertia

TABLE 30: NUMBER OF ONLINE PROGRAMS CONSIDERED



Source: 2022 Online Student Recruitment Report, RNL

Download the report:



Level of Intended Study

TABLE 7: INTENDED ONLINE CREDENTIAL

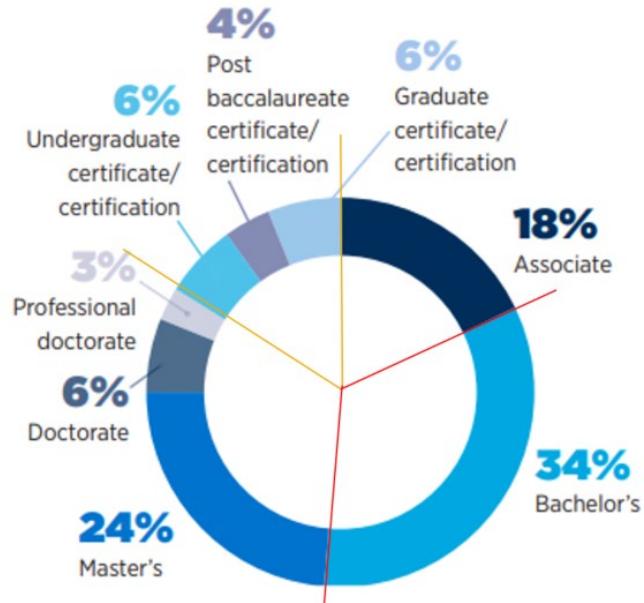
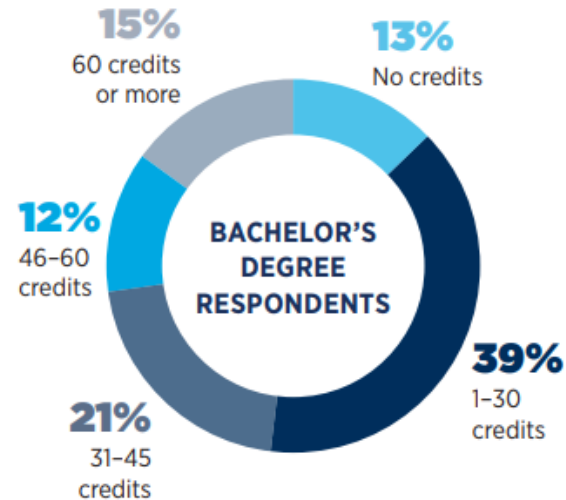


TABLE 8: PREVIOUSLY EARNED UNDERGRADUATE CREDITS

(bachelor's degree respondents only)



Adult students demand timely response to inquiries

TABLE 31: EXPECTED RESPONSE TIMES AFTER FIRST INQUIRY	UNDER-GRADUATE DEGREE	GRADUATE DEGREE	NON-DEGREE
Personalized email			
Immediately	27%	19%	17%
Within 3 hours	21%	20%	20%
Within a day	29%	26%	33%
More than 1 day	23%	36%	30%
Text message			
Immediately	27%	24%	20%
Within 3 hours	25%	27%	35%
Within a day	25%	23%	25%
More than 1 day	23%	27%	21%
Phone call			
Immediately	29%	24%	25%
Within 3 hours	19%	20%	20%
Within a day	26%	26%	28%
More than 1 day	26%	31%	27%

Those 45+ years of age are more willing to wait...

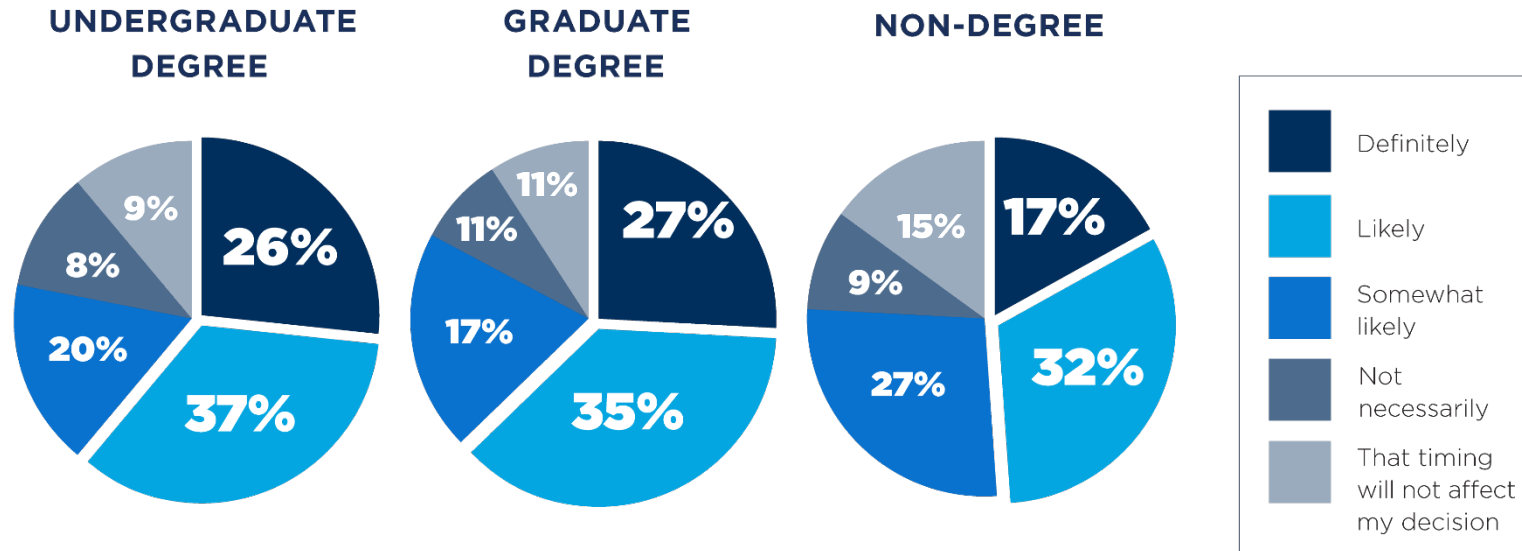
+45: **41%**

+45: **36%**

+45: **48%**

Adult students reward programs that respond quickly

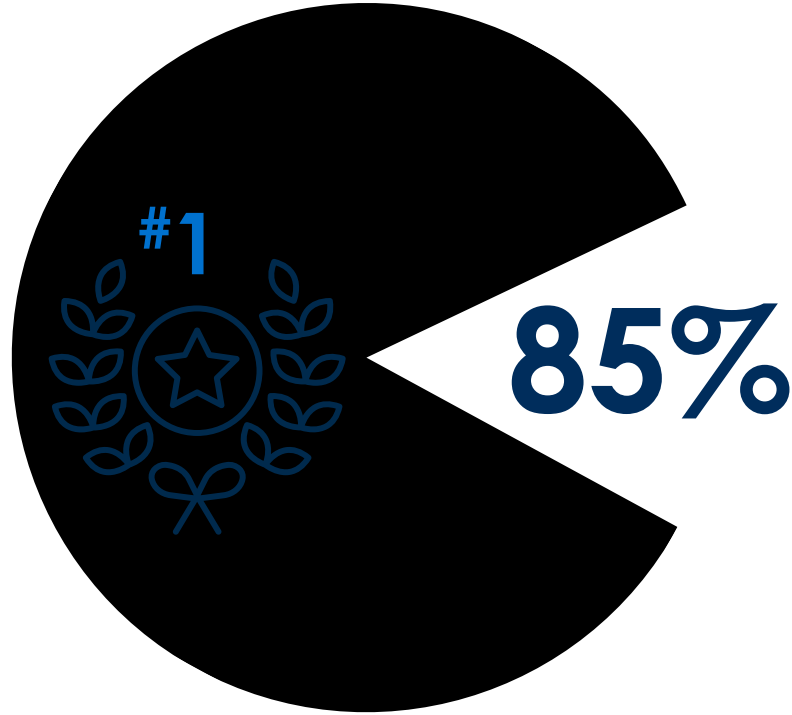
TABLE 36: LIKELIHOOD OF ENROLLING IN PROGRAM THAT RESPONDS FIRST TO INQUIRY



Adult students expect timely admissions decisions

TABLE 38: EXPECTED TIME TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF ADMISSION	UNDER-GRADUATE DEGREE	GRADUATE DEGREE	NON-DEGREE
Within 24 hours	11%	15%	8%
1-3 days	34%	29%	32%
4-7 days	30%	27%	31%
7-14 days	18%	19%	20%
14-21 days	5%	7%	6%
Longer than 21 days	2%	3%	3%

Speed impacts enrollment



of graduate program applicants are **likely to enroll at the first school that accepts them**

Key takeaways to responding to Market Expectations and Demand

- A growth strategy must include more online programs
- Graduate offerings should include a hybrid and/or online option
- We can't apply old practices to new modalities and expect that they will be successful
- The pandemic advanced, but did not significantly accelerate, demand for online/hybrid programs – these have been in demand for years
- Speedy response to initial inquiry, application, and other contact is expected and those who meet those expectations will benefit from increased demand



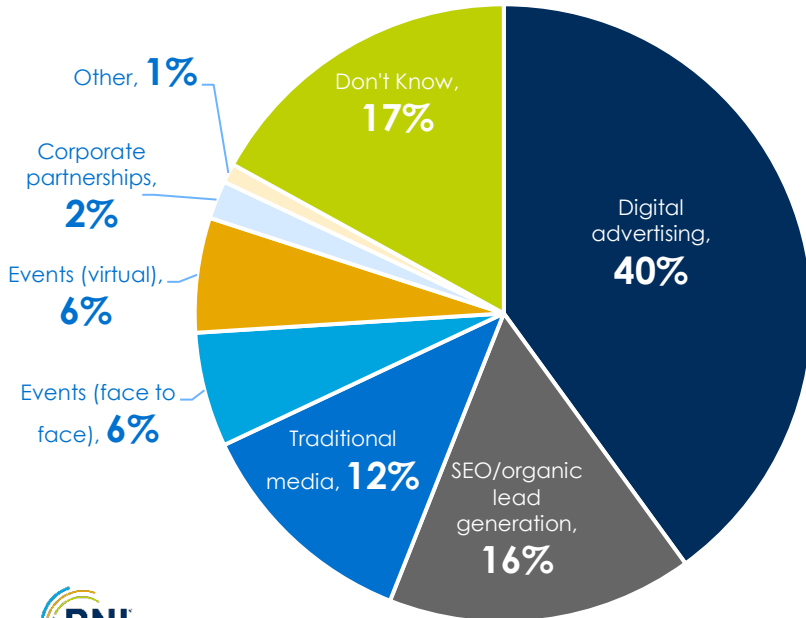


Marketing to a “New” Market

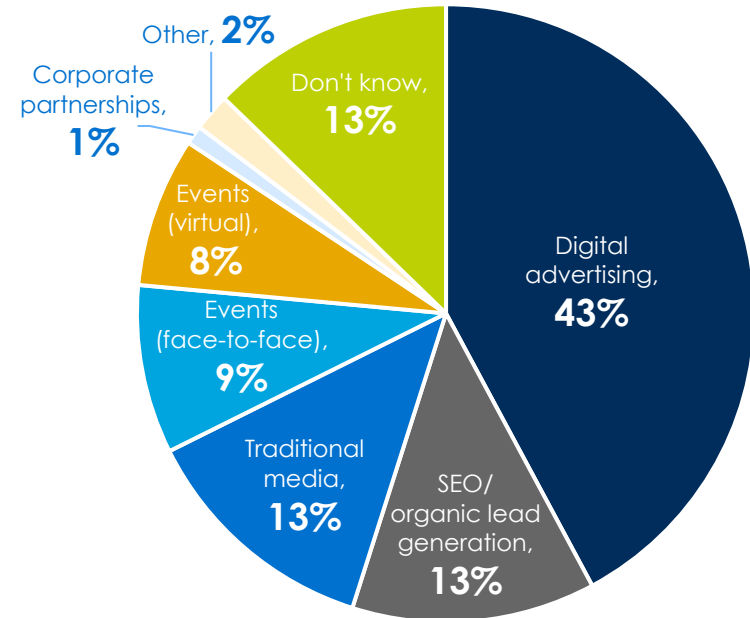
How the typical marketing budget is being spent

THE MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT BUDGETS FOR GRADUATE AND ONLINE PROGRAMS

PRIVATE
ALLOCATION OF MARKETING DOLLARS



PUBLIC
ALLOCATION OF MARKETING DOLLARS

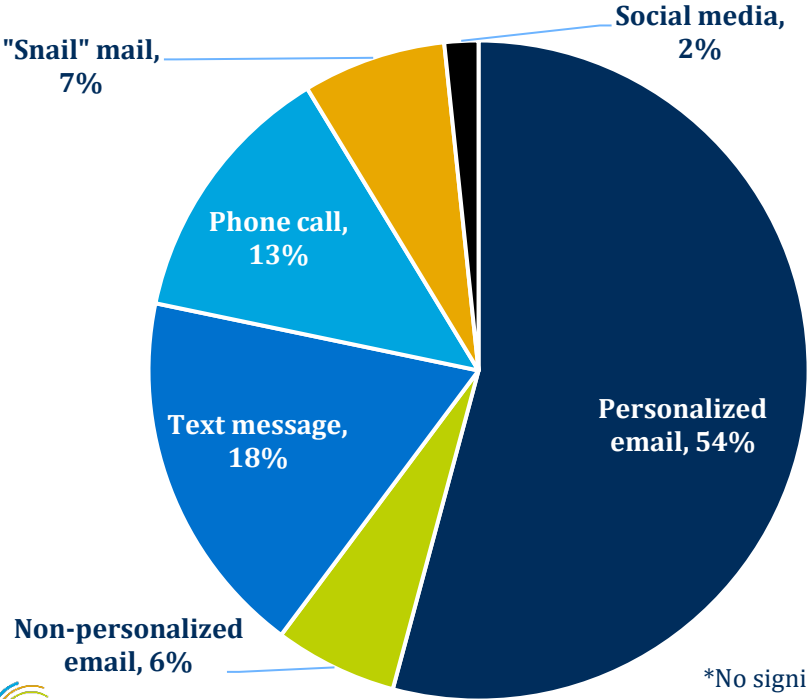


Integrated media strategy

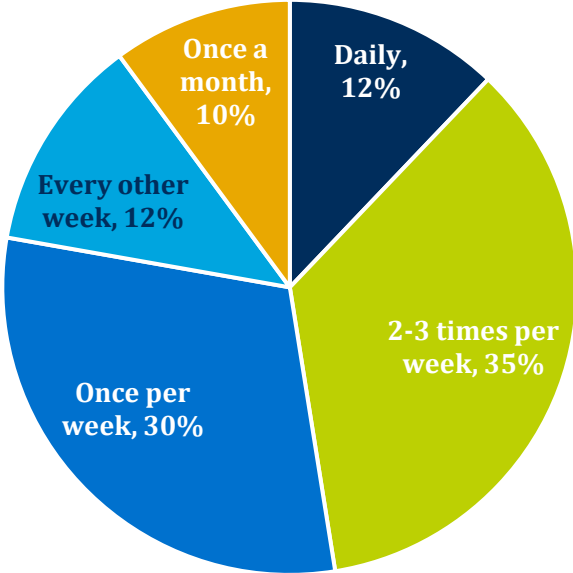


Online students expect regular contact from the programs and the prefer personalized email.

Preferred Method of Follow Up*



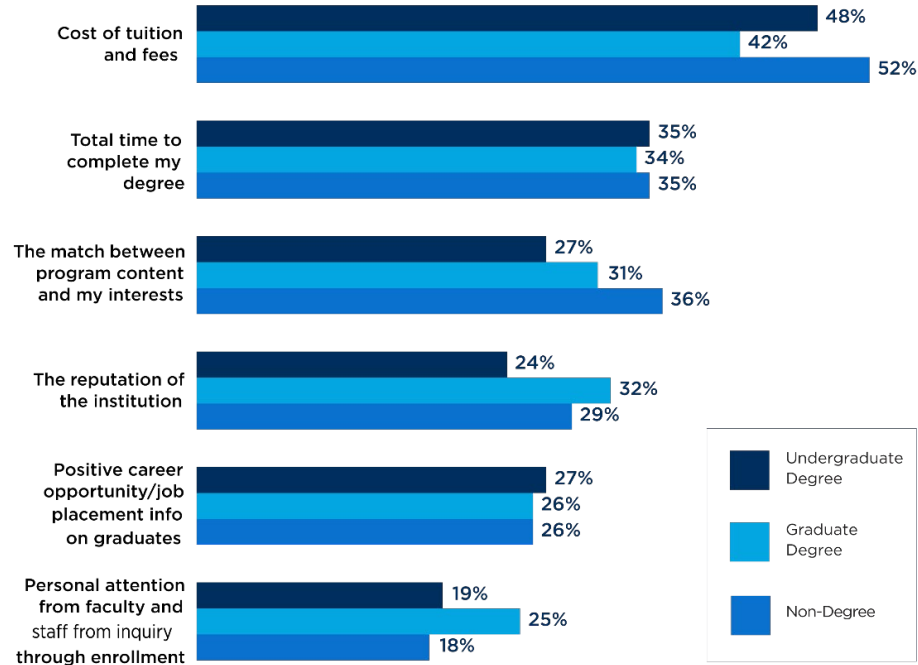
Preferred Frequency of Follow Up*



*No significant difference in preferences by level of study

Online students are focused on practical factors

TABLE 26: MOST IMPORTANT ENROLLMENT FACTORS
(Respondents chose their three most important factors.)



Integrated media strategy



SEO Action Planning



ASSESS

Benchmark visibility based on organic sessions and current search ranking.



PRIORITIZE

Establish a content strategy based on goals, trends and potential for lift.



ASSIGN

Identify resources for management of SEO strategy and content development.



RESEARCH AND WRITE

Develop keyword-driven, benefits-focused content for program and enrollment pages.

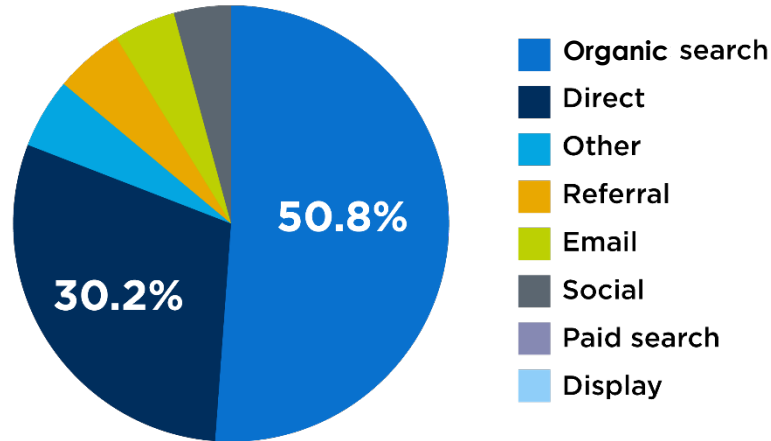


FIX AND EXTEND

Resolve content and technical errors to improve performance, and develop additional content and continue...

Organic lead generation is a lower volume but higher converting lead source

TOP CHANNELS

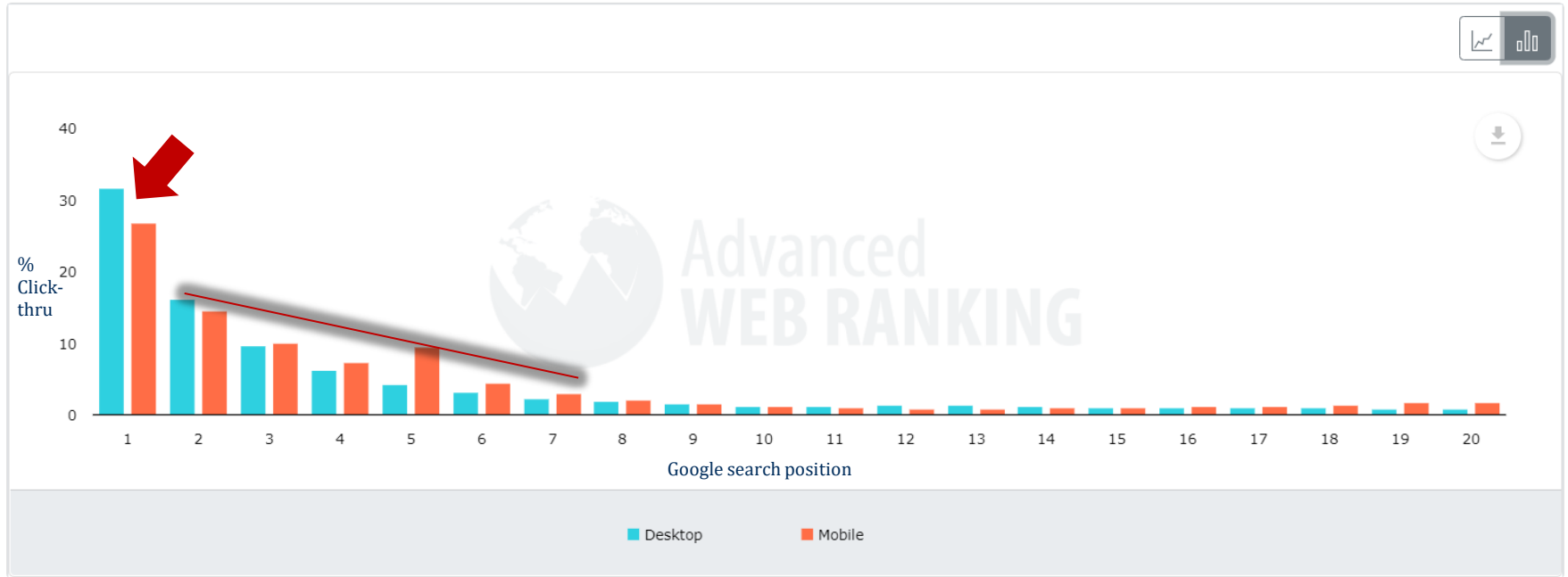


Approximately **50%** of all higher education website traffic comes from search engines.

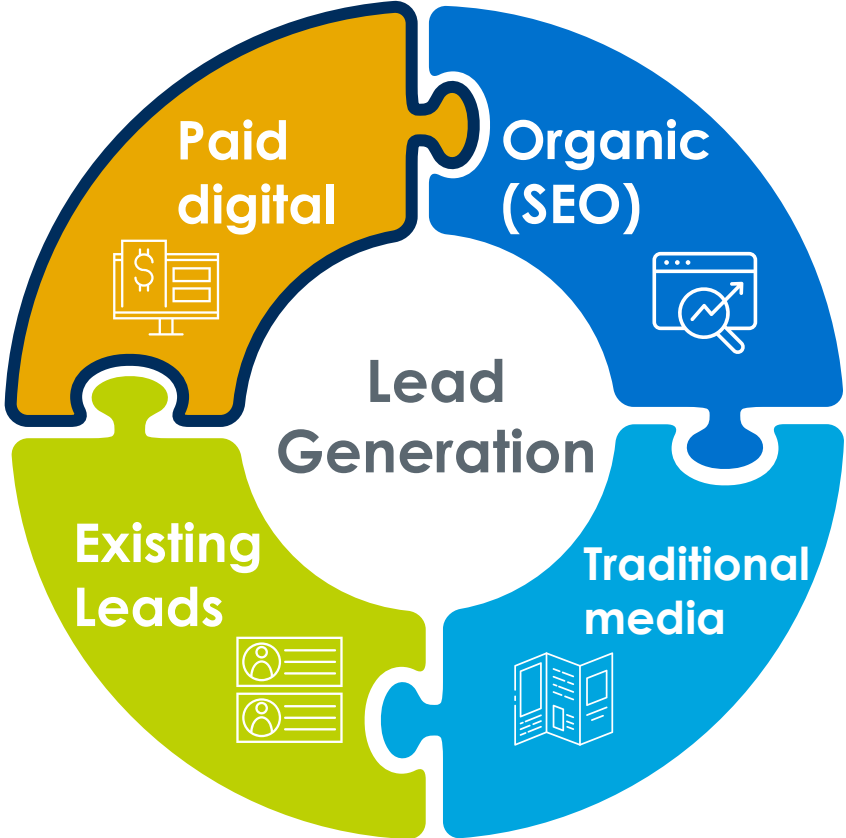
77% of students will use a search engine to access a website **EVEN** if they know which school they want to look up.

Organic leads are approximately **7X** more likely to convert compared to other sources.

National click-through rates per ranking position



Integrated media strategy



Paid digital lead generation trends



INCREASING INVESTMENT

Increasing investment from campuses in digital and social channels

CPLs are increasing across the board



FOCUSED STRATEGY

A focused strategy is important to deliver a high ROI

Persona-specific communication resonates in the market



HIGH LEVEL OF OPTIMIZATION

High level of optimization leads to better results



DIGITAL CHANNELS

Digital channels should include social, IP targeting, video, new and next channels

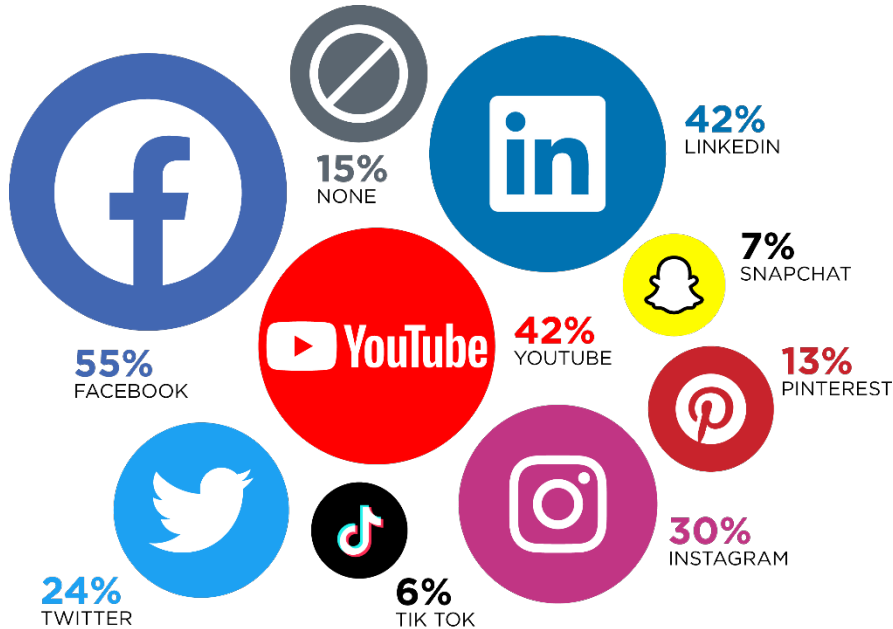


CHANGING REGULATIONS

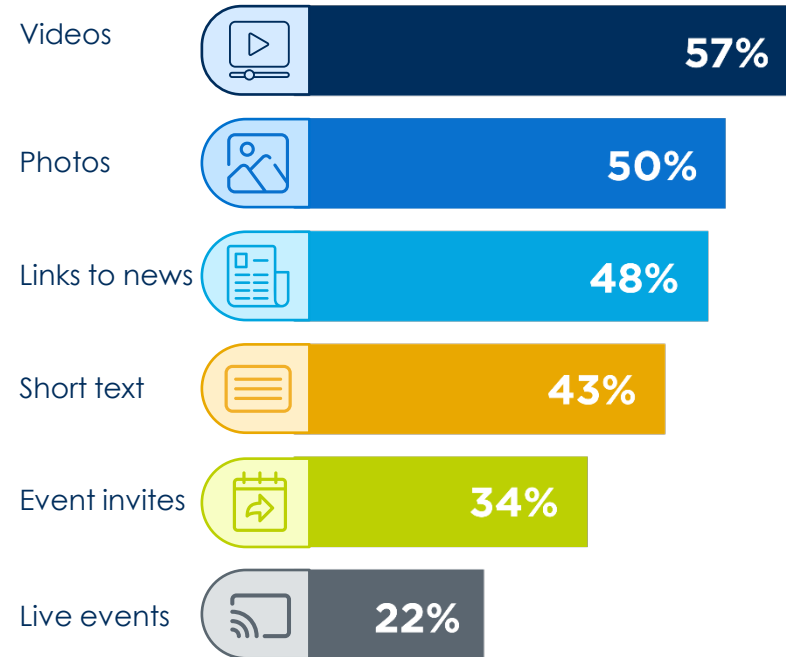
Ever-changing regulations

68% of prospective students use social media in their search

PREFERRED SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GRADUATE PROGRAM INFO



PREFERRED CONTENT ON SOCIAL



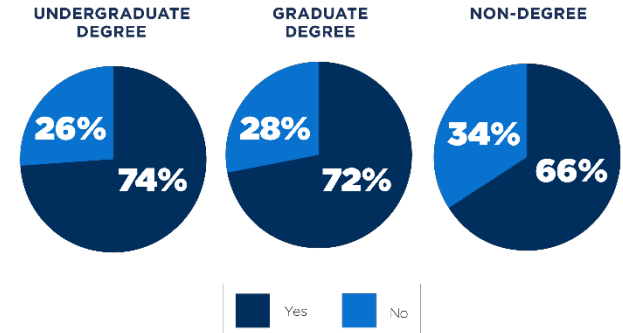
Online students most frequently use digital channels to engage with an institution

TABLE 15: SOURCES USED TO FIND ONLINE PROGRAMS OF INTEREST	UNDER-GRADUATE DEGREE	GRADUATE DEGREE	NON-DEGREE
Search engines	89%	85%	95%
College/program search sites	77%	78%	61%
Ads on social media	58%	73%	57%
Someone I know	53%	56%	56%
Ads on websites	54%	52%	46%
Ads on streaming TV	51%	47%	36%
Ads on broadcast or cable TV	46%	50%	39%
Videos on YouTube or elsewhere	44%	48%	48%
Printed materials from institutions	38%	36%	31%
Ads in newspapers, magazines, etc.	34%	38%	27%
Printed rankings guides	32%	31%	27%
Ads on streaming radio	28%	27%	18%
Billboards/other outdoor ads	28%	24%	19%
Ads on local broadcast radio	26%	26%	13%
Ads on podcasts/other streaming audio	26%	18%	18%

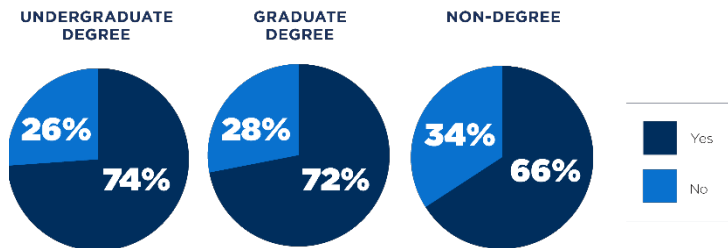
Lower usage but important to include in the mix

What are the three most common initial sources of information?

TABLE 18: CLICKED ON DIGITAL ADS FOR ONLINE PROGRAMS



Online students click ads that speak to their “persona”



MOST COMPELLING REASON TO CLICK ON DIGITAL AD

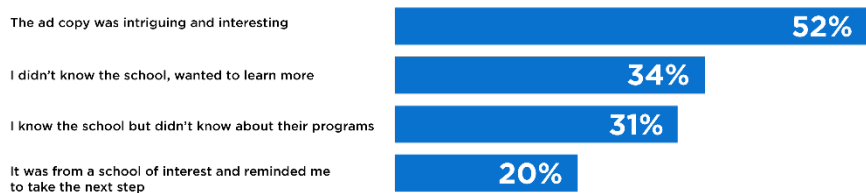
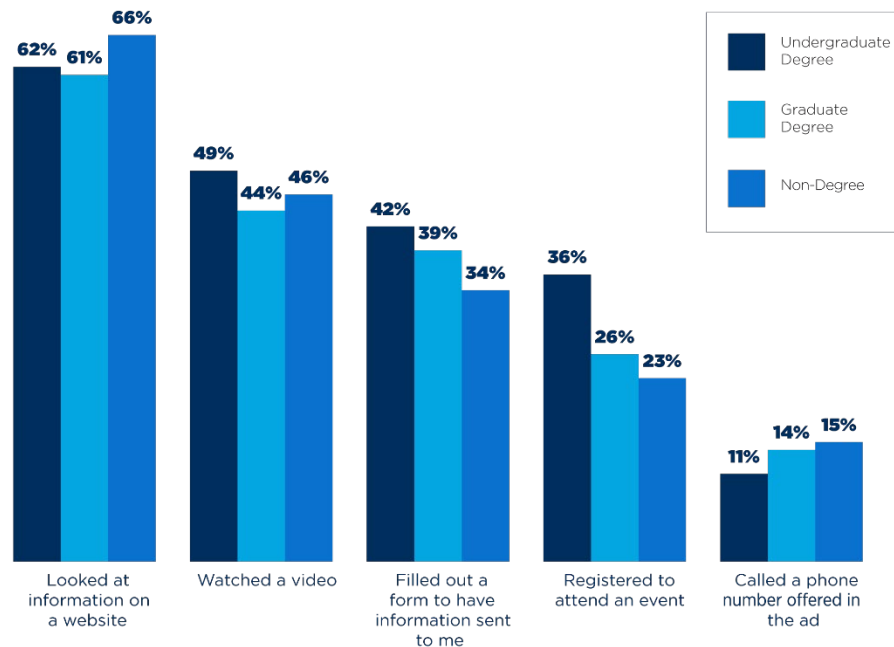


TABLE 19: ACTION AFTER CLICKING DIGITAL ADS



Integrated media strategy



Traditional Media



Direct Mail

Inquiry Generation + Re-engagement

Evolving + OnDemand



Out of Home

Awareness + Interest

Static + Digital



Traditional Radio

Awareness & Broad Reach

Passive + Complementary



Traditional TV

Broad Reach + Retention

Immediate + Intrusive



Transit

Awareness + Engagement

Static + Digital



Building a Plan for Success

Building a strong foundation for growth



Decisions driven by
data and analytics



Direction guided by
a comprehensive
strategic plan



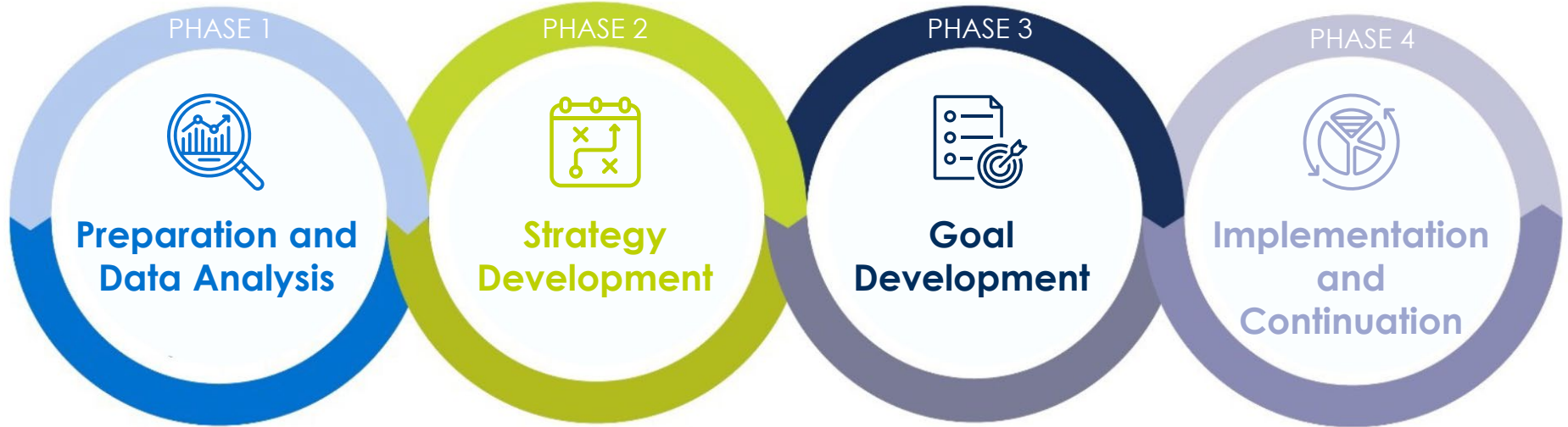
Culture of
investment



Remember your
mission

Strategic Enrollment Planning

The four-phase recursive process



- Build structure
- KPI identification
- Data collection
- Situation analysis

- Tactic identification
- Strategy prioritization
- ROI considerations

- Enrollment projections
- Goal setting
- Written plan finalization

- SEP council reconstituted to include SEM functions
- Monitor, evaluate, and update the plan

Thank You



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