

RNL Regional Workshop

Graduate and Online Enrollment

WELCOME
to Columbus



Let's get
started

Introductions

- How did you “get here”?

What's on the Agenda Today?

- 10:00 **Know Your Market:** How National and Regional Trends Impact Your Success
- 11:15 **Understand Your Audience:**
12 “Must Dos” to be Competitive
- 12:15 Lunch
- 1:30 **Meet Your Market:** Best Practices in Lead Gen and Conversion
- 2:30 **Applying What You Learned:** Next Steps in Making Change Happen

WiFi Network

Please refer to the sign on your table for the credentials.

Goals for today

- 1 Connect with colleagues from around your region
- 2 Leave armed with context and research focused on:
 - ✓ Growth factors
 - ✓ Regional geographic and program specific data
 - ✓ Behaviors and expectations in the non-traditional student market
 - ✓ Key characteristics of a high-quality marketing and recruitment plans
 - ✓ Patterns of success we have observed in this market
- 3 Go back to campus energized with **at least** one actionable idea to implement

We value you!

RESOURCES

We are giving you exclusive access to our full research reports. Check out the reports at the registration table and at your seats.

CONNECT WITH RNL

Let us know if you'd like to connect to discuss how we are partnering with campuses in any of the following areas:

- OPM alternative
- Conversion
- Lead generation
- Instructional design
- Full-funnel attribution
- Consulting and research

EVALUATION FORM

Please complete evaluation form and leave at the table or hand to an RNL staff member.



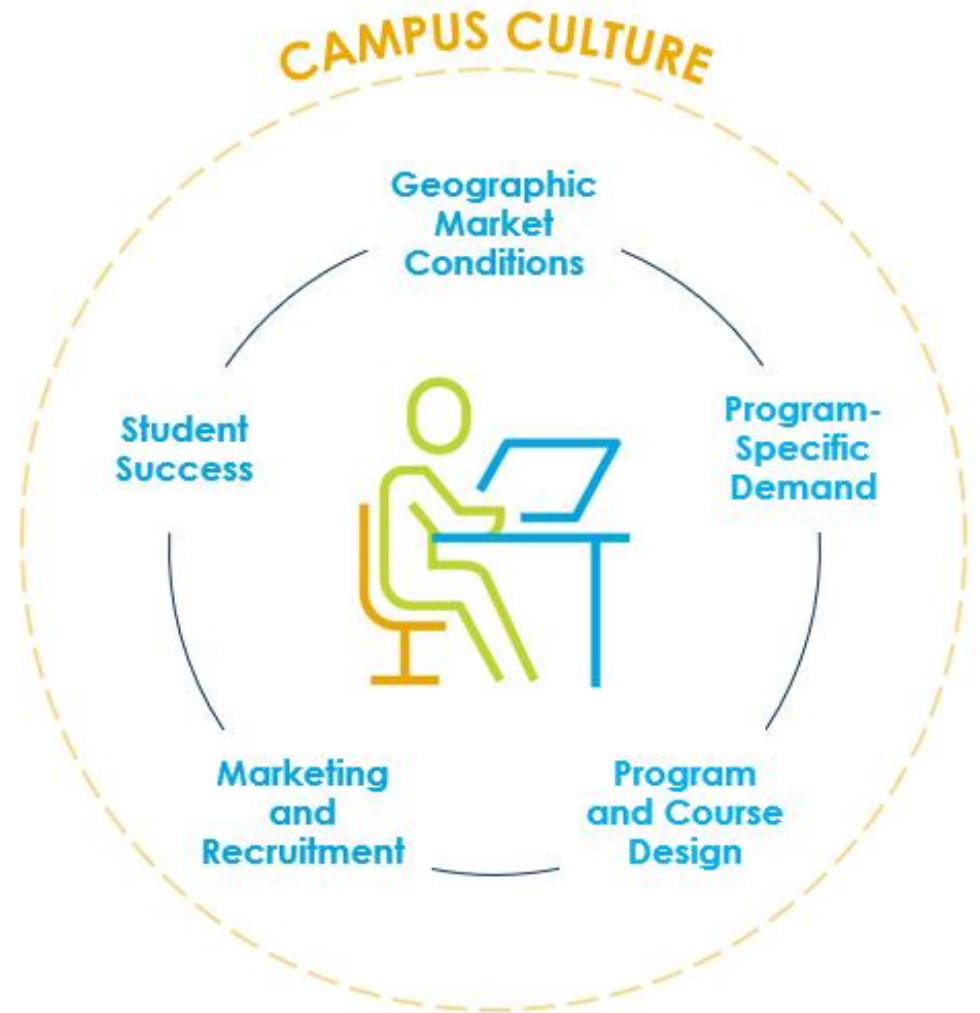
OFFER TO RNL
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Access to RNL's latest report: the 2023 Graduate Student Recruitment Report



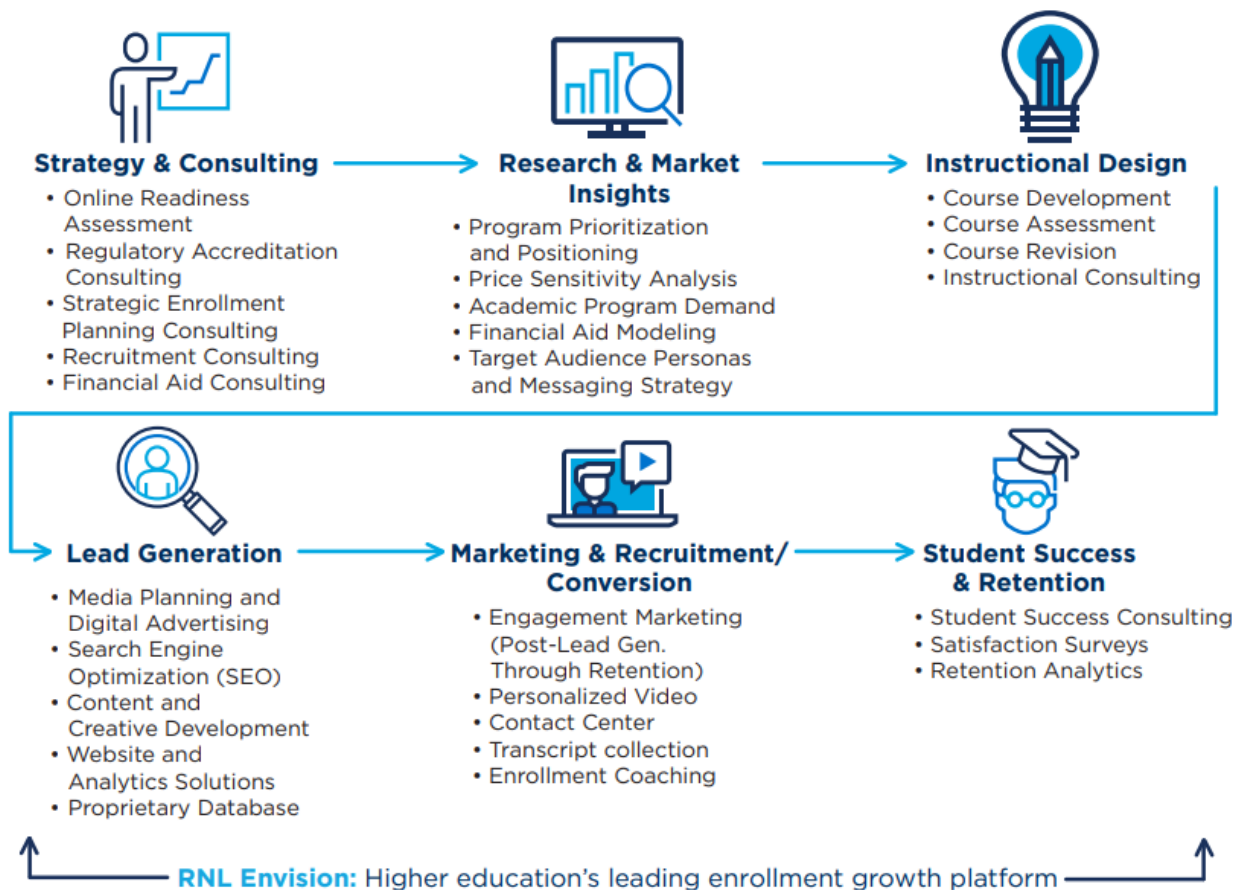
scan me

Factors Influencing Enrollment



RNL Enable: The Complete Solution for Graduate Enrollment

Find everything you need from strategy to course design to recruitment. Learn more at: RNL.com/Enable

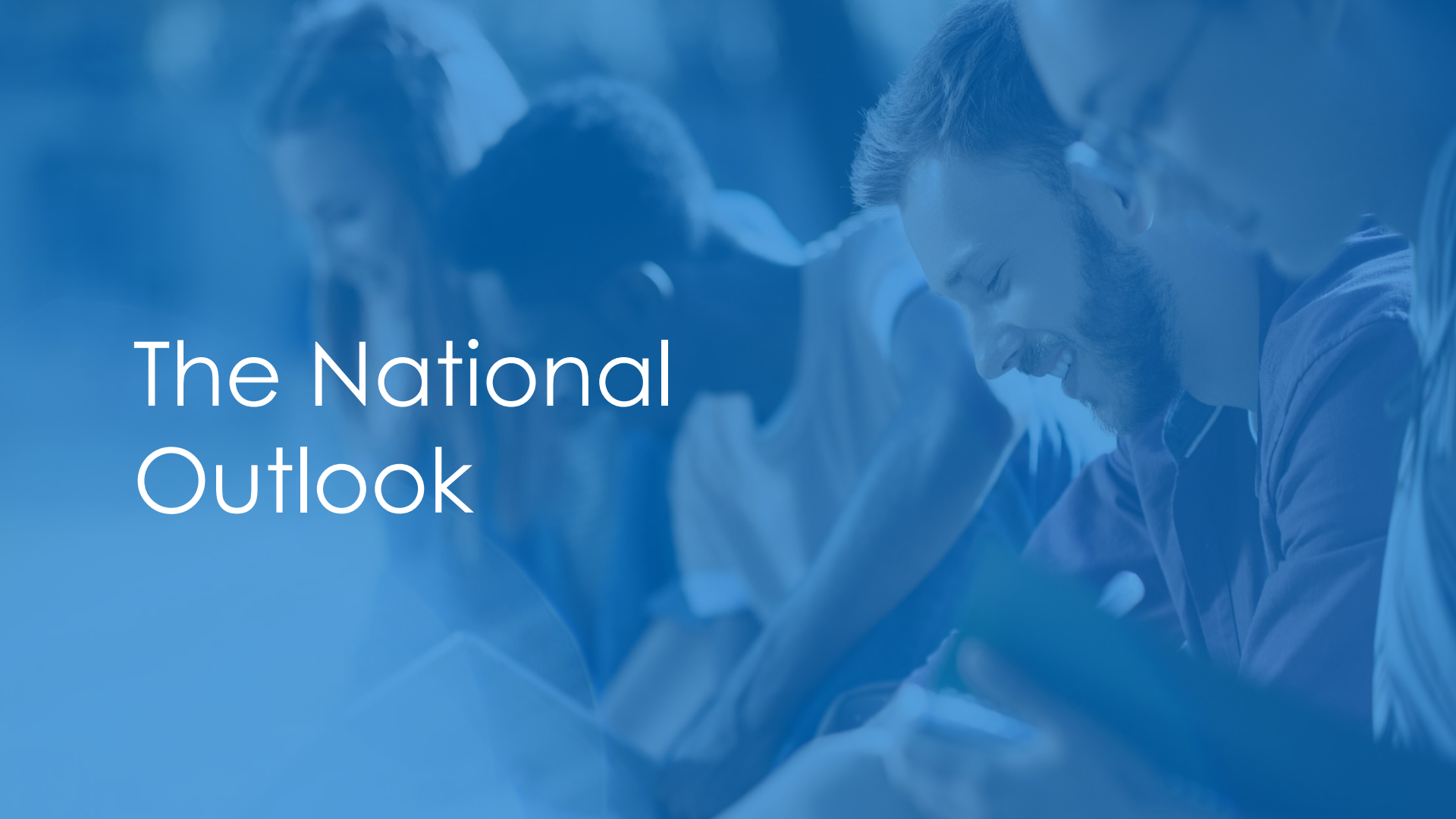


1

Know Your Market:

Regional and National Data To Inform
Your Strategy

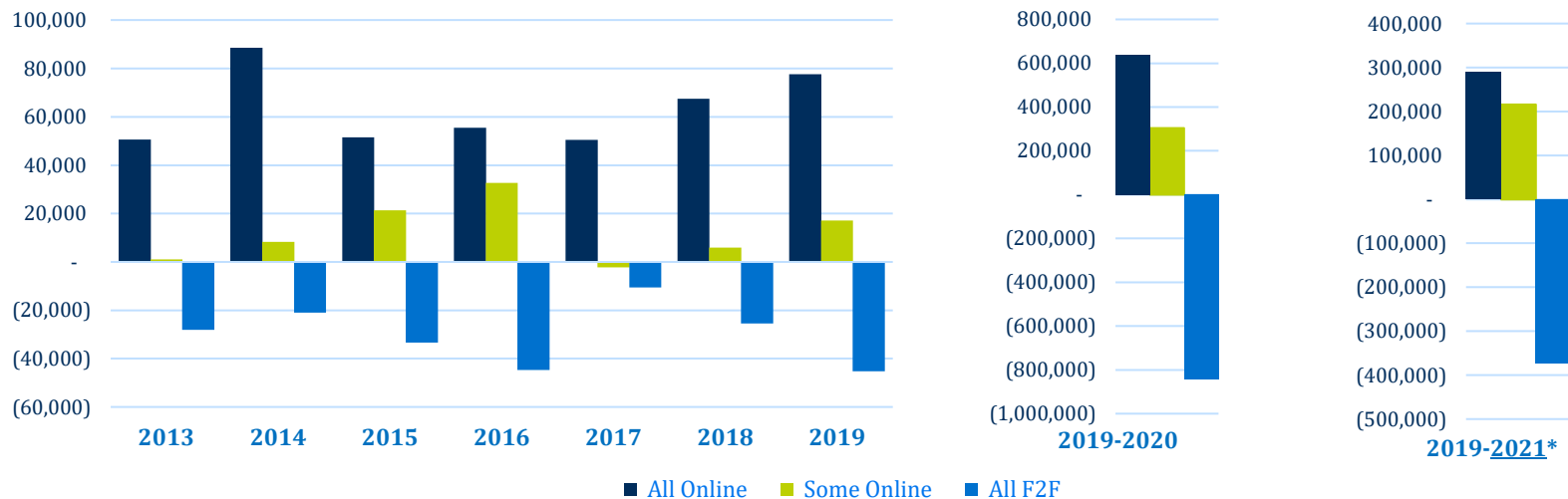


A blue-tinted photograph of a group of people, including a man with a beard, looking at a laptop screen together. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'The National Outlook' is written in white on the left side of the image.

The National Outlook

No surprise that online education has become “mission critical” for graduate growth

Graduate - YoY Enrollment Change by Format

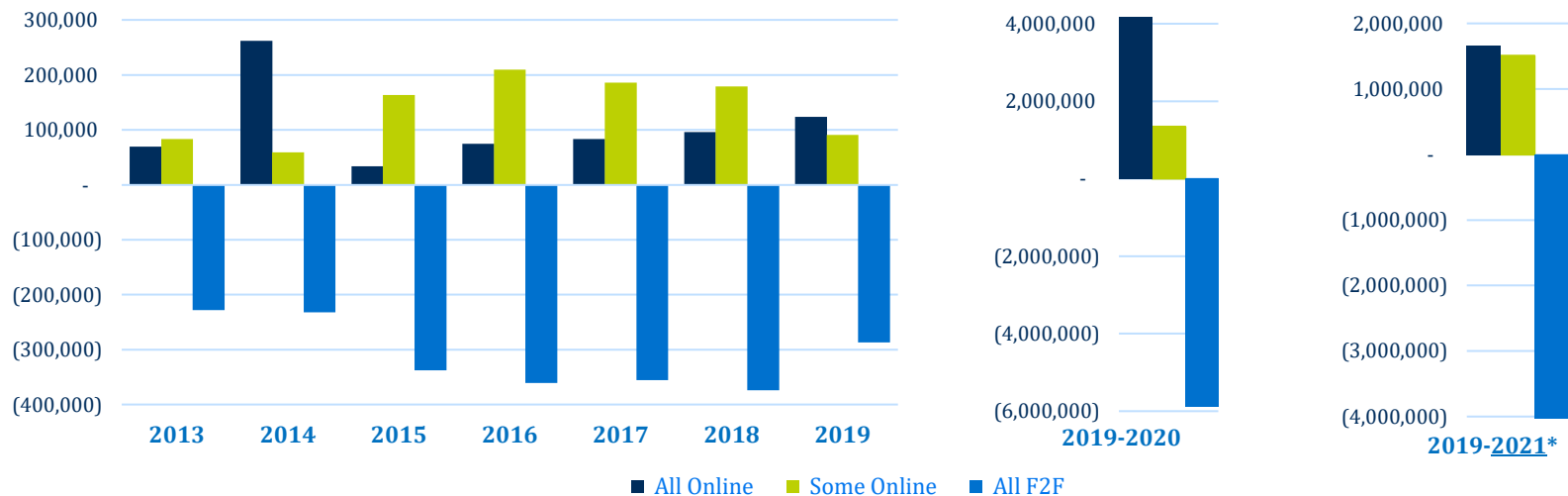


Source: RNL analysis of IPEDS Fall Enrollment data.

*We compare 2019 to 2021 rather than 2020 in order to better understand the pre- and post-pandemic trajectory of online demand.

...but would you be surprised that the same is true for undergraduate?

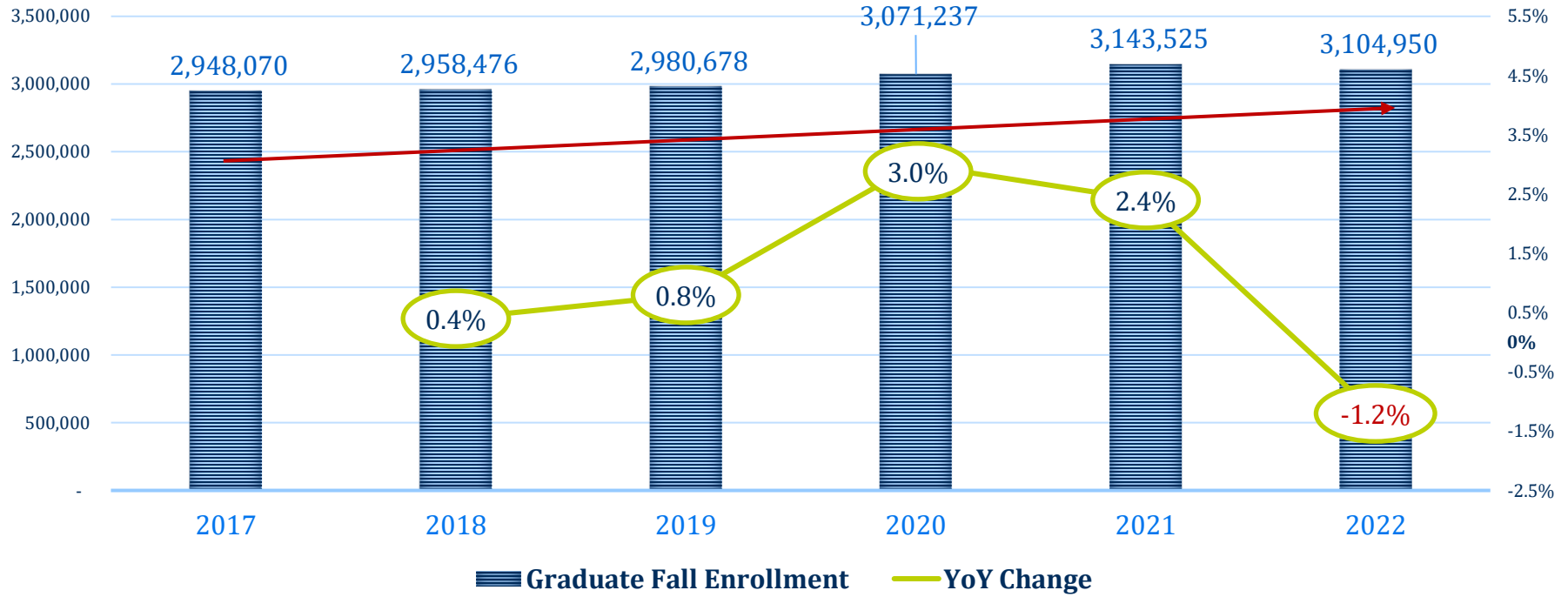
Undergraduate - YoY Enrollment Change by Format



Source: RNL analysis of IPEDS Fall Enrollment data.

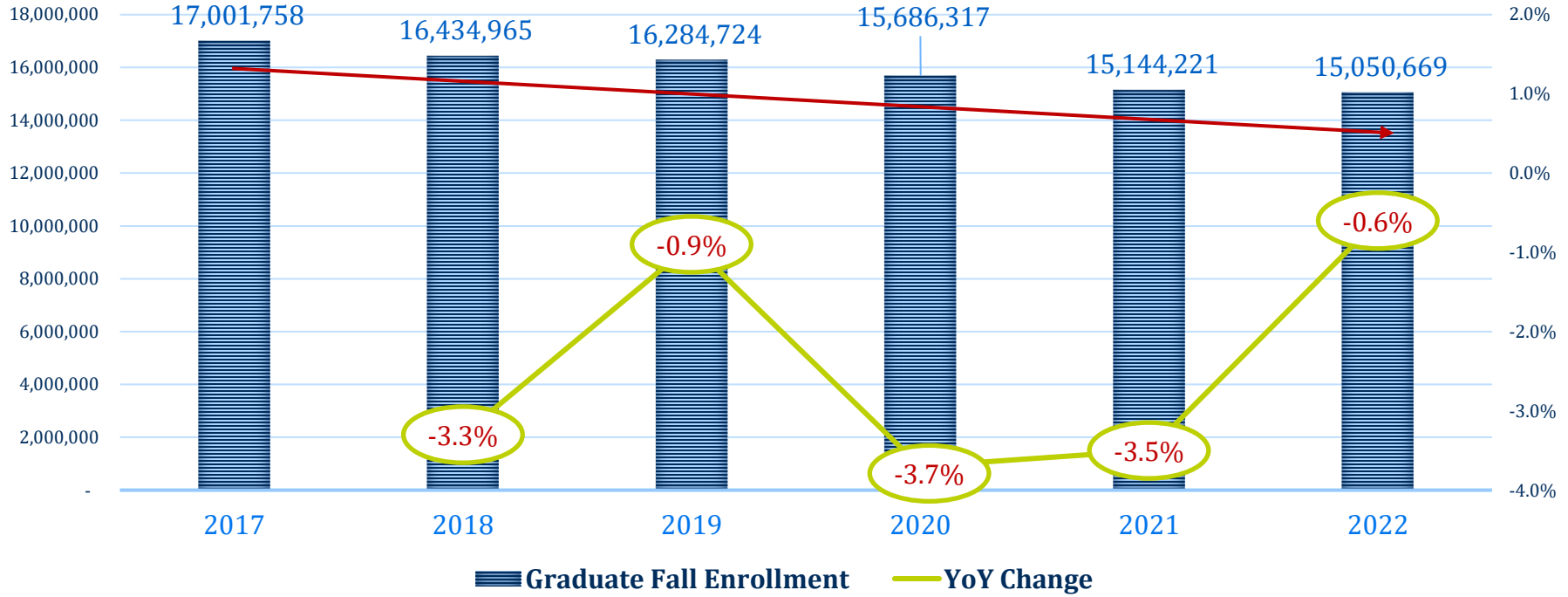
*We compare 2019 to 2021 rather than 2020 in order to better understand the pre- and post-pandemic trajectory of online demand.

Graduate enrollment may be “correcting”



*Source: National Student Clearinghouse, [CTEE, Fall 2022](#)

Undergraduate enrollment continues its slide

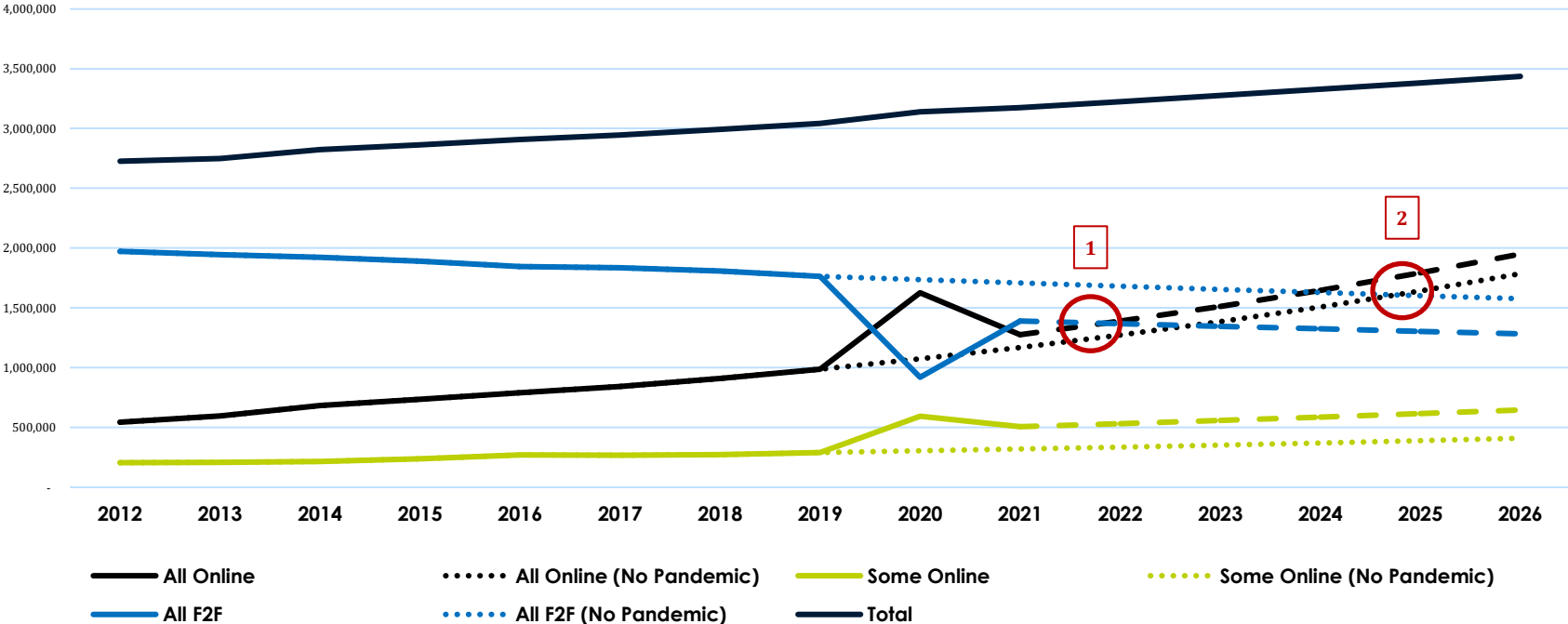


*Source: National Student Clearinghouse, [CTEE, Fall 2022](#)

Graduate Enrollment Trends and Format Choice

(With and Without the Pandemic)

Fall Enrollment: Graduate

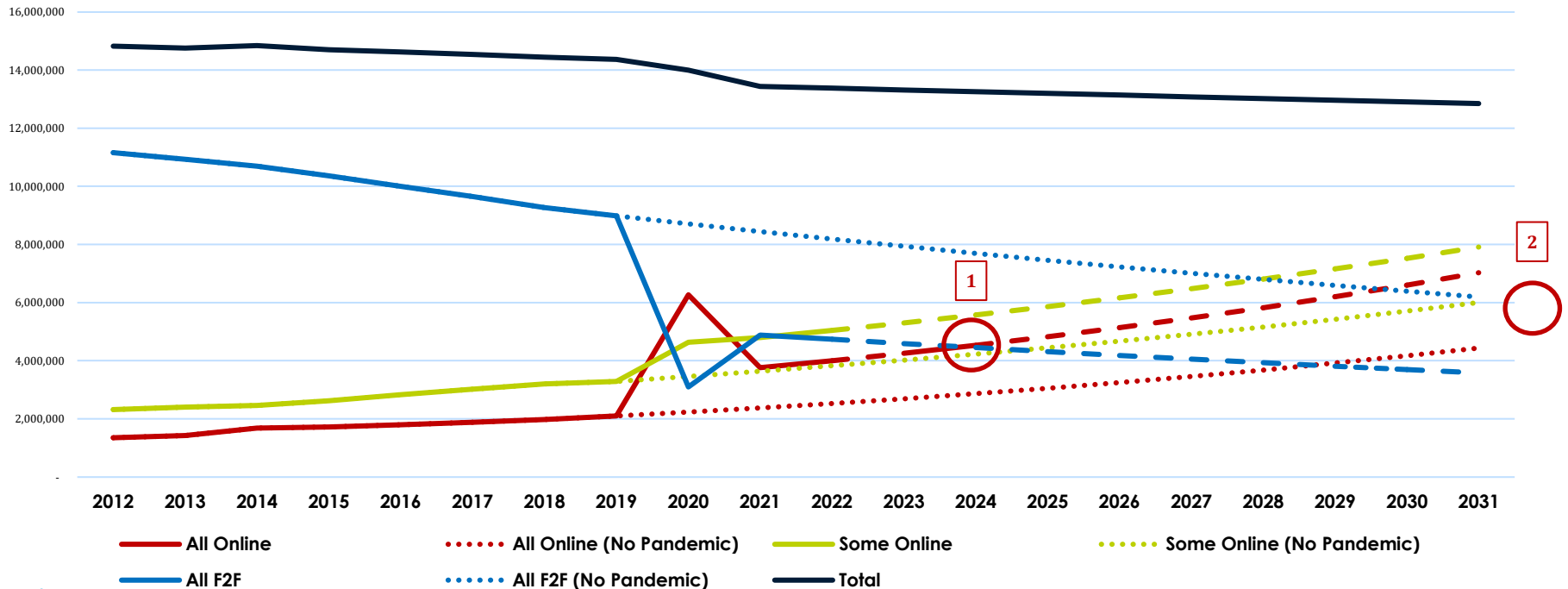


Source: RNL Analysis of IPEDS Fall Enrollment Snapshot data. (U.S. degree-granting institutions of at least two years.)

Undergraduate Enrollment Trends and Format Choice

(With and Without the Pandemic)

Fall Enrollment: Undergraduate



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

The Undercounting of Online Students

Undergraduate				
	Fall Enrollment Snapshot (Fall 2021)	12-Month Enrollment (2021-2022)	Undercount	% of total
Total Enrollment	15,825,026	20,881,097	5,056,071	24.2%
All Online Courses	4,365,930	6,282,243	1,916,313	30.5%
Some Online Courses	5,056,813	7,977,708	2,920,895	36.6%
No Online Courses	6,402,283	6,621,146	218,863	3.3%

Graduate				
	Fall Enrollment Snapshot (Fall 2021)	12-Month Enrollment (2021-2022)	Undercount	% of total
Total Enrollment	3,211,586	4,024,245	812,659	20.2%
All Online Courses	1,294,448	1,747,014	452,566	25.9%
Some Online Courses	515,500	952,737	437,237	45.9%
No Online Courses	1,401,638	1,324,494	(77,144)	-5.8%

Who are these students?

Online and hybrid students who enroll at times other than the fall semester.



**Has your institution increased goals
for graduate and online in recent
years?**

**If so, have you been given more
resources to do so?**

A blue-tinted photograph of a group of people, including a man with a beard, looking at a laptop screen together. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'The Region' is written in white on the left side of the image.

The Region



What online bachelor's program is generating the most graduates in this state?

25 Largest Online Bachelor's (Ohio)

ONLINE AVAILABLE

ALL FORMATS

OCCUPATIONS

PROGRAM	ONLINE AVAILABLE			ALL FORMATS			OCCUPATIONS	
	TOTAL ONLINE DEGREES	5-YEAR GROWTH #	5-YEAR GROWTH %	TOTAL DEGREES 2021	5-YEAR GROWTH #	5-YEAR GROWTH %	ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPENINGS	PROJECTED % GROWTH (2022 – 2027)
Registered Nursing	5,845	98	2%	7,051	341	5%	4,775	3%
Business Administration and Management	1,647	(22)	(1%)	2,402	(689)	(22%)	37,699	3%
Speech Communication and Rhetoric	561	322	135%	1,474	(143)	(9%)	933	3%
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	444	71	19%	964	(43)	(4%)	1,631	(2%)
Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services	366	252	221%	385	256	198%	9,411	2%
Marketing/Marketing Management, General	362	266	277%	2,981	494	20%	2,075	8%
Psychology	356	219	160%	3,519	(98)	(3%)	1,328	10%
Accounting	312	63	25%	2,132	(293)	(12%)	8,071	1%
Public Health	249	71	40%	469	176	60%	1,808	8%
Social Work	226	116	105%	1,135	3	0%	1,739	4%
Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	224	135	152%	278	(151)	(35%)	18,644	4%
Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies, Other	217	214	7133%	304	3	1%	38,599	1%
Information Technology	197	66	50%	264	7	3%	6,955	6%
Nursing Practice	172	71	70%	189	88	87%	5,146	4%
Clinical Laboratory Science/Medical Technology	169	(41)	(20%)	261	(35)	(12%)	460	2%
Small Business Administration/Management	165	165	Insf. Data	167	167	Insf. Data	11,616	4%
General Studies	149	123	473%	296	24	9%	45,145	1%
Human Resources Management	147	61	71%	398	25	7%	3,371	3%
Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration	127	(387)	(75%)	370	(260)	(41%)	1,754	(2%)
Business/Commerce, General	125	91	268%	288	(194)	(40%)	12,818	5%
Health/Health Care Administration/Management	122	(65)	(35%)	301	(124)	(29%)	5,174	3%
Kindergarten/Preschool Education and Teaching	114	48	73%	123	(13)	(10%)	1,133	4%
Education, Other	108	(21)	(16%)	159	4	3%	8,836	1%
Organizational Communication, General	104	23	28%	122	(26)	(18%)	465	4%
Religion/Theological Studies	97	(24)	(20%)	110	(35)	(24%)	935	3%





10 Critical Pieces of Market Intelligence

Online BSN: Degrees and Jobs

1. How many degrees?



2. How is online contributing?

	Completions (2021)	% Completions	Institutions (2021)	% Institutions
All Programs	7,051	100%	47	100%
Distance Offered Programs	5,845	83%	25	53%
Non-Distance Offered Programs	1,206	17%	22	47%

3. Will jobs grow?

4. How many jobs annually?

Related Occupations (at Level)

77,413

Jobs (2023)* ?

21% above National average*

+3.4%

% Change (2023-2028)*

Nation: +7.1%*

\$37.85/hr
\$78.7K/yr

Median Earnings
Nation: \$41.42/hr;
\$86.2K/yr

5,292

Annual Openings*

Online BSN: Top online competitors in the region

5. How do you compare with competitors?

6. Who is dominating?

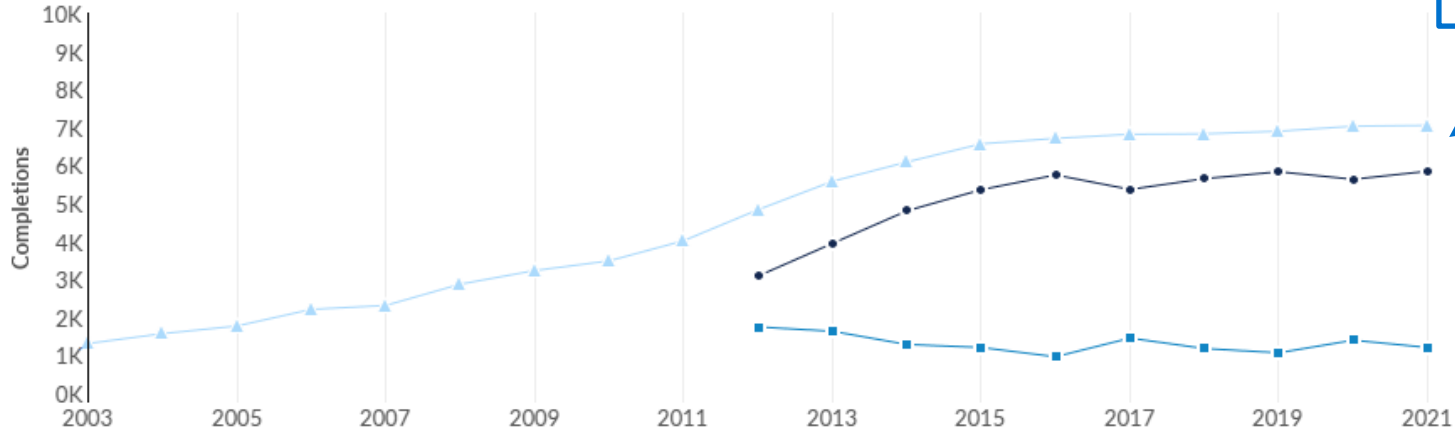
7. How have competitors performed?

10 Largest Online Programs	Bachelor's Degree > Distance Offered Completions (2021)	Growth % YOY (2021)	Market Share (2021)	IPEDES Cost Per Credit (2021)	Completions Trend (2017-2021)
Ohio University-Main Campus	2,089	-11.0%	35.7%	\$606	
Kent State University at Kent	495	4.0%	8.5%	\$493	
Mount Carmel College of Nursing	380	9.8%	6.5%	\$692	
University of Cincinnati-Main Campus	379	-8.9%	6.5%	\$421	
Xavier University	367	17.6%	6.3%	\$873	
Ohio State University-Main Campus	305	3.7%	5.2%	\$459	
University of Toledo	297	28.6%	5.1%	\$376	
The Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences	270	18.9%	4.6%	\$445	
Cleveland State University	254	16.0%	4.3%	\$484	
Wright State University-Main Campus	150	Insf. Data	2.6%	\$440	



Online BSN: Long- and short-term trends in the region

Degree Production Trends – 2003-2021



8. What is the enrollment trend across all programs?

9-10. Which types of programs are pushing growth? Online? Classroom? Both?

	2012 Completions	2021 Completions	% Change
● Distance Offered Programs	3,084	5,845	+89.5%
■ Non-Distance Offered Programs	1,747	1,206	-31.0%
▲ All Programs	4,831	7,051	+46.0%





What master's (**all formats**) has seen the greatest growth in the last five years in this state?

25 Largest Growth Master's (Ohio)

ALL FORMATS

ONLINE AVAILABLE

OCCUPATIONS

PROGRAM	TOTAL DEGREES 2021	5-YEAR GROWTH #	5-YEAR GROWTH %	TOTAL ONLINE DEGREES	5-YEAR GROWTH #	5-YEAR GROWTH %	ESTIMATED ANNUAL MASTER'S OPENINGS	PROJECTED % GROWTH (2022 – 2027)
Social Work	991	218	28%	681	523	331%	966	4%
Management Science	286	217	314%	74	72	3600%	2,478	4%
Applied Behavior Analysis	189	189	Insf. Data	189	189	Insf. Data	36	11%
Speech-Language Pathology/Pathologist	176	167	1856%	100	100	Insf. Data	140	10%
Mental Health Counseling/Counselor	348	165	90%	51	14	38%	1,018	9%
Physician Assistant	402	163	68%	0	0	0%	82	14%
Computer Science	387	155	67%	75	52	226%	4,050	7%
Health/Health Care Administration	503	146	41%	475	172	57%	2,874	3%
Business Analytics	124	124	Insf. Data	112	112	Insf. Data	1,898	8%
Information Technology	196	104	113%	196	196	Insf. Data	3,864	6%
Business Admin., Mgmt. & Ops, Other...	201	97	93%	102	90	750%	17,795	3%
Biology/Biological Sciences	228	96	73%	152	136	850%	325	6%
Econometrics and Quantitative Economics	126	88	232%	0	0	0%	680	9%
Financial Mathematics	141	84	147%	0	0	0%	467	7%
Physical Education Teaching and Coaching	134	81	153%	127	86	210%	946	10%
Engineering/Industrial Management	179	78	77%	134	92	219%	1,433	2%
Accounting and Related Services...	71	71	Insf. Data	0	0	0%	16,327	2%
Architectural and Building Sciences	71	70	7000%	0	0	0%	1,854	3%
Physiology	211	57	37%	174	57	49%	60	9%
Special Education and Teaching	286	55	24%	238	158	198%	416	0%
American/U.S. Law/Legal Studies	53	53	Insf. Data	53	53	Insf. Data	315	3%
Human-Centered Technology Design	52	52	Insf. Data	52	52	Insf. Data	105	11%
Sport and Fitness Administration/Management	279	48	21%	210	64	44%	1,070	10%
Medical Informatics	66	43	187%	66	43	187%	894	7%
Pharmacology	56	43	331%	44	44	Insf. Data	105	8%





10 Critical Pieces of Market Intelligence

Social Work (M): Degree and Jobs

1. How many degrees?



2. How is online contributing?

	Completions (2021)	% Completions	Institutions (2021)	% Institutions
All Programs	991	100%	11	100%
Distance Offered Programs	681	69%	4	36%
Non-Distance Offered Programs	310	31%	7	64%

3. Will jobs grow?

4. How many jobs annually?

Related Occupations (at Level)

14,808

Jobs (2023)*

6% above National average*

+5.2%

% Change (2023-2028)*

Nation: +8.3%*

\$24.75/hr
\$51.5K/yr

Median Earnings
Nation: \$27.41/hr;
\$57.0K/yr

1,557

Annual Openings*

Social Work (M): Top competitors in the region

5. How do you compare with competitors?

6. Who is dominating?

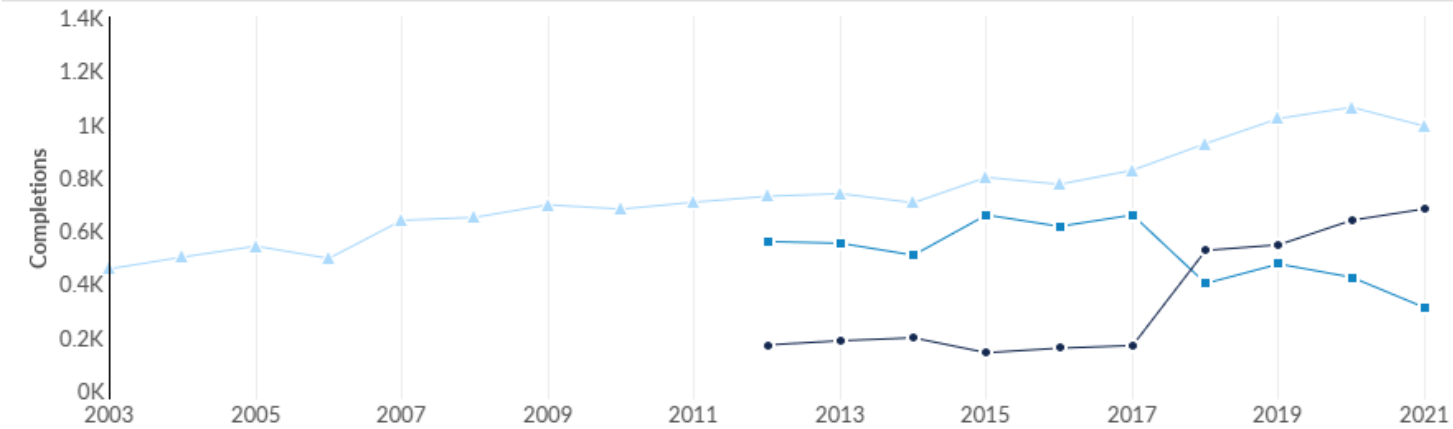
7. How have competitors performed?

10 Largest Online Programs	Master's Degree Completions (2021)	Growth % YOY (2021)	Market Share (2021) [?]	IPEDS Cost Per Credit (2021)	Completions Trend (2017-2021)
⊞ Ohio State University-Main Campus	356	-2.5%	35.9%	\$723	
⊞ Case Western Reserve University	197	-11.7%	19.9%	\$2,057	
⊞ Cleveland State University	100	22.0%	10.1%	\$579	
⊞ University of Akron Main Campus	70	7.7%	7.1%	\$442	
⊞ University of Cincinnati-Main Campus	63	-23.2%	6.4%	\$662	
⊞ Youngstown State University	63	-11.3%	6.4%	\$538	
⊞ University of Toledo	40	-9.1%	4.0%	\$615	
⊞ Ohio University-Main Campus	28	-44.0%	2.8%	\$583	
⊞ Wright State University-Main Campus	27	-34.1%	2.7%	\$660	
⊞ Miami University-Oxford	26	18.2%	2.6%	\$623	



Social Work (M): Long- and short-term trends in the region

Degree Production Trends – 2003-2021



8. What is the enrollment trend cross all programs?

9-10. Which types of programs are pushing growth? Online? Classroom? Both?

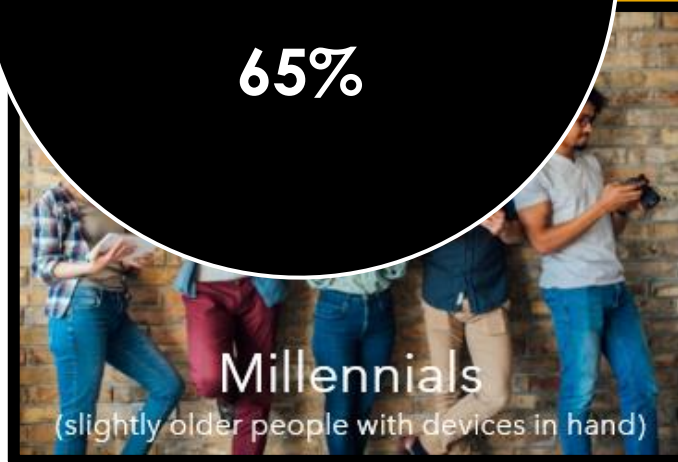
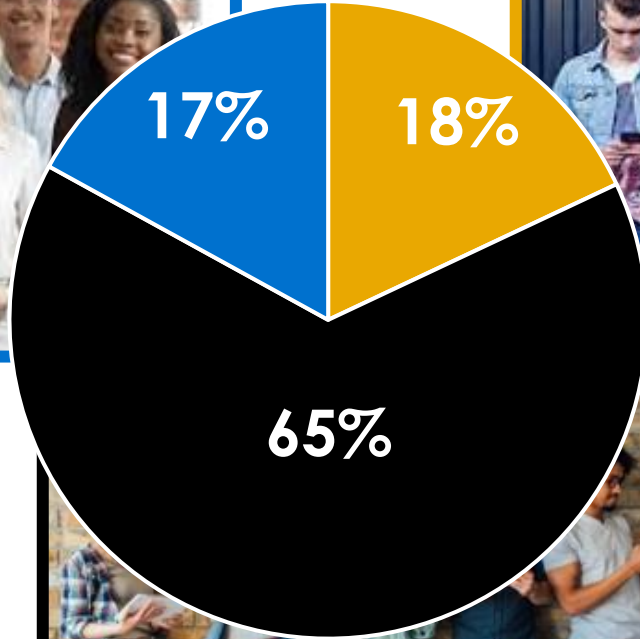
	2012 Completions	2021 Completions	% Change
● Distance Offered Programs	170	681	+300.6%
■ Non-Distance Offered Programs	558	310	-44.4%
▲ All Programs	728	991	+36.1%

A blue-tinted photograph of three people in a meeting. A woman on the left is pointing at a laptop screen. A man in a plaid shirt is looking at the screen. A woman with glasses is also looking at the screen. There are papers and a laptop on the table.

*When we come back from
our break, we're going to
dive into what it will take to
meet student expectations –*

here's why...

Business Graduate Students by Generation



Student Expectations have shifted. Are you ready?

Past student expectations



"Me" centric
view of the
world



Rise in
consumer
mentalities



Need for
speed



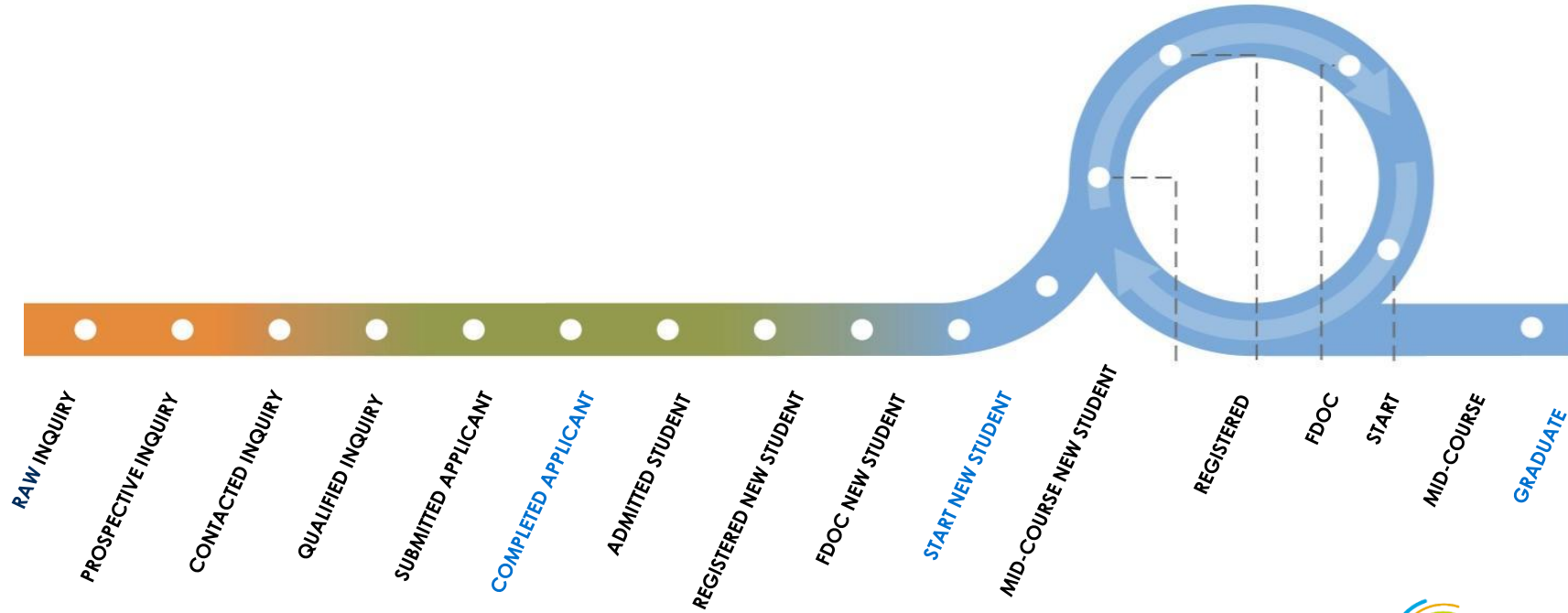
Meaningful
connections

The Pandemic Effect

The experiences graduate students had during the two pandemic years have impacted their preferences and expectations:

- 1. Increased demand for fully online study:** 3.2 million graduate students were “pushed off the cliff” and into online/remote study and this was the “push” that some needed to embrace online.
- 2. Increased demand for access to fully online courses (in classroom programs):** After several semesters of online/remote course taking, an expectation of being able to take some courses (as needed) in a fully online format has increased (this is also happening at the UG level).
- 3. Changing expectations/interpretation of what is of “value”:** Experiences have clarified for many students what the “valuable” aspects of classroom study are (and what they aren’t), and advanced comfortability with digital content.

These realities impact every stage...



RNL Regional Workshop

Graduate and Online Enrollment



2

Understanding Your Audience

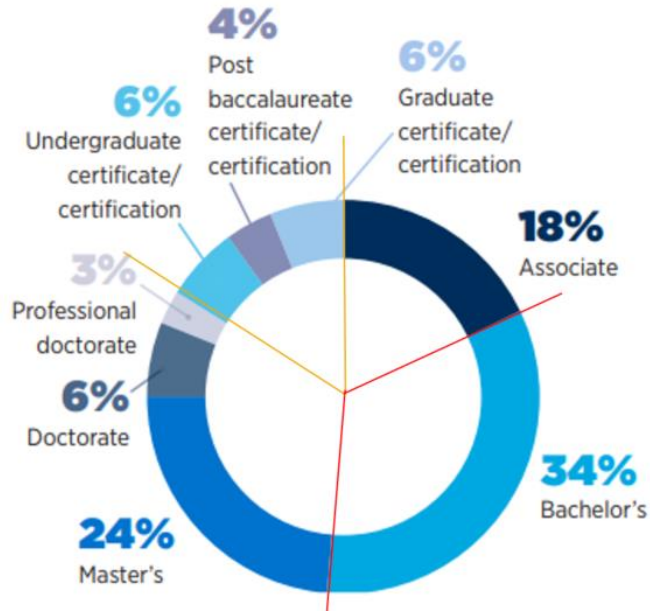
*12 Things You Need To Do
In Order to Win*



What are the “must do’s” in
program design?

1. Focus on degrees

TABLE 7: INTENDED ONLINE CREDENTIAL



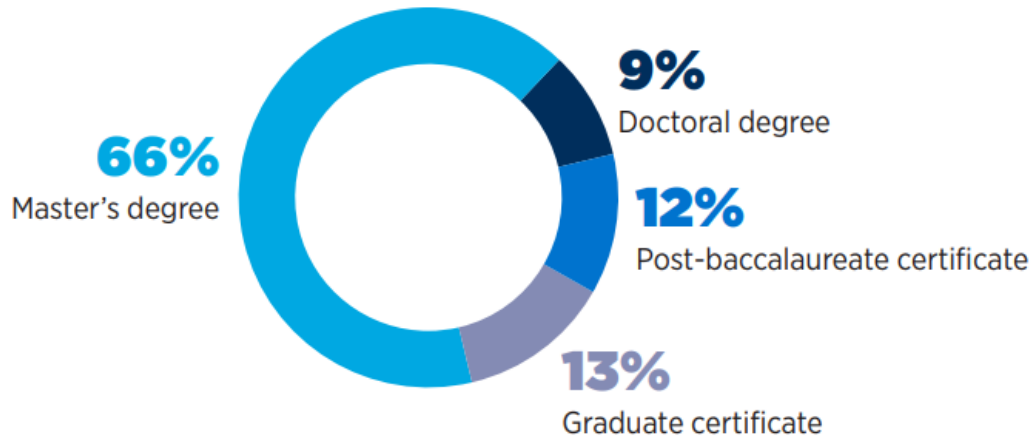
How to Win



Ensure that you have adequate numbers of online master's **AND bachelor's** programs, rather than launching any program for which there is internal interest in



1. Focus on degrees



How to Win



Ensure that you have adequate master's level offerings. Don't spend undue time on certificates which demonstrate lower demand and produce less revenue – unless they can be stacked into a degree.

2. Focus on high demand degree areas.

How to Win



Offer online (and hybrid) degree programs in high demand areas (Business, Health Professions, CIS...) rather than niche areas for which there may be less internal resistance.

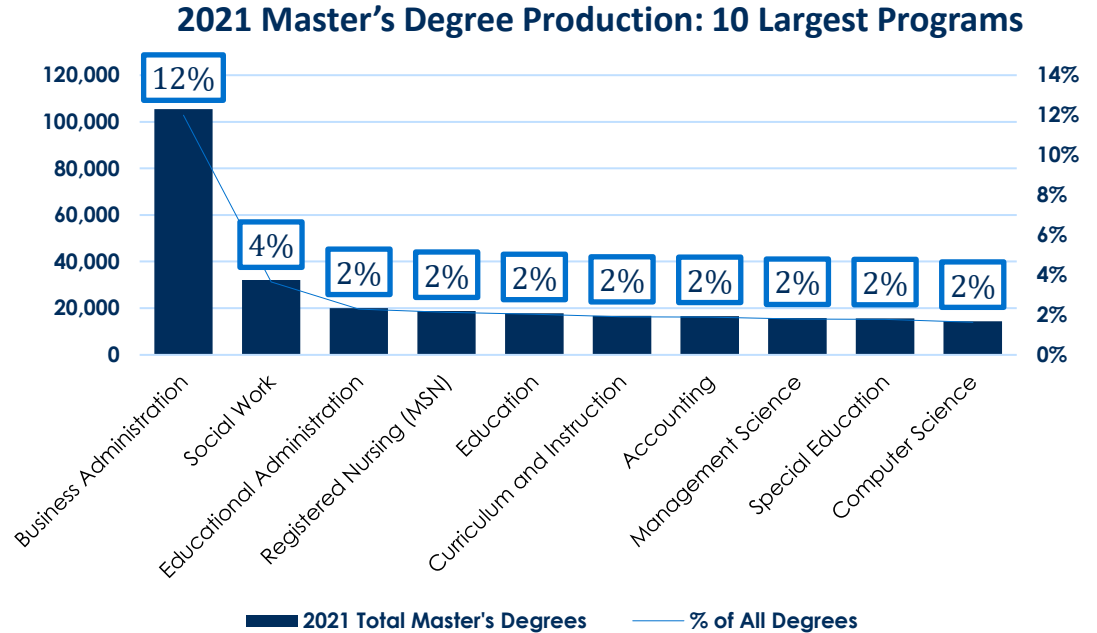
SUBJECT	ALL
Business	24%
Health Professions	13%
Computer/Information Science	11%
Education	9%
Counseling/Psychology	7%
Arts and Humanities	6%
Social Work/Public Administration	5%
Engineering	5%
Biological/Physical/Earth Sciences	5%
Communications	4%
Criminal Justice/Law/Homeland Security	4%
Social Sciences	3%
Other	5%

2a. You can't “niche yourself into enrollment health.”

How to Win

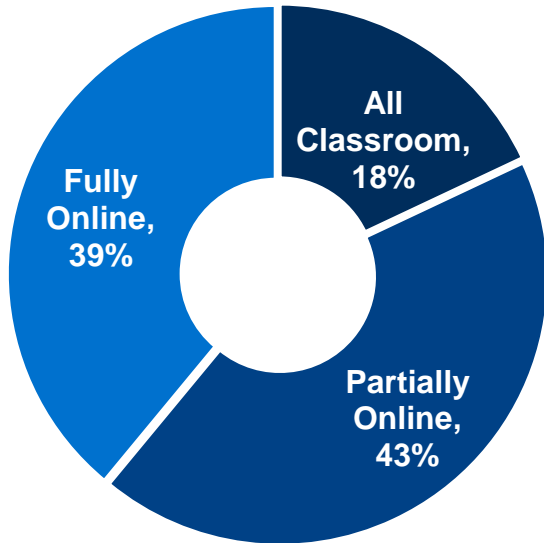


You cannot “niche” yourself into enrollment growth.



Among **1,101** different master's categories, the 10 largest account for 32% of the total in 2021. 173 degree areas produced fewer than 10 graduates.

3. Ensure you offer online programs – in high demand topics.



Distance of Furthest Programs Considered

	All Online	Partially Online	All Classroom
Within 25 miles	40%	37%	34%

How to Win



Almost any program designed to materially contribute to enrollment growth must be available online. Recognize that online delivery is how institutions provide flexibility and convenience today.



4. Ensure that programs offer accelerated courses.

How to Win



Less than 30% of undergrads and 20% of grad students seek semester-length study. Growth programs must offer accelerated terms – and stackable courses.

TABLE 11: PREFERRED LENGTH OF COURSES

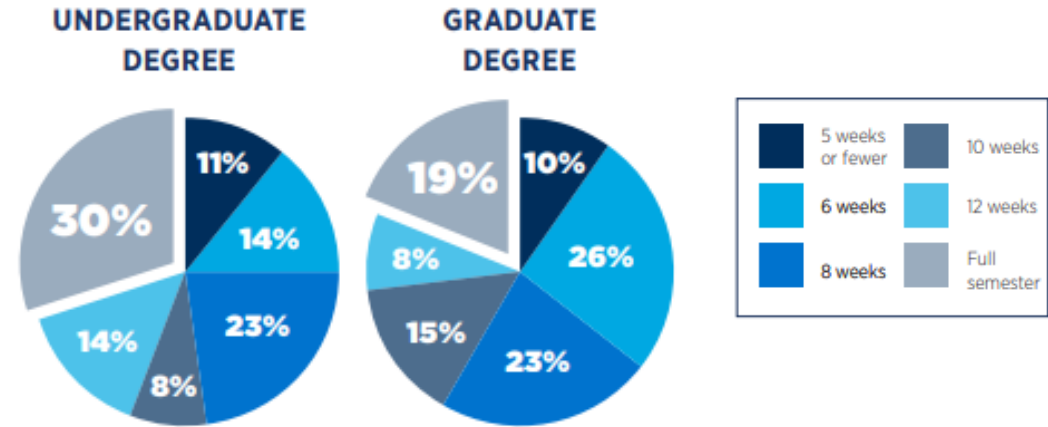


TABLE 12: PREFERRED NUMBER OF COURSES PER SEMESTER/TERM

	UNDER-GRADUATE DEGREE	GRADUATE DEGREE
1	17%	21%
2	44%	41%
3	21%	23%
4 or more	17%	15%

4a. In online programs, some self-paced and more structured elements should be included, and optional convenings.

How to Win



Online students want both self-paced and structured elements in their courses, and express interest in (not more than 2) synchronous convenings per course (which should be optional.)

TABLE 13: PREFERENCE: SELF-PACED OR STRUCTURED

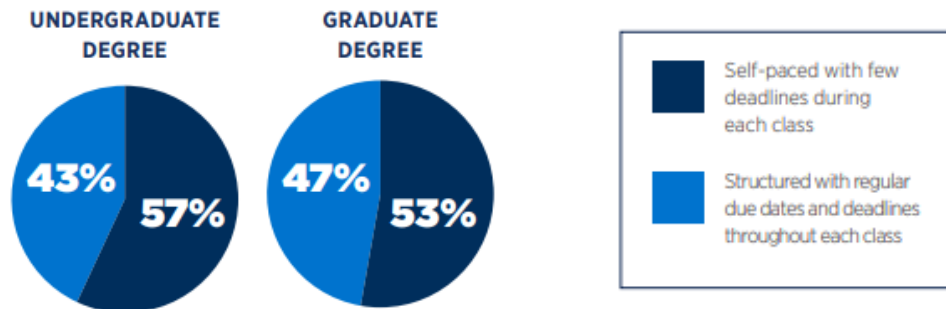
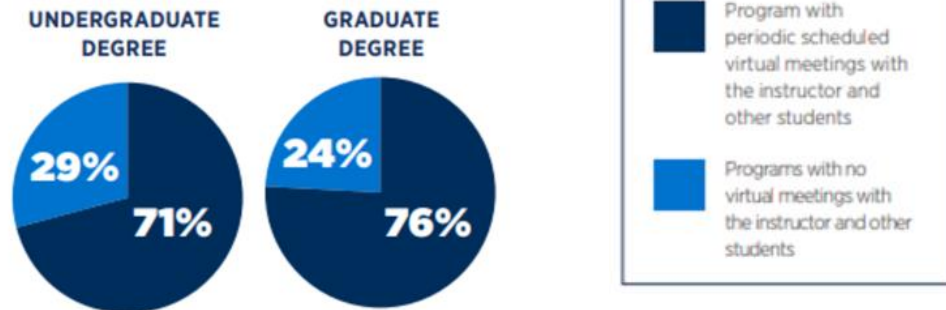
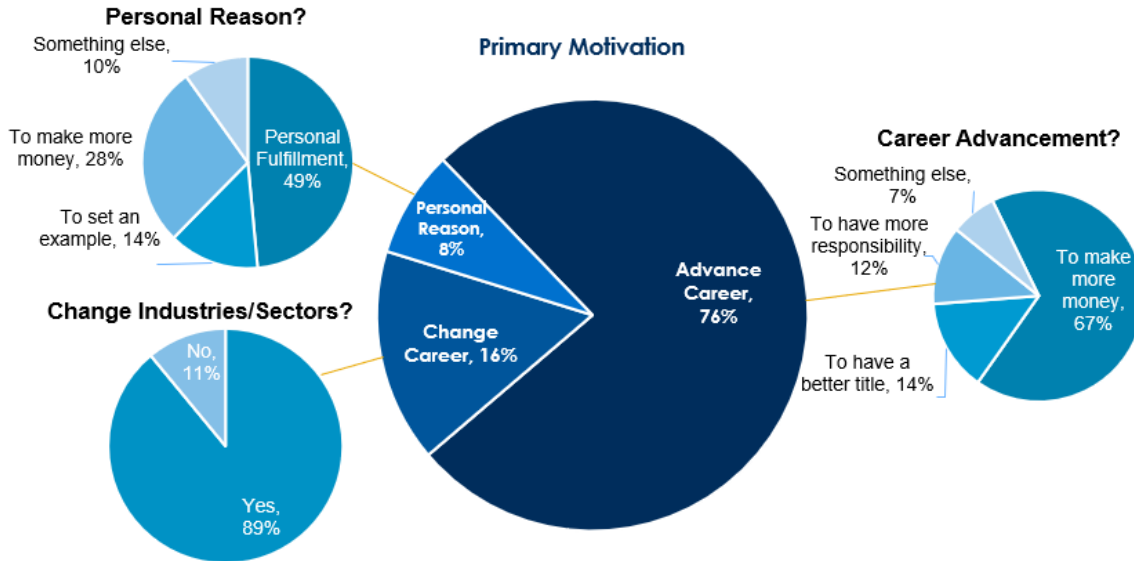


TABLE 14: ENGAGEMENT



5. Ensure that career advancement is at the core of your positioning – and curriculum.



How to Win



All but 8% of students enroll for career reasons. Positioning and curriculum that does not make future career success (think ROI) clear will not win. Avoid imagery of grads in caps and gowns in favor of people in work situations.



6. Messaging, positioning, and programs should reflect concerns with cost, future employment, and flexibility.

How to Win



Every aspect of programs should reflect student concern with total cost, future employment, and flexibility. This not only means positioning to these concerns, but developing programs that require as few credits as possible (less \$), accept previous credit, showcase the success of recent graduates, and offer flexibility in formats.

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS IN ENROLLMENT DECISIONS	IMPORTANT (IMPORTANT AND VERY IMPORTANT)	
	NOT YET ENROLLED	ENROLLED
Cost	77%	72%
Future employment opportunities	70%	70%
Flexible course options (online, evening, weekend, etc.)	72%	63%
Financial aid/scholarship opportunities	69%	68%
Academic reputation	66%	69%
Campus location (close to work/home)	54%	53%
Personalized attention prior to enrollment	39%	41%
Recommendations from family/friends/employer	33%	36%
Size of institution	22%	28%

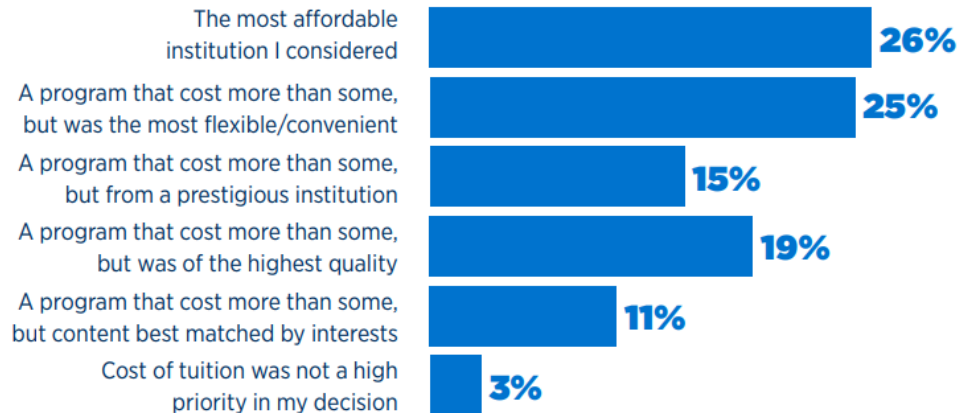
6a. If you are not the most affordable institution, focus even more messaging on other aspects of ROI.

How to Win



Only 26% enroll in the least expensive program, so if you are less affordable focus on flexibility, content match, but do not over-rely on the “prestige” factor unless you truly ARE the prestige provider in your region or program area.

Balancing cost and other factors





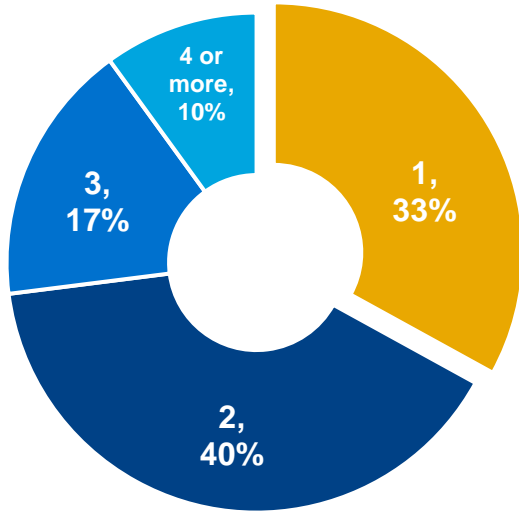
What are the “must do’s” in
recruitment and cultivation?



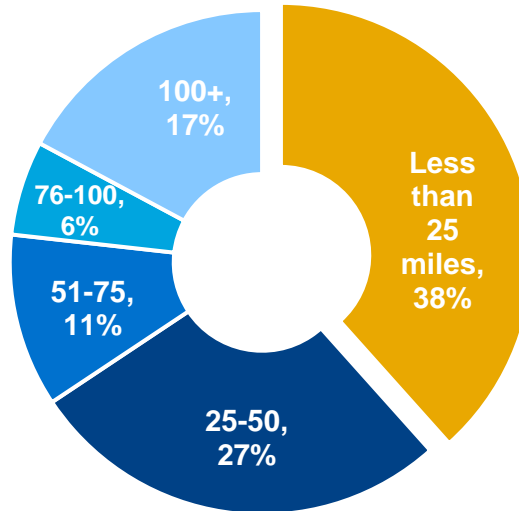
What is your team doing (or want to do) to address evolving student expectations?

7. Make the case for YOUR program in comparison with your competitors (which ARE local).

How Many Programs



How Far Away



How to Win



Unlike past times, you are not the only program being considered, so focus on “selling” your program in relation to others. Also note that (even in online programs), you are competing locally more often than nationally – or even regionally.



8. Respond quickly – within minutes or hours – or risk losing the student and/or creating a bad “first impression.”

How to Win



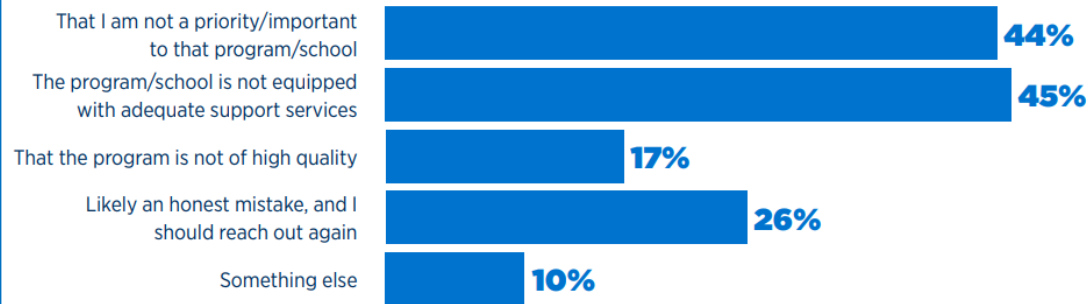
Students (young or old) expect response times like any other service they use. Responding within minutes (or hours) is essential in both satisfying the student AND ensuring they have a positive attitude about your program.

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

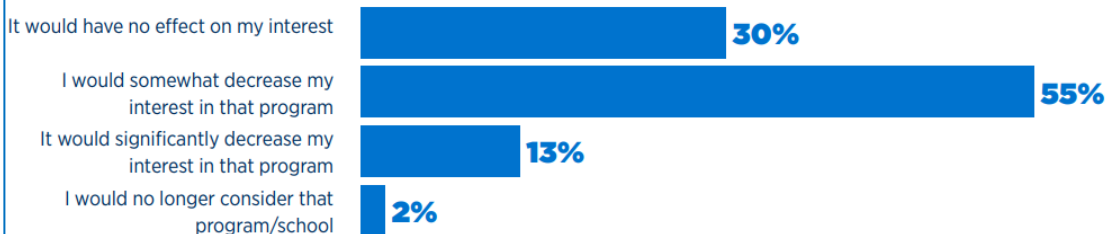
Source: 2022 Online Student Recruitment Report, RNL

8a. The best programs with the best marketing, are stunted by ineffective cultivation and follow up.

What does a slow response signify to you?



To what extent did/would a slow response affect your willingness to consider a particular program?



Source: 2023 Graduate Student Recruitment Report, RNL

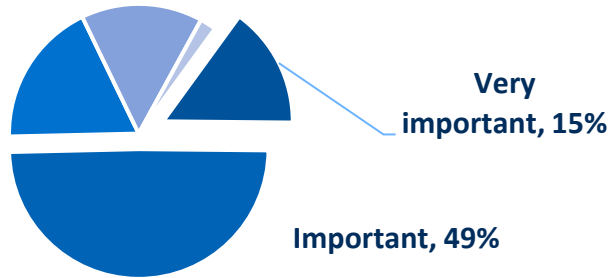
How to Win



Response times that take longer than expectations result diminished interest and negative impressions. Only one in three will “forgive” a slow response.

8a. Early personalized communication is essential

Importance of Personalized Communication



PERSONALIZE THEIR RESPONSE?	1	2	3	4	5	6
Use my first name in emails/texts	51%	18%	13%	9%	6%	3%
Send me information specific to my program of interest	26%	30%	26%	9%	6%	3%
Appear to know me and my situation when I make contact	10%	16%	20%	16%	28%	9%
Send me videos in which my name is used	6%	20%	11%	14%	23%	26%
Call me regularly to check in on my needs and questions	4%	8%	13%	16%	17%	43%
Share information reflecting/related to my demographic (age, background, etc.)	3%	8%	17%	35%	20%	16%

How to Win



While 90% percent of students will accept a non-personalized email as a place-holder only 7% prefer ongoing non-personalized contact. Two-thirds indicate that personalized communication is an important aspect of their interest in programs, but the methods they expect are quite straightforward.

9. Ensure that professional recruiters are responding to first, and early follow up, contact.

How to Win

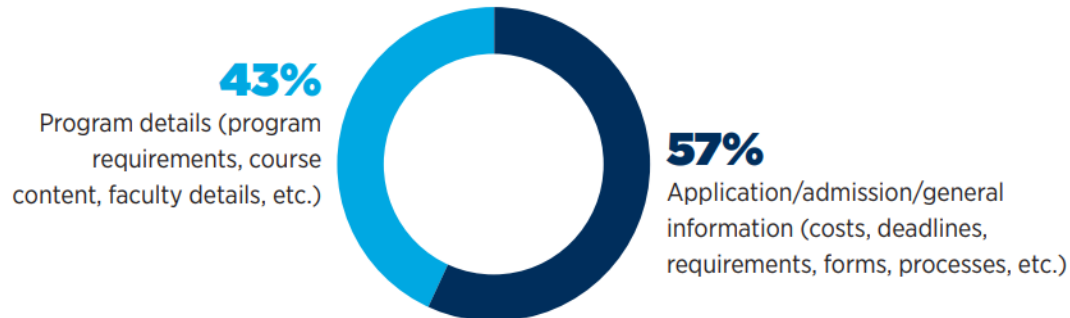


Many decentralized enrollment offices rely on faculty or other program staff to respond to inquiries. This is not only ineffective (in ensuring quick follow up) but also unnecessary, as students prefer a recruiter, and the information they need is general.

Follow Up: Who



Follow Up: What



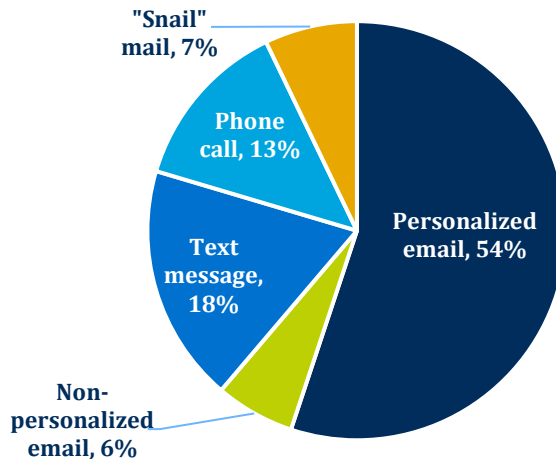
10. Create communications flows that engage prospects with relevant content in multiple channels.

How to Win

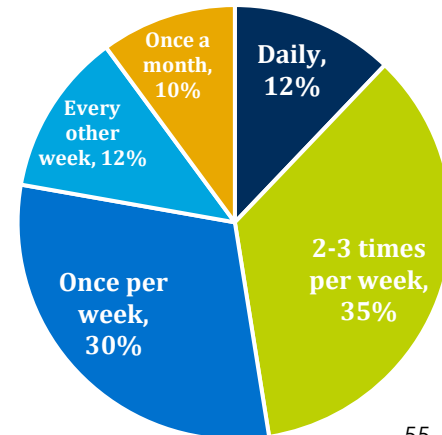


After first engagement, prospective students seek regular contact (once per week, after an initial period of more regular contact). Mix up your channels (add in text and leave phone messages) to ensure you catch them where they are at any given moment.

Follow Up: How



Follow Up: How Often



11. Ensure your admissions notification is as close to one week as possible.

TABLE 38: EXPECTED TIME TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF ADMISSION

	UNDER-GRADUATE DEGREE	GRADUATE DEGREE
Within 24 hours	11%	15%
1-3 days	34%	29%
4-7 days	30%	27%
7-14 days	18%	19%
14-21 days	5%	7%
Longer than 21 days	2%	3%



Source: 2022 Online Student Recruitment Report, RNL

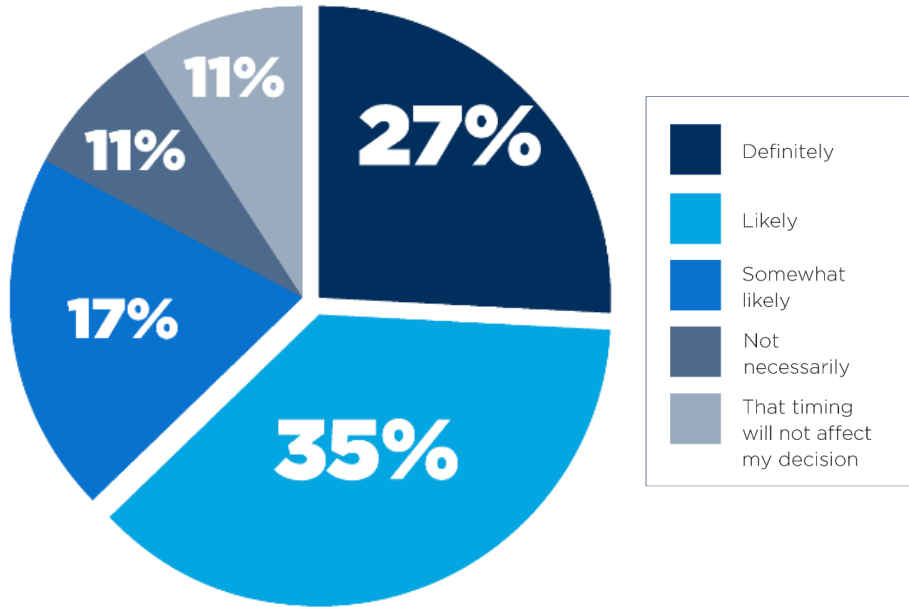
How to Win



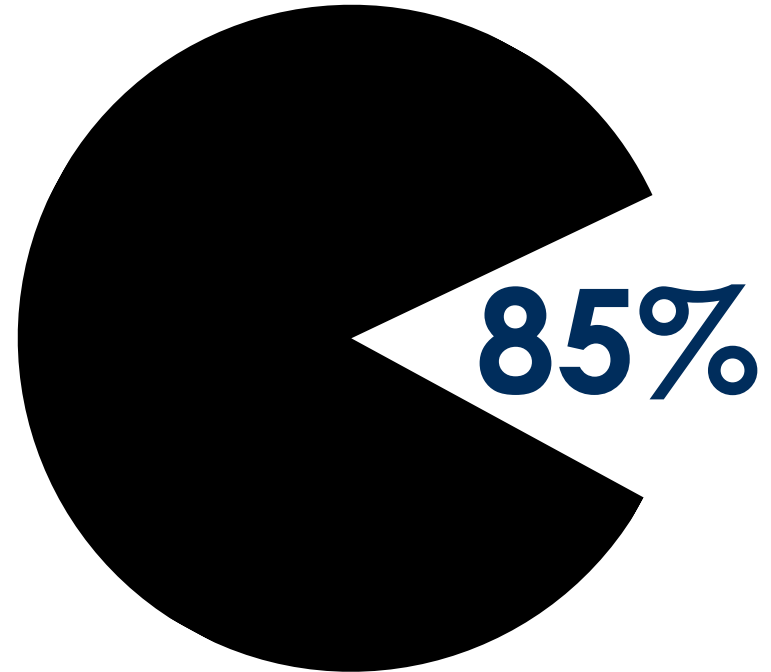
Admissions processes must be streamlined. Evaluate every element in your process (and materials required) to see if there is a regulatory or accreditation reason for its inclusion. If not, eliminate. Work with faculty to develop “minimum requirements” criteria that allows admissions office to accept students who clearly meet requirements.

12. Why is all of this SO important?

Likelihood of Enrolling:
First Program to Respond



Likelihood of Enrolling:
First Program to Admit



RNL's Graduate and Online Reports

RNL 2021 Graduate Student Recruitment Report
Insights for graduate enrollment and marketing leaders

Co-sponsored by:
PLEXUSS



The cover features the RNL logo at the top left, followed by the title and subtitle. Below is the PLEXUSS logo with the text 'Co-sponsored by:'. The background is a photograph of a woman with glasses smiling while looking at a device. A large QR code is positioned in the lower-left quadrant.

RNL 2022 Online Student Recruitment Report
10 Challenges and Solutions for Engaging Prospective Online Students

Co-sponsored by:
PLEXUSS



The cover features the RNL logo at the top left, followed by the title and subtitle. Below is the PLEXUSS logo with the text 'Co-sponsored by:'. The background is a photograph of a woman with glasses looking at a laptop. A large QR code is positioned in the lower-left quadrant.

RNL 2023 Graduate Student Recruitment Report
25 key insights for enrollment leaders based on a survey of 1,500 prospective graduate students

Co-sponsored by:
PLEXUSS

Access Full Report



The cover features the RNL logo at the top left, followed by the title and subtitle. Below is the PLEXUSS logo with the text 'Co-sponsored by:'. The background is a photograph of a woman with blonde hair looking at a laptop. A large QR code is positioned in the lower-right quadrant, with the text 'Access Full Report' above it.

RNL Regional Workshop

Graduate and Online Enrollment



3

Meet Your Market: Best Practices in Lead Gen and Conversion





**How do you generate
leads for your graduate
and/or online
programs?**

1. Ensure your marketing strategy integrates multiple channels and tactics

How to Win



Organic search, paid digital, traditional media, events, and working existing leads are all essential elements of success.

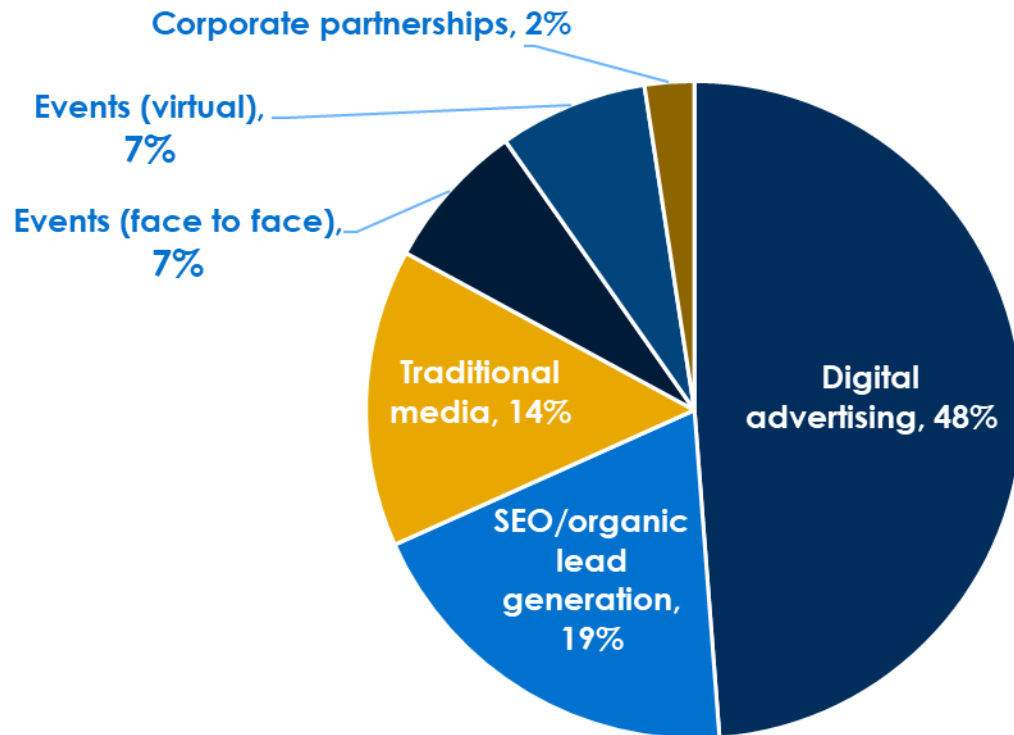


2. Allocate your marketing budget to align with student search preferences

How to Win



Allocate your resources to align with how students search.



3. Organic lead gen needs to be the foundation of your strategy.

How to Win

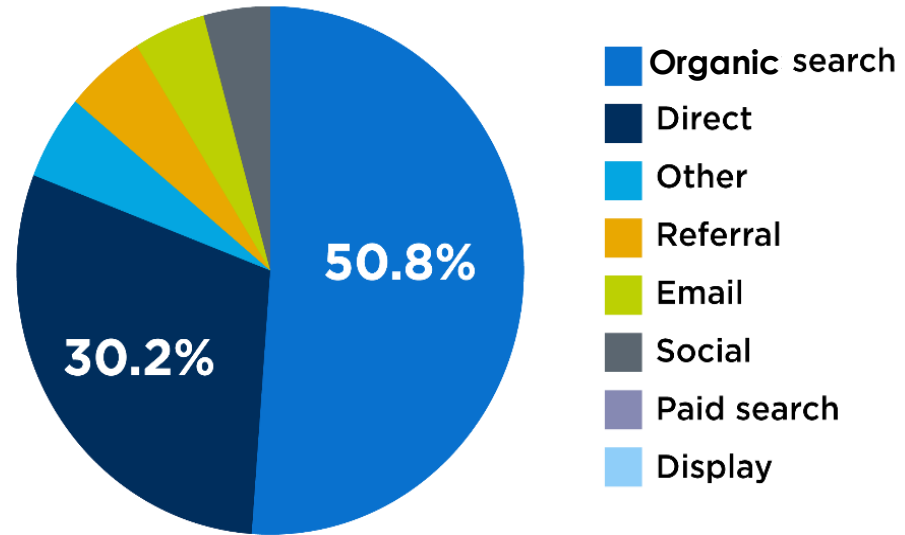
Search Engine Optimization



Organic SEO may not be your largest spend, but it is the foundation of success.

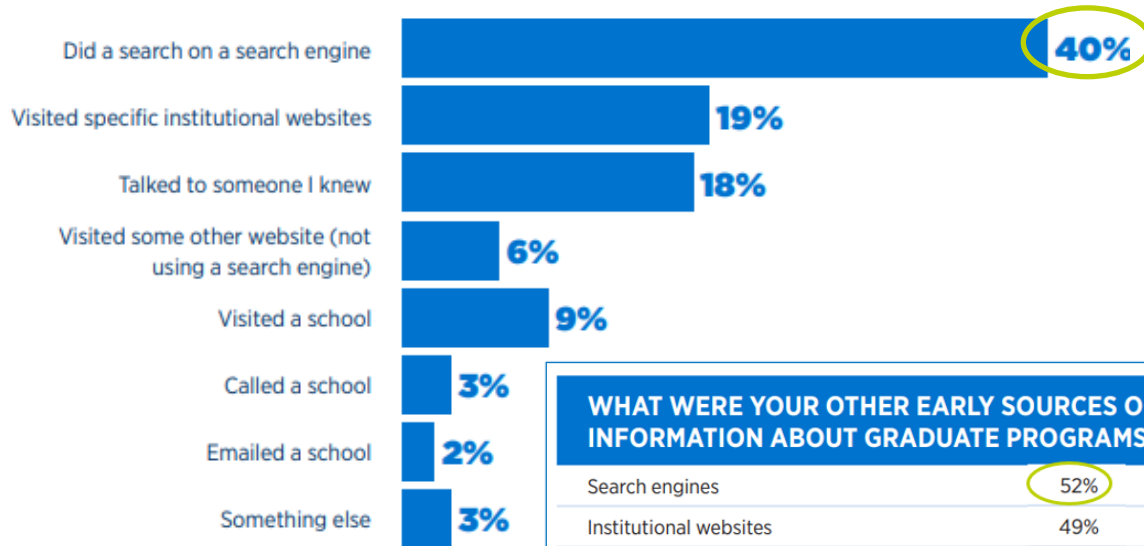
Organic leads convert at 7 times the rate of other leads and 50% of all website traffic comes from organic search.

TOP CHANNELS



3a. 90 percent of students start on a search engine.

First Step in Program Search



WHAT WERE YOUR OTHER EARLY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT GRADUATE PROGRAMS?

Search engines	52%
Institutional websites	49%
Printed materials from institutions	23%
Ads on social media sites	21%
Other websites	21%
Videos on YouTube or elsewhere	19%

How to Win

Search Engine Optimization



A multi-channel integrated marketing campaign must have SEO – paid and organic at its heart. 90+ percent of students use search engines as either their first or second step.



4. Effective SEO requires an action plan.

How to Win

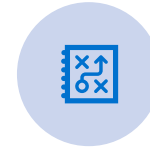
Search Engine Optimization



Effective SEO must be constantly attended to, it is not an event, it is a process.



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

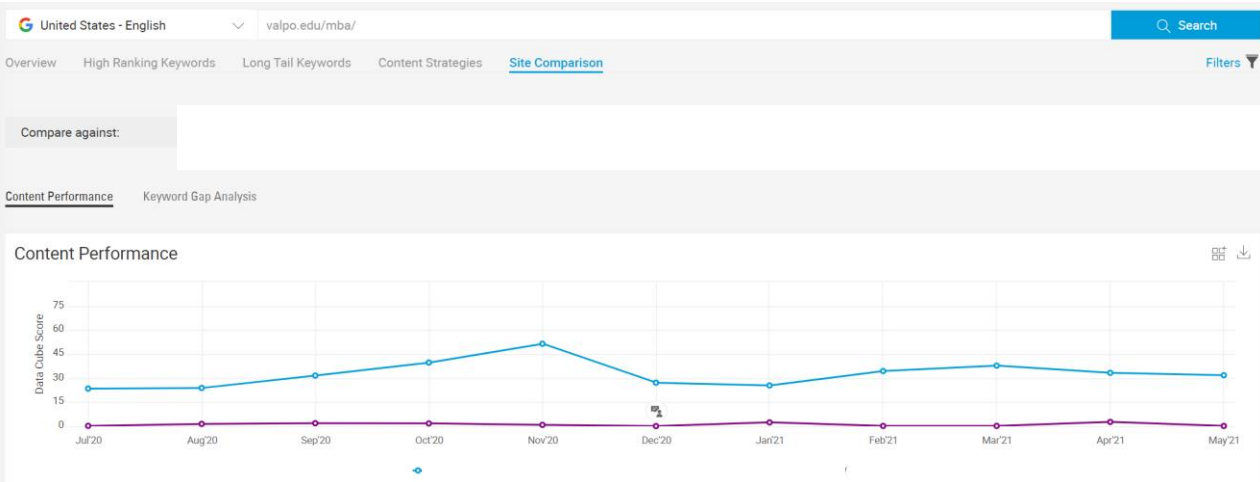
National click-through rates per ranking position



SEO: Key performance indicators

RNL State University vs. RNL College

Site	Total Organic Keywords	Ranked on Page 1	Ranked on Page 1 % Change	Ranked on Page 2	Ranked on Page 2 % Change
rnlstate.edu/mba	33	0	100.00% ▼	1	No Change
rnlcollege.edu/mba	26	10	28.57% ▼	4	42.86% ▼



RNL State

RNL College

Comparison of academic **search engine footprint**, based on the keywords each institution ranks for, the position they rank in, and the related search volume.



Great example of utilizing SEO to drive leads

Google

how to pay for my masters degree

https://www.franklin.edu › blog › how-to-pay-for-a-ma...
How to Pay for a Master's Degree: 6 Big Tips For Working Adults
Look for scholarships and grants that match your personal background, industry and experience. Start with professional associations you belong to and branch out ...

People also ask

- How do people pay for a master's degree?
- How can I not pay for my masters degree?
- Does FAFSA cover a master's degree?

Feedback

https://www.forbes.com › advisor › student-loans › ho...
How To Pay For Grad School – Forbes Advisor
Aug 11, 2021 — **How To Pay** For Grad School · 1. Start Looking for Free Money · 2. Apply for Assistantships · 3. Utilize the Federal Work-Study **Program** · 4. Research ...
[Compare Student Loan Rates...](#) · [Federal Loans For Graduate...](#) · [Private Loans For Graduate...](#)

https://www.usnews.com › paying › articles › 2013/03/12
Use These 5 Strategies to Pay for Graduate School
Mar 12, 2013 — Get an employer to **pay** for **graduate** school. Secure a **graduate** school scholarship. Work for the **graduate** school. Borrow smart. Use available ...
[Work For The Graduate School](#) · [Borrow Smart](#) · [Find The Best Student Loans...](#)

FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY

DEGREES | ONLINE DEGREES | ADMISSIONS | TUITION & FINANCIAL AID | TRANSFERRING CREDIT | THE FRANKLIN EXPERIENCE

 **Back To College Blog**

BROWSE BY: Program Program Type Academic Level Topic



How to Pay for a Master's Degree: 6 Big Tips For Working Adults



Master's Degree Paying for School

You know a master's degree can be pivotal to your success. You've read how it can help advance your career, increase your salary, or transition into a brand new field. But, how will

Request Information

STEP 1 STEP 2 SUBMIT

What type of program are you seeking?*

-- Select Program Type --

What is your program of interest?

-- Select Program --

Step 1 of 3

GET STARTED >

In submitting my contact information, I understand that I will receive phone calls, text messages and email about attending Franklin University. I may opt out of these communications at any time.

Your privacy is important to us. [Privacy Policy](#)

POPULAR POSTS

1 What Exactly Can You Do with A Business Degree? Quite a Lot.



SEO Analysis: Program Page Performance



Keyword Ranking by Search Volume

entries

Keyword	Blended Rank	Search Volume
masters curriculum and instruction	40	1,300
master in curriculum and instruction	50	1,300
master curriculum and instruction	41	1,300
masters curriculum and instruction online	88	480
masters of curriculum and instruction online	99	480
online masters in curriculum and instruction	70	480
masters in curriculum and instruction online	88	480
master in curriculum and instruction online	83	480
online masters curriculum and instruction	22	480
masters of education curriculum and instruction	33	320
masters of education in curriculum and instruction	40	320
master of education in curriculum and instruction	57	320
online masters degree in teaching	99	320
master of education curriculum and instruction	52	320
online masters degree for teachers	63	320
masters degree in curriculum and instruction	42	260
online ma in education	84	210

Keyword Ranking by Rank

entries

Keyword	Blended Rank	Search Volume
ams reading certificate program	17	0
online masters curriculum and instruction	22	480
masters of education curriculum and instruction online	27	70
masters of education curriculum	30	50
masters of education curriculum and instruction	33	320
curriculum and instruction degree	35	170
master of education curriculum	39	50
masters of education in curriculum and instruction	40	320
masters curriculum and instruction	40	1,300
what is a masters in curriculum and instruction	41	20
master curriculum and instruction	41	1,300
masters in curriculum development	42	90
online master of education in curriculum and instruction	42	70
masters degree in curriculum and instruction	42	260
what is curriculum and instruction	47	50
master of arts in curriculum and instruction	47	50
master in curriculum and instruction	50	1,300
master of education curriculum and instruction	52	320
ma curriculum and instruction	56	50





**What does SEO
look like on your campus:
web copy or optimized content?**

**Is SEO generating quality leads
on your campus? Why or why not?**

6. Multi-channel digital marketing is essential to ensuring students will consider you.

How to Win

Digital Media



Graduate and online students begin and end their search online. If you are not (effectively) advertising online you are not visible to prospective students. The right channels, with the right messages, with constant updates and adjustment is essential.



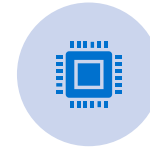
Ensure adequate investment: CLP/CPE have increased with added competition. You cannot win the student if they don't know you exist.



Focus your strategy: Student personas will help ensure you are connecting with the right prospects.



Select the right channels: Success relies on a multi-channel approach that matches where prospects are looking.



Continually optimize for success: There is no “set it and forget it.” Algorithms etc. require regular evaluation of ROI.



Track regulatory changes: The regulatory environment is in constant flux and as such must be monitored and adjusted for.

5. Digital media are used by massive majorities of graduate and online students, marketing strategies should be aligned.

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

6 of the 10 most frequent search methods are digital marketing.

How to Win

Digital Media



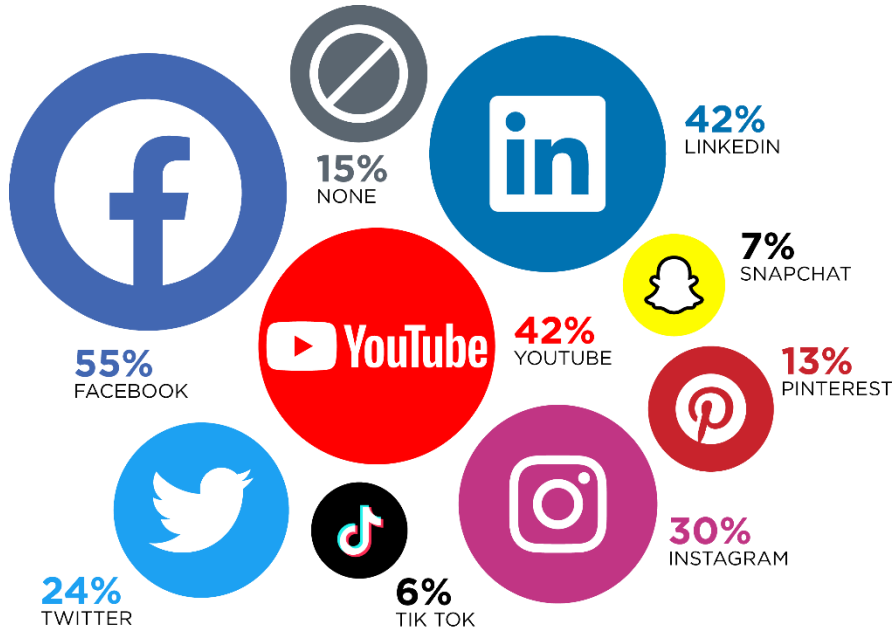
There is no silver bullet, single channel, that works. Programs must mount a multi-channel campaign that blends paid search, social media, and other methods into their paid digital strategy.



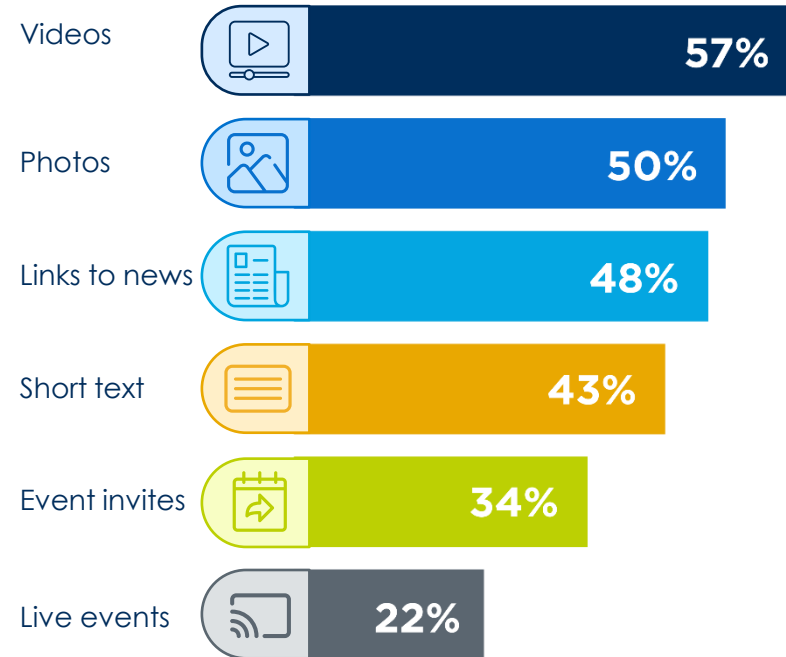
Source: 2022 Online Student Recruitment Report, RNL

60+% of prospective students use social media in their search

PREFERRED SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GRADUATE PROGRAM INFO



PREFERRED CONTENT ON SOCIAL



7. Digital marketing messaging needs to focus on matching to personas in order to increase engagement.

How to Win

Digital Media



While 60% of students click on digital ads, this is more likely to be due to retargeting efforts than that the copy of the ad attracted the students attention. Aligning ad copy and imagery with personas developed for each program will increase conversion.

Did you click on digital ads during search?



60%

Yes



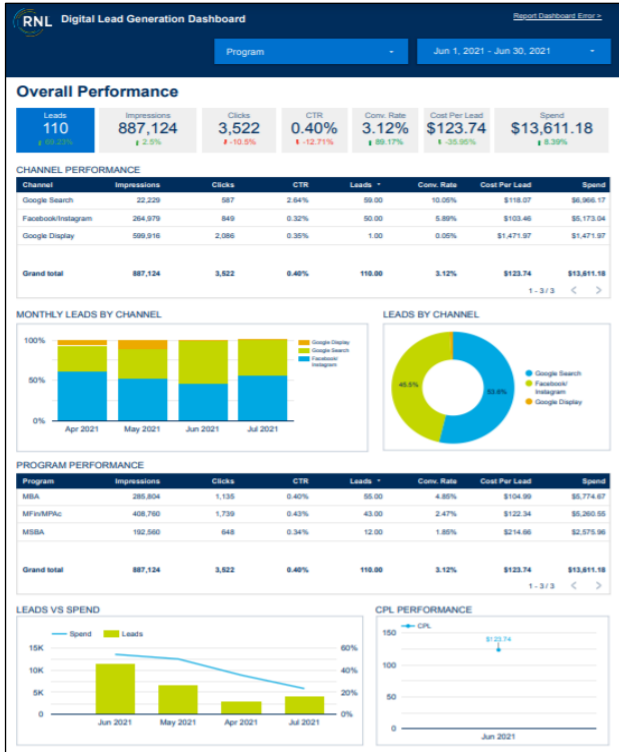
40%

No

WHY DID/WILL YOU CLICK ON ADS?	ALL
It was for a school I am interested in and the ad reminded me that I needed to take the next step.	35%
I'm aware of this school but didn't know anything about their programs	25%
I didn't know about the school and I wanted to learn more	24%
The ad "copy" was intriguing to me and made me want to click	15%



Lead Source Reporting (Paid Digital)



- Analyze all paid efforts overall, but also by channel.
- Know and analyze the goals of each channel (i.e... Facebook vs Paid search, etc.)
- Most successful paid efforts are at the program level and include paid search, social, display, and programmatic plays.



8. Traditional media should be leveraged as part of an integrated media campaign, but in new ways.

How to Win

Traditional Media



Continuing to use traditional media in the manner that it was used in the past is likely ineffective, but leveraging digital tracking to ensure an understanding of ROI can make traditional marketing an important element in your campaigns.



Direct Mail: While mailing catalogs is a thing of the past, mailing post cards with QR codes makes this entirely measurable.



Traditional Radio: In many markets, traditional radio continues to be among the best ways to raise general visibility and awareness.



Transit and Billboards: Similar to direct mail, the inclusion of a QR code can turn a billboard or subway ad into a trackable asset.



Traditional TV: Provides broad reach and allows for competition with bigger brands.



Out of Home: Builds awareness and interest but is static.

8a. Traditional media are cited by as many as 40 percent of prospective students as one of their “go to” ways to learn.

TABLE 15: SOURCES USED TO FIND ONLINE PROGRAMS OF INTEREST	UNDER-GRADUATE DEGREE	GRADUATE DEGREE
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Ads on streaming radio	28%	27%
Billboards/other outdoor ads	28%	24%
Ads on local broadcast radio	26%	26%
Ads on podcasts/other streaming audio	26%	18%

Lower usage but important to include in the mix



Source: 2022 Online Student Recruitment Report, RNL

How to Win

Traditional Media



While digital channels are most frequently cited as sources in program search, as much as one-third of students use more traditional methods. To find them where they are, marketing must include both.



**How are you leveraging traditional media
in new ways to support the overall
strategy?**

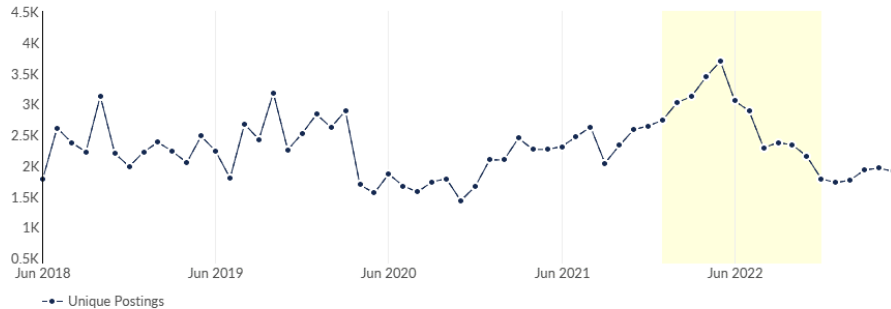


Existing Leads & Partnerships

1. Utilize institutional data to identify current partnership possibilities

- In what companies do we have an alumni presence?
- Where are our faculty networked and known?
- Enrollment Funnel: Is there a pattern of companies?

2. What type of outside data can we access (through *Lightcast*, *BLS*, etc.) to discern possible market oppor



124,676 Jobs (2022)* 3% above National average*	+6.0% % Change (2022-2027)* Nation: +8.9%*	\$33.81/hr \$70.3K/yr Median Earnings Nation: \$30.07/hr; \$62.5K/yr	13,099 Annual Openings*
---	--	---	----------------------------

Occupation	2022 Jobs*	Annual Openings*	Median Earnings	Growth (2022 - 2027)*	Employment Concentration (2022)*
Accountants and Auditors	19,838	1,942	\$38.20/hr	+4.91%	1.06
Management Analysts	19,482	2,242	\$45.88/hr	+9.91%	1.27
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	11,405	1,434	\$32.95/hr	+11.34%	1.18
Financial Managers	8,918	818	\$70.65/hr	+7.59%	1.16
Project Management Specialists	8,403	814	\$46.38/hr	+7.07%	0.82
Computer and Information Systems Managers	7,239	651	\$77.83/hr	+7.24%	1.01
Human Resources Specialists	6,359	719	\$35.48/hr	+7.75%	0.85
Chief Executives	5,529	449	\$84.34/hr	+2.88%	1.55
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	5,182	513	\$29.84/hr	-3.16%	0.99
Marketing Managers	5,166	528	\$67.16/hr	+6.31%	1.32

Job Postings Analytics: Occupations and Positions

Master's, Nursing

Top Companies Posting

Company	Total/Unique (Oct 2019 - Sep 2020)	Posting Intensity	Median Posting Duration
Cross Country Healthcare, Inc.	2,267 / 244	9 : 1	28 days
Children's Hospital Medical Center	737 / 163	5 : 1	19 days
Vanderbilt University	1,303 / 116	11 : 1	64 days
Medstaff Inc	832 / 94	9 : 1	32 days
Vanderbilt University Medical Center	949 / 92	10 : 1	72 days
HCA Holdings, Inc.	622 / 64	10 : 1	51 days
United States Department of the Air Force	228 / 57	4 : 1	32 days
Allied Health Group Inc	156 / 34	5 : 1	16 days
Department of Veterans Affairs	248 / 29	9 : 1	33 days
Fcs, Inc.	71 / 25	3 : 1	19 days

Top Posted Job Titles

Job Title	Total/Unique (Oct 2019 - Sep 2020)	Posting Intensity	Median Posting Duration
Job Captains	888 / 116	8 : 1	26 days
Registered Nurses	671 / 71	9 : 1	52 days
Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners	171 / 55	3 : 1	32 days
Psychiatric Registered Nurses	197 / 44	4 : 1	23 days
Medical Surgical Travel Registered Nurses	880 / 34	26 : 1	39 days
Medical Surgical Registered Nurses	272 / 31	9 : 1	46 days
ICU Registered Nurses	143 / 28	5 : 1	28 days
Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners	73 / 25	3 : 1	27 days
Clinical Staff Leaders	395 / 23	17 : 1	74 days
Nurse Practitioners	89 / 23	4 : 1	17 days

Job posting analytics represent the most timely demand indicators, in that they include data as recent as one month previous to retrieval. They provide data that is more customizable than US Department of Labor data on specific companies, positions, and skills seeking employees with the degree being analyzed. We are able to assess the relative demand for each factor, the relative ease (or difficulty) in identifying qualified candidates, and the specific employers most frequently looking for graduates of your programs.

An RNL Program Prioritization and Positioning study also includes an analysis of the associated industries, cities most frequently seeking qualified candidates, typical level of experience required/preferred and the concentrations of available jobs by degree level within the associated discipline.



Existing Leads & Partnerships: Takeaways

- 1. Interview key leaders about possible executive contacts**
- 2. Assess team structure and staffing to support partnership growth**
- 3. Build Corporate outreach strategy**
 - Develop a corporate outreach toolkit
 - Develop communication strategy
 - Include ROI scenarios for partners
 - What are the benefits to the partner for an agreement between your campus and them?
- 4. Track your ROI**
 - Cost per Lead?
 - Cost per Start?
 - How do those KPI's compare to other channels?



Given the mix of your lead generation activity, do you have a healthy and balanced lead generation strategy?

What activities or additional strategies could help you generate more quality leads?

RNL Regional Workshop

Graduate and Online Enrollment



4

Applying What You Learned: Next Steps in Making Change Happen



RNL's Formula for Success



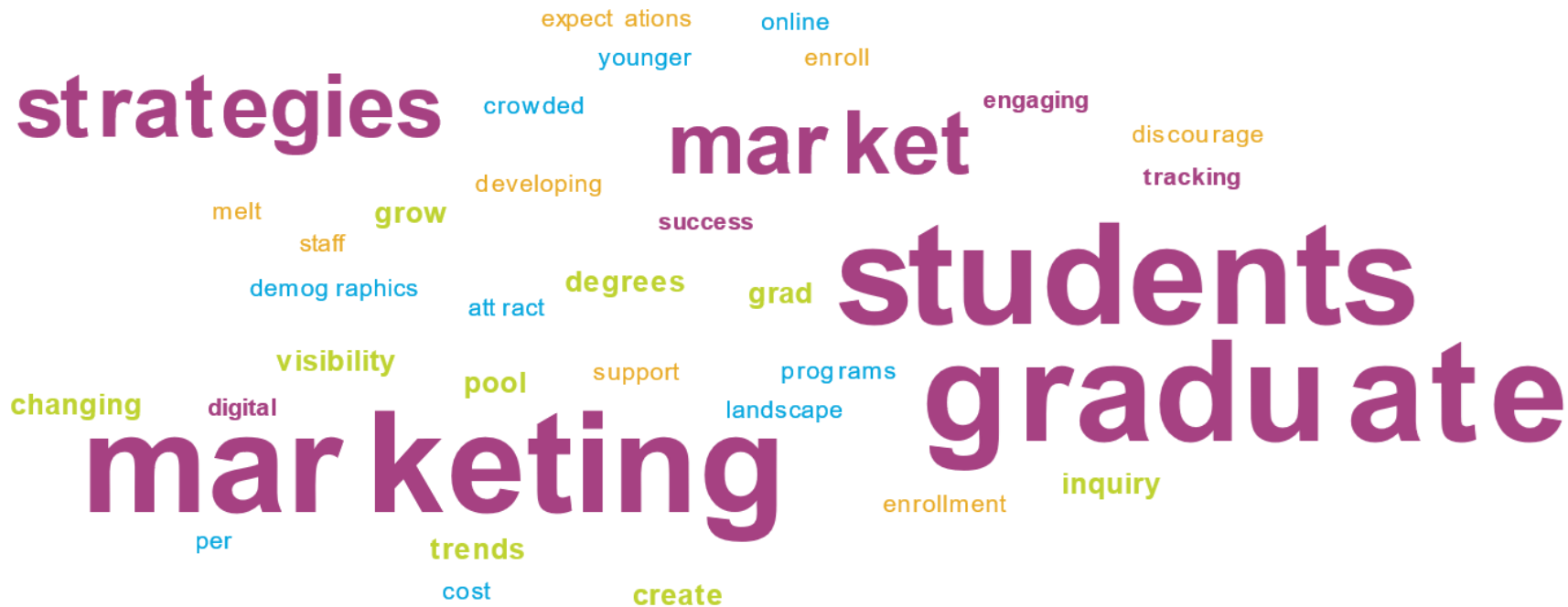
= Success

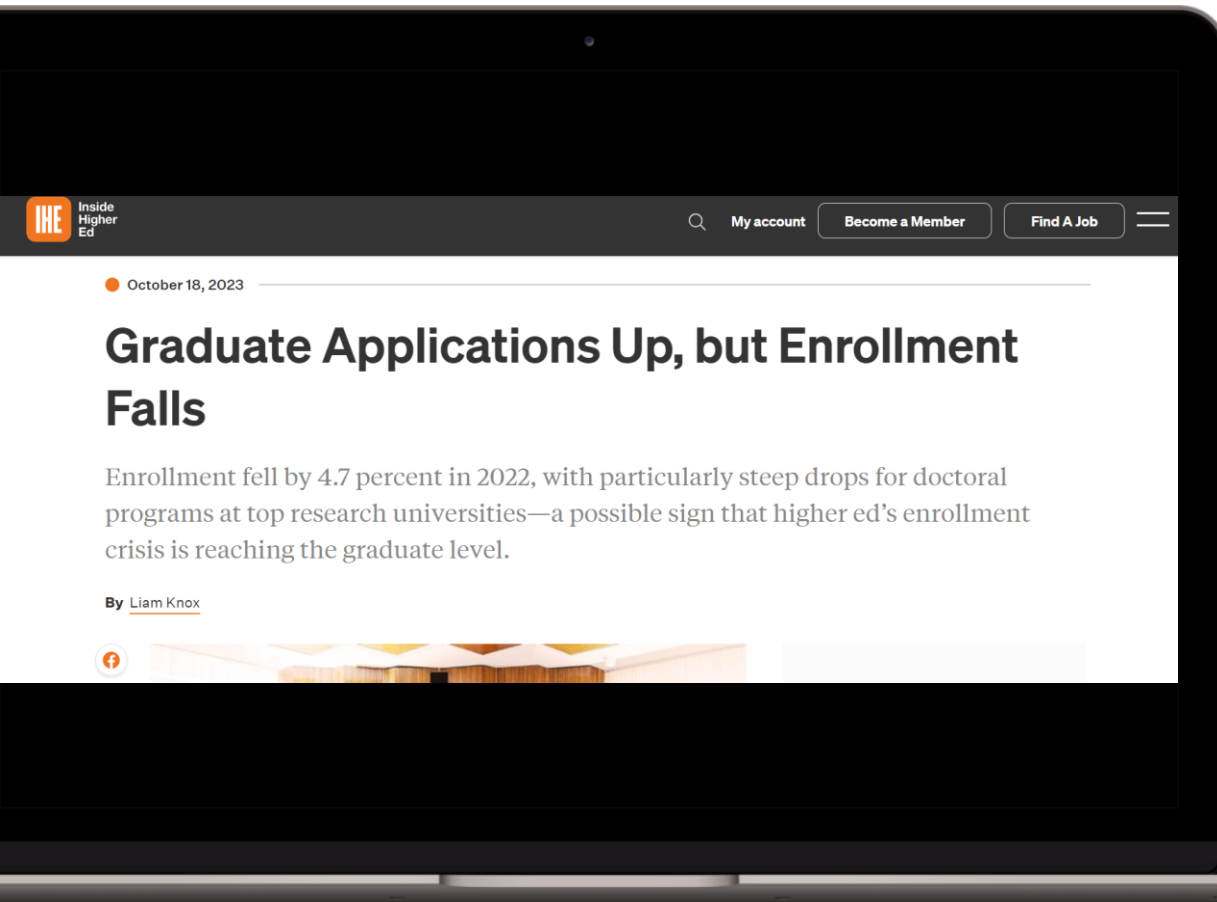


A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a blue checkered shirt. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand and looking at it. In the foreground, the keyboard of a laptop is visible. The entire image has a blue tint. Overlaid in the center is the text "Q & A" in a white, sans-serif font.

Q & A

Your questions





Did you see this headline last week?

Who's missing from the data?

SNHU
Liberty
Grand Canyon
Capella
Western Governors
University of Phoenix



How to respond to
decreasing employer
demand for degrees

What everyone is talking about...

EDUCATION JULY 11, 2023

Americans' Confidence in Higher Education Down Sharply

Shifting Confidence in Higher Education Among Demographic Groups, 2015-2023

% of U.S. adults with "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education

	2015 %	2018 %	2023 %	2015-2023 change pct. pts.
Party identification				
Republicans	56	39	19	-37
Independents	48	44	32	-16
Democrats	68	62	59	-9
Education				
No college degree	54	45	29	-25
College degree only	57	50	47	-10
Postgraduate degree	67	60	50	-17

Percent of the public that has confidence in higher ed:

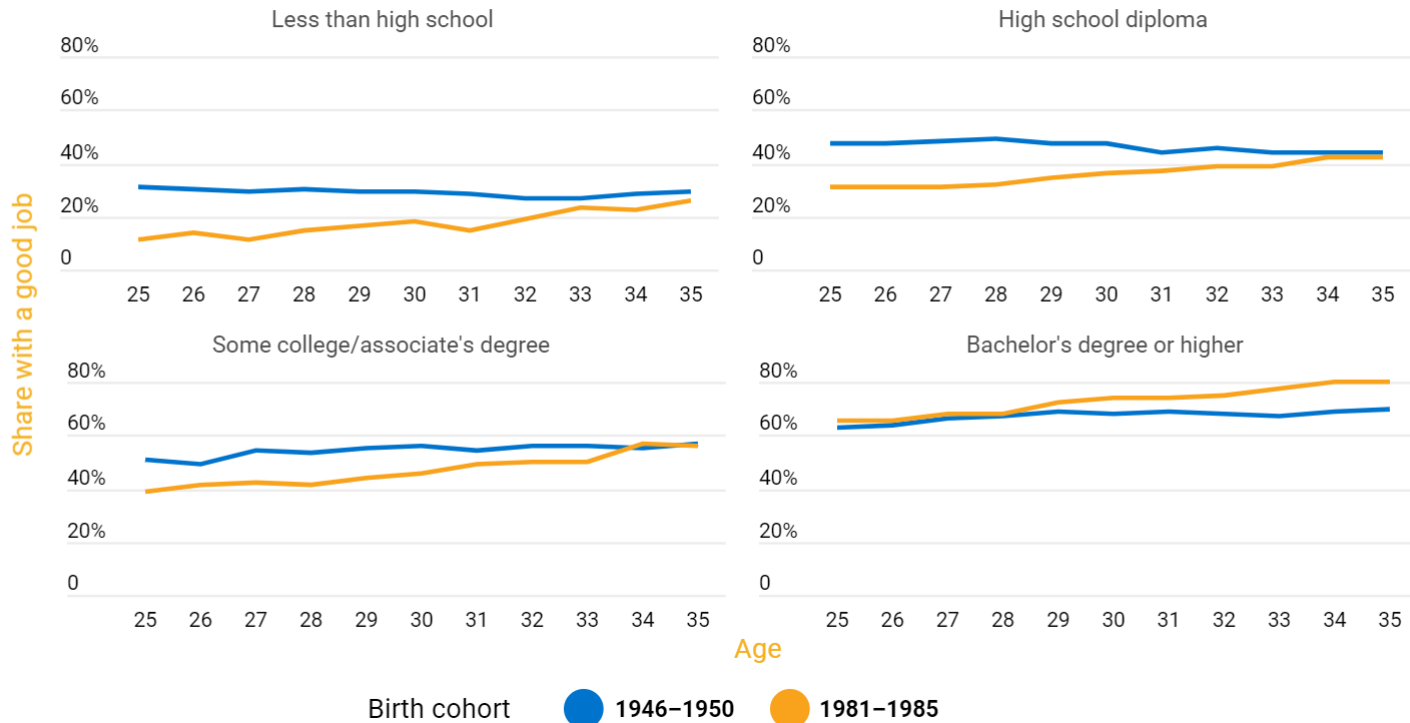
48%

2018

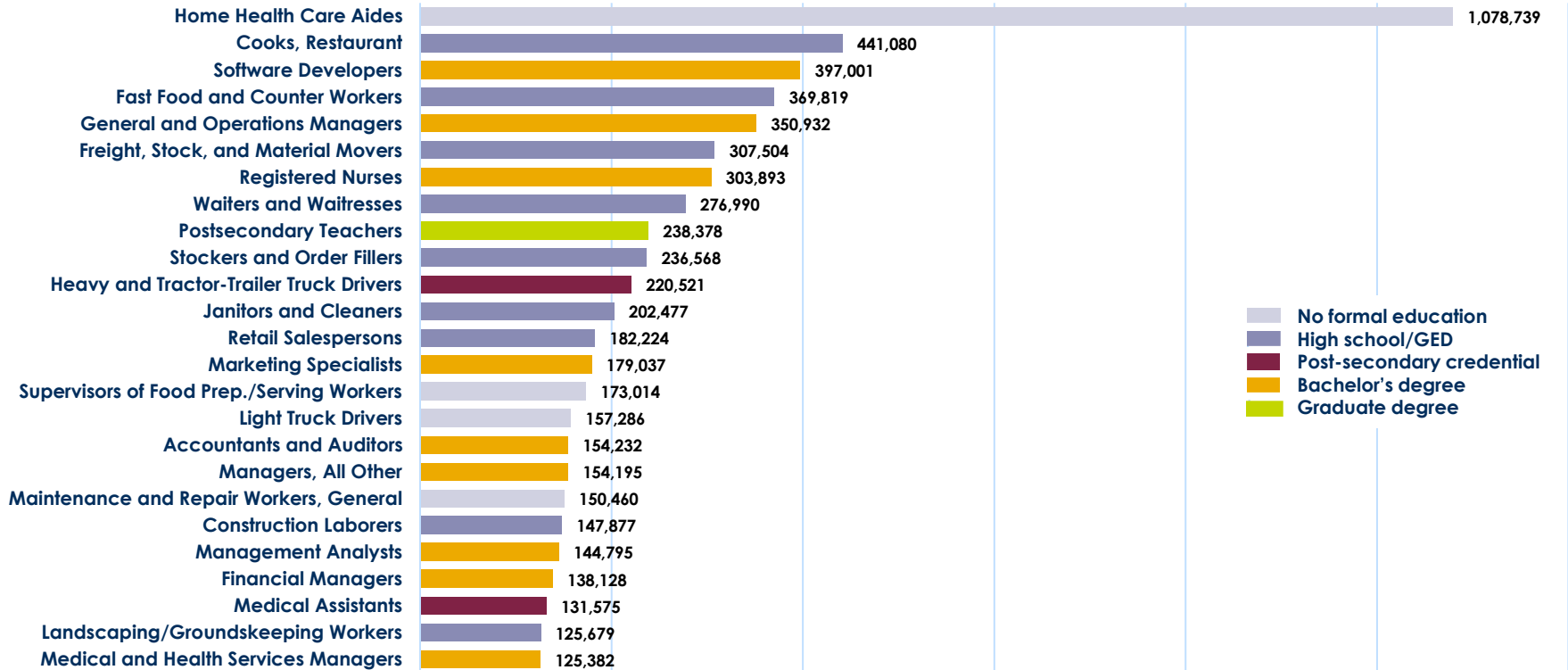
36%

2023

What is driving these attitudes?

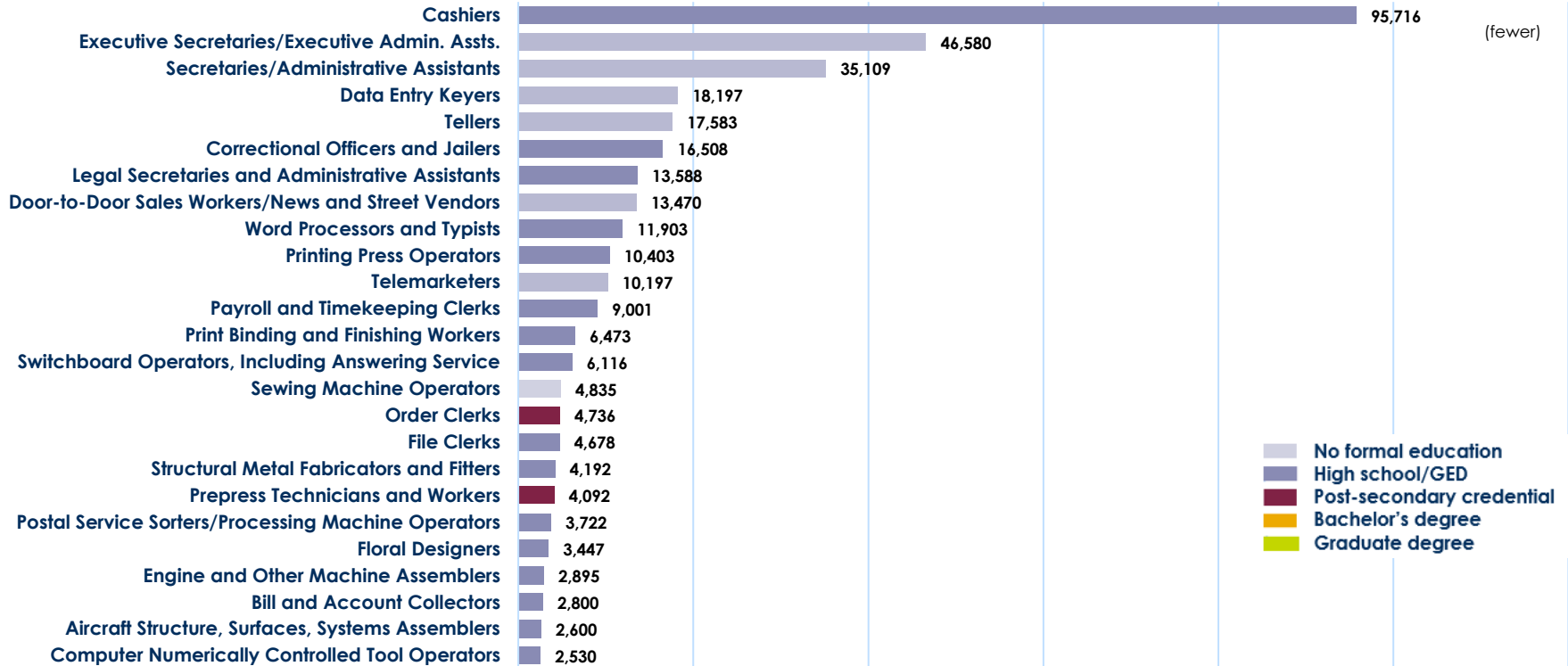


Greatest Growth Occupations (2023-2032)



Source: RNL analysis of U.S. Labor Department, Bureau of Labor Statistics data (retrieved 7/2023, via Lightcast)

Greatest Contracting Occupations (2023-2032)



Source: RNL analysis of U.S. Labor Department, Bureau of Labor Statistics data (retrieved 7/2023, via Lightcast)

CEOs, Supervisors, and HR Leaders Differ on Alternative Credentials

The New York Times

OPINION
GUEST ESSAY

Let's Stop Pretending College Degrees Don't Matter

Aug. 21, 2023

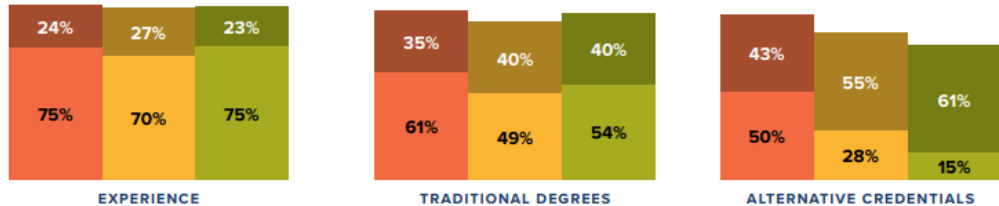
In April 2022, a [major study](#) by the Society for Human Resource Management, or S.H.R.M., found that 71 percent of executives said that some alternative credentials are equivalent to a bachelor's degree. But only 58 percent of supervisors (most likely beneath those executives on the organization chart) concurred, a figure that fell to 36 percent for human resources professionals, or those typically closest to hiring decisions.

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYER GROUPS AGREEING CERTAIN ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIALS EQUATE TO EDUCATION

EXECUTIVES SUPERVISORS HR PROFESSIONALS



PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS WHO PLACED A HIGH OR MODERATE VALUE ON EXPERIENCE, TRADITIONAL DEGREES AND ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIALS



Source: <https://shrm.org/foundation/about/Documents/The%20Rise%20of%20Alternative%20Credentials%20In%20Hiring.pdf>



How to think about
identifying new
degree areas

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



Landscape, Road Map, and Mirror



LANDSCAPE

Do you know the terrain will be to travel? A Quantitative assessment of the demand and supply characteristics confronting each program in your market helps you plan for success.



ROAD MAP

Do you know how to navigate the terrain? Qualitative investigation of specific competitors will ensure you can differentiate your program in a crowded market. Differentiation is more than a unique program name.



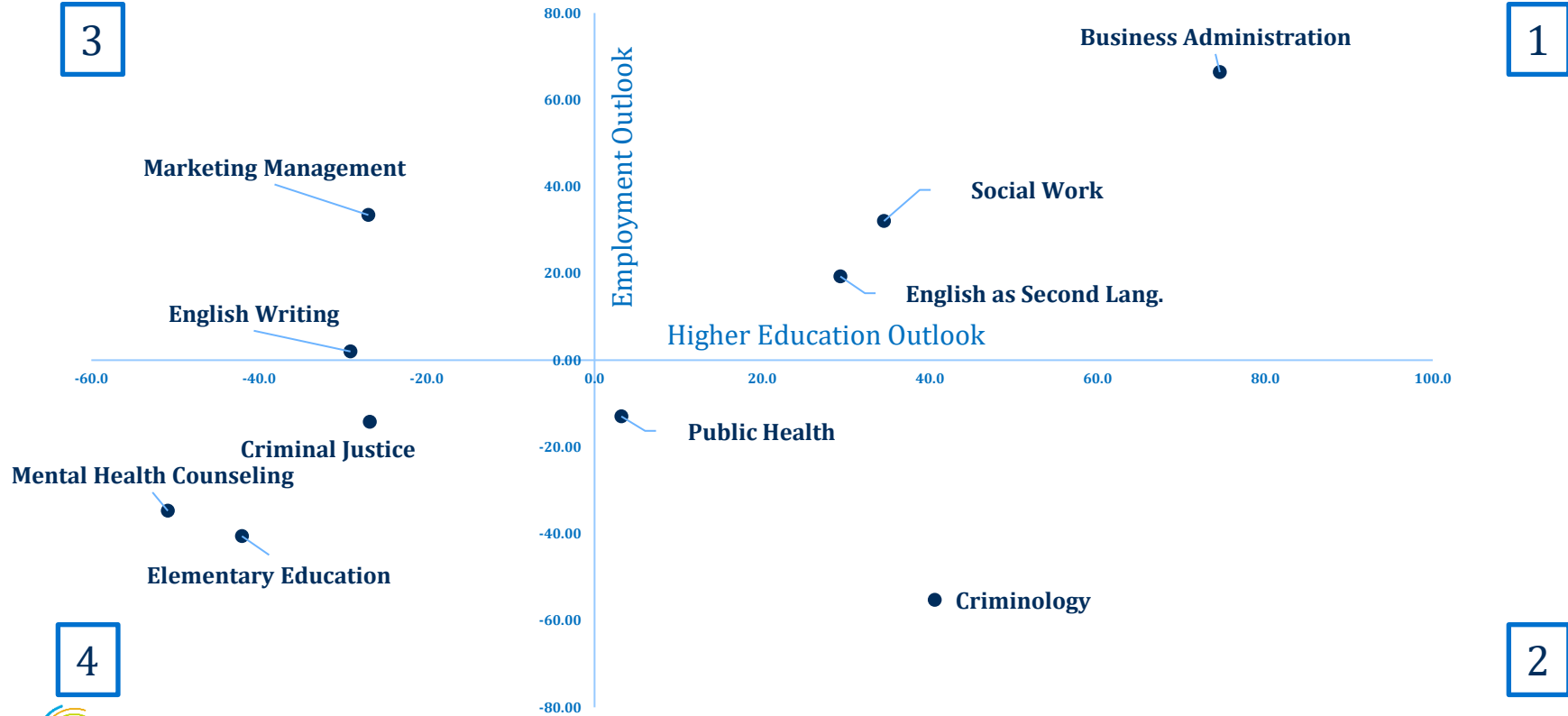
MIRROR

What do others think of you as a provider? Do your programs align with those perceptions? Surveying your audience(s) will help you understand how you fit into your regional (and wider) market.

Largest Master (1-25) Programs (100-mile radius)

Program	ALL Master's							Online Master's					Related Occupations		
	2019 ALL Master's Degrees	Rank - ALL	Client Total	5-Year Growth #	5-Year Growth %	Average Annual Growth (CARG)	Online as % of Total	Online Master's Degrees 2019	Rank - ON-LINE	5-Year Growth #	5-Year Growth %	Average Annual Growth (CARG)	2020 Jobs	Annual Openings	Proj. Growth (2020-2030)
Business Administration	3,584	1	-	(247)	-6.4%	-1.3%	61%	2,189	1	205	10%	2%	281,501	23,537	15,987
Social Work	1,693	2	-	399	30.8%	5.5%	19%	320	3	320	Insf. Data	#DIV/0!	50,913	4,871	4,209
Educational Leadership and Admin.	796	3	-	16	2.1%	0.4%	38%	306	5	76	33%	6%	12,774	883	(56)
Accounting	755	4	-	(145)	-16.1%	-3.5%	8%	62	31	23	59%	10%	71,042	6,039	1,651
Mechanical Engineering	669	5	-	206	44.5%	7.6%	33%	219	8	3	1%	0%	79,768	5,202	(164)
Electrical Engineering	609	6	-	121	24.8%	4.5%	25%	150	16	-22	-13%	-3%	33,857	2,254	907
Occupational Therapy	577	7	-	131	29.4%	5.3%	21%	124	23	44	55%	9%	8,081	511	621
Organizational Leadership	550	8	-	149	37.2%	6.5%	91%	501	2	165	49%	8%	169,348	14,092	10,741
Education	541	9	1	(167)	-23.6%	-5.2%	25%	134	22	-71	-35%	-8%	135,323	9,228	(2,072)
Business Admin., Mgmt. and Operations	536	10	156d	(147)	-21.5%	-4.7%	59%	317	4	-217	-41%	-10%	60,280	5,180	3,494
Curriculum and Instruction	491	11	-	(26)	-5.0%	-1.0%	49%	242	6	-83	-26%	-6%	6,658	596	214
Business Management	423	12	-	(78)	-15.6%	-3.3%	0%	0	n/a	-193	-100%	-100%	268,500	21,781	14,840
Physician Assistant	402	13	-	67	20.0%	3.7%	0%	0	n/a	-37	-100%	-100%	7,348	582	1,548
Public Administration	399	14	-	(123)	-23.6%	-5.2%	35%	139	19	-3	-2%	0%	164,850	13,207	9,382
Industrial Engineering	393	15	-	181	85.4%	13.1%	19%	74	27	60	429%	40%	70,724	4,685	2,001
Teacher Educ./Prof. Dev., Specific Levels	377	16	-	143	61.1%	10.0%	16%	59	33	53	883%	58%	19,269	2,200	965
Health Care Administration/Management	371	17	-	(91)	-19.7%	-4.3%	53%	195	10	26	15%	3%	19,265	1,923	4,374
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	363	18	-	52	16.7%	3.1%	41%	149	17	-6	-4%	-1%	160,526	8,721	5,505
Counselor Education/School Counseling...	359	19	21	(125)	-25.8%	-5.8%	11%	38	50	0	0%	0%	12,966	1,237	456
Information Sciences	334	20	-	80	31.5%	5.6%	24%	81	25	51	170%	22%	97,780	7,109	5,749
Family Practice Nursing	317	21	-	73	29.9%	5.4%	3%	8	117	-115	-93%	-42%	9,758	919	3,523
Library and Information Science	309	22	-	(107)	-25.7%	-5.8%	72%	222	7	-194	-47%	-12%	6,484	582	0
Special Education and Teaching	288	23	-	(67)	-18.9%	-4.1%	48%	139	20	101	266%	30%	12,870	940	102
Human Resources Management...	281	24	-	(116)	-29.2%	-6.7%	74%	209	9	-89	-30%	-7%	64,974	5,918	934
Architectural/Building Sciences/Technology	274	25	-	274	Insf. Data	#DIV/0!	14%	38	51	38	Insf. Data	#DIV/0!	102,190	8,409	3,151

Program Prioritization Matrix – All Program Formats




3

1

4

2



How to effectively
differentiate new
programs in a
crowded market?

Graduate (and online) students say that the match between content and interests is the most important factor in selecting a program.

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.*

You differentiate through the language you use, the information you provide...

Program Descriptive Language

We analyze the content and tone of the primary program descriptions that are presented by each competitor on program webpages because this helps us understand how they present the program to stand out among competitors.

Program descriptions can be “student-focused,” focusing on what the program will do for the student, or “institution-focused” focusing on what the program brings to the student. Some combination of the two. As increasing numbers of students indicate that the match between the program content and their own interests is the most important enrollment decision factor (RNL, Graduate Student Report, 2021), it has become more important for institutions to lead with what the program will do for the student in life, work, and community – rather than focusing on specific pedagogy, institutional mission, philosophy, or reputation.

In what follows we highlight key passages that we identified as critical to framing how visitors view the program from their first review of material.

Chamberlain University	DePaul University	Purdue University Northwest	University of St Francis
Primary Program Description			
<p>By Nurses, For Nurses Our 100% doctorally-prepared faculty use their nursing experience to help you grow. Join a CCNE-accredited nursing school with more than 130 years of history educating nurses.</p> <p>You're in Good Company You'll join a network of more than 90,000 students and alumni nationwide who step forward to support each other - and their patients.</p> <p>8 Specialty Track Options Specialize your practice as you earn your MSN degree. Choose from specialty tracks including healthcare policy, nurse educator, nurse executive, nursing informatics, family nurse practitioner, adult-</p>	<p>Earn the credentials to advance your career If you're a registered nurse, DePaul's MS in Nursing program will help you develop the skills and credentials you need to become a nurse administrator, nurse educator, family nurse practitioner or adult-gerontology nurse practitioner. We'll tailor the program for you depending on your educational background.</p> <p>If choosing nurse educator or nurse administrator track, you'll earn a Master of Science in Nursing through DePaul; and a certificate in health administration or health professions education through DePaul's alliance</p>	<p>Elevate your career with Purdue University Northwest's online Master of Science in Nursing (MSN). Discover a high-quality and affordable pathway to your next nursing credential. Power onward in your nursing career with PNW.</p> <p>Online Flexibility for Working Nurses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customize your path and pace to fit your busy nursing schedule. • Complete your practicum hours where you work. • Graduate with your master's degree in nursing in two years or less. 	<p>Who are USF MSNs? As a master's graduate of Leach College of Nursing, you can take on the role of an advanced nurse who functions in a family nurse practitioner, psychiatric mental health nurse, nurse educator, or nurse administrator role. The MSN is a valuable, respected degree. Advanced practice nurses are often called on to assume leadership roles in the profession and in health care delivery.</p> <p>As a graduate you will incorporate your education and research into a practice that is reflective of the dynamic needs of a diverse population. Through the advanced role you will be instrumental in ensuring</p>

WEBSITE BEST PRACTICES

Because undergraduate students conduct almost the entirety of their search process online, and then make their enrollment decisions largely based on the information they can (or cannot) find on institutional websites, it is more important than ever for institutional websites to ensure that they're following many of the best practices that are commonly found on the sites of other services with which prospective students interact regularly. 2021 RNL data indicates that nearly 80 percent of both prospective undergraduate and graduate students have watched a video on an institutional/program page; that more than half have used a chat feature; and that an information request form is the most common way to make first contact with the programs that interest them. For these reasons, we assess how each of these are done at competitor programs/institutions.

Franklin University	Ohio Christian University	Ohio State University	University of St. Francis
Website Best Practices: Use of Video, Chat, Information Request Form			
Video: Not present on home page	Video: Not present on home page	Video: Not present on home page	Video: Not present on home page
Chat: None	Chat: None	Chat: Yes, but it is not on the home page. Therefore, obtaining information through chat feature is more difficult than searching an FAQ page.	Chat: Yes, but it is not on the home page. Therefore, obtaining information through chat feature is more difficult than searching an FAQ page.
Information Request Form: A pop-up window appears as users scroll that leads to an information request form. There are also action buttons to Request Info at the top of the vertical navigation bar and just below the main image, as well as an embedded form within the body of the home page.	Information Request Form: Prominently positioned at the very top of the home page is an embedded information request form.	Information Request Form: There is a top and an action "sticky" bar at the contact staff, both lead to a list of contact numbers, but no information request form. There are links within the home page that lead to university staff (e.g., program staff).	Information Request Form: There is a top and an action "sticky" bar at the contact staff, both lead to a list of contact numbers, but no information request form. There are links within the home page that lead to university staff (e.g., program staff).
General Navigation Summary: Most, if not all, of the information prospective students need is available and navigation is intuitive.	General Navigation Summary: Most, if not all, of the information prospective students need is available and navigation is intuitive. Because	General Navigation Summary: Most, if not all, of the information prospective students need is available and navigation is intuitive. However	General Navigation Summary: Most, if not all, of the information prospective students need is available and navigation is intuitive. However

Video: How Programs Compare with Valparaiso University

More than 70 percent of prospective students watch videos during their search for study. Like three of its competitors, Valparaiso University does not include a video on its home page. Only University of Maryland Global provides a video. It's about one minute long and narrated by a graduate who is depicted at home with her family, as well as in an interview setting, and talks about the benefits of the program.

Examples of Videos UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND GLOBAL



Cate Reich wanted to be a role model to her children and to give back to her country. She decided to earn an MS in Cybersecurity. UMGC's reputation and flexibility were the perfect fit for Cate's busy life. What's more, Cate's UMGC courses were not only immediately useful to her work, they also allowed her expand her career while making the world a safer place.

...and the options that you provide students to customize their program.

Valparaiso University – Competitor Analysis

Master of Science in Cybersecurity						
Institution, Program Name, and Home Page	Total Credits	Required Courses	Concentrations/ Specializations	Culminating Experience: Thesis/Capstone	Format(s)	Schedules: Semesters/ Terms
DePaul University MS in Cybersecurity https://www.cdm.depaul.edu/academics/pages/MS-In-Cybersecurity.aspx	52 quarter credits/17 courses (equivalent to 35 semester credits)	Governance, Risk Management and Compliance and Networking and Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NET 405 Network Fundamentals NET 411 Introduction to Computer and Network Systems NET 413 Introduction to Lan Technologies CSEC 418 Introduction to Host Security Computer Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSC 400 Discrete Structures for Computer Science CSC 401 Introduction to Programming CSC 402 Data Structures I CSC 403 Data Structures II CSC 406 Systems I CSC 407 Systems II 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer Security Governance, Risk Management and Compliance Networking and Infrastructure 	Computer Security and Networking and Infrastructure. <i>Students have the option of completing the Information Security Governance course, the Computer Information and Network Security Capstone course, or completing a Master's Research Project. If a student chooses to complete a Master's Research project for 8 credit hours, 4 credit hours of CSC 695 replaces one major or open elective course. A student who completes a Master's Research project also has the option of completing a Master's Thesis.</i>	Online	10-week terms

INFORMATION ON RELATED CAREERS

2021 data on the enrollment decision making patterns of prospective students indicate that positive career outlook and/or positive outcomes data on the employment of recent graduates is the second most frequently cited factor in choosing graduate programs/institutions. This is a function of the combination of the cost of higher education, the soft job market in many fields, and the rising skepticism of many about the value of a college education after a generation of dreamers have had to return to school in order to equip themselves with useable job skills.

Therefore, it is mission critical for successful programs to prominently present as much detailed information as possible in order to attract students to their programs. While programs and institutions are doing better—although not great—at presenting some information on career prospects, these data tend to be superficial, without detail or clickable links, and almost completely devoid of data on the success of recent graduates of the specific institution the visitor is considering. With this in mind, we evaluate the related career information that is presented by programs and institutions.

Concordia University Chicago	University of Cincinnati	University of Indianapolis
Information on Related Careers		
Medium-High. The home page includes a section "What Can You Do With a Master's in Sports Leadership?" that includes headshots of four (presumed) alumni with their position titles, as well as a bulleted list of potential positions. What Can You Do With a Master's in Sports Leadership? <i>The Sports Industry Needs More Business Leaders - You Can Fill That Need</i>	Medium-High. Clicking on Careers leads to an entire webpage dedicated the career outlook of graduates. Career Outlook <i>Obtaining employment in sport requires a distinctive game plan that often draws heavily on face-to-face networking with industry professionals. That's why we developed our online Master of Science in Sport Administration program designed to leverage the Bearcat Nation's vast alumni network and UC faculty members with close industry connections.</i>	Low. The home page includes a "Potential Careers" section that comprises a short list of general position titles. POTENTIAL CAREERS <i>The MS in sport management prepares you for a variety of roles in athletic administration.</i> Compliance Facility/operations management Ticket office management Development (sales, sponsorship, fundraising) Public relations Business office management Human resource management
Information on the Career Outcomes of Recent Graduates		
Low. There are headshots of what we presume are four alumni along with their position titles.	Low. Under "Testimonials," users can watch two videos, which comprise alumni stories.	None. No information on the career outcomes of recent graduates is presented.

Examples of Career Information Presentation CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO



Thank you for attending!

EVALUATION FORM

Please complete evaluation form and leave at the table or hand to an RNL staff member.

RESOURCES

Resources are at the check-in table and online. An email will be sent out with a copy of the slides from today.

CONNECT WITH RNL

Let us know if you'd like to connect to discuss how we are partnering with campuses in any of the following areas:

- OPM alternative
- Conversion
- Lead generation with full-funnel attribution
- Instructional design
- Consulting and research



OFFER TO RNL
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Access to RNL's latest report: the 2023 Graduate Student Recruitment Report



scan me

Thank You

We appreciate your time and look forward to further conversations with your teams!

<https://www.ruffalonl.com/graduate-online-enrollment-solutions/>



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APPENDIX

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Media recommendations inform media spend

University

INQUIRY GOALS ACADEMIC PERIOD GOALS

INQUIRY GOALS		2021-06			to			2021-08		
Channel		Jun 2021	Recommendation	Historical	Jul 2021	Recommendation	Historical	Aug 2021	Recommendation	Historical
Totals	Budget	\$235,000.00	\$263,726.31	\$211,944.84	\$0.00	\$206,925.48	\$172,899.71	\$0.00	\$84,649.30	\$155,664.74
	Inquiry	1,325	1,582	1,372	0	1,342	1,205	0	603	1,211
Paid Channels	Budget	\$235,000.00	\$263,726.31	\$211,944.84	\$0.00	\$206,925.48	\$172,899.71	\$0.00	\$84,649.30	\$155,664.74
	Inquiry	1,325	1,395	1,242	0	1,186	1,043	0	496	1,055
Affiliate	Budget	\$10,000.00	\$12,014.85	\$18,088.25	\$0.00	\$6,137.31	\$12,060.20	\$0.00	\$1,495.79	\$10,659.00
	Inquiry	200	202	309	0	119	196	0	25	225
Paid Search	Budget	\$165,000.00	\$179,413.70	\$138,110.46	\$0.00	\$132,495.05	\$113,624.68	\$0.00	\$63,170.86	\$103,534.64
	Inquiry	800	866	680	0	715	604	0	346	561
Paid Social	Budget	\$60,000.00	\$72,297.76	\$55,746.13	\$0.00	\$68,293.12	\$47,214.83	\$0.00	\$19,982.65	\$41,471.09
	Inquiry	325	327	253	0	352	243	0	125	269
	Budget	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	Inquiry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Inquiry collection


University

👤
INQUIRY SEARCH

Search Results

Search Title: Channel / Vender View ✕ ▾

Last 30 +

First Name/Inquiry Id/Queue Id

Last Name

Inquiry

<input type="checkbox"/>	Inquiry Id	Received Date ↓	First Name	Last Name	Inquiry Id	Channel Name	Source/Vendor	Source Campaign	Program
<input type="checkbox"/>	72128057	06/13/2021 06:51:15 am	K	Evans	72128057	Search	Google	Program	Bachel Science Special Educati
<input type="checkbox"/>	72128053	06/13/2021 06:46:57 am	G	Swancy	72128053	Paid Social	Facebook	Microsite	Undecic
<input type="checkbox"/>	72128043	06/13/2021 06:35:25 am	M	Howard	72128043	Affiliate	Campus Explorer	0	Bachel Business Admins
<input type="checkbox"/>	72128020	06/13/2021 06:12:26 am	M	Marshall	72128020	Search	Google	Program	Undecic
<input type="checkbox"/>	72127888	06/13/2021 03:46:55 am	E	McDonald	72127888	Search	Google	Generic	Undecic
		06/13/2021							Bachel

So, let's talk about the big questions

Turn to someone at your table who is not from your institution. Introduce yourself and spend five minutes discussing one of the following questions:

Among the two of you, the shorter of the two of you ask:

Last names A-G: *“What is NOT working in our current digital media strategy?”*

Last names H-N: *“What program is missing from our program portfolio?”*

Last Names O-Z: *“What are we doing to increase response times?”*