

# Going Pro: Positioning Graduate Professional Programs for Success

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# Agenda

1. Who are today's professional graduate students?
2. Marketing strategies that resonate
3. Winning the enrollment game and promoting student success
4. Final takeaways

# Establishing (or reimaging) programs that align with brand and institutional mission

- Creating a vision for grad recruitment in a traditional institution
  - Brand alone is not enough: find your niche (while avoiding the super-narrow)
  - Flexibility to pivot
  - Grad recruitment requires distinct strategies



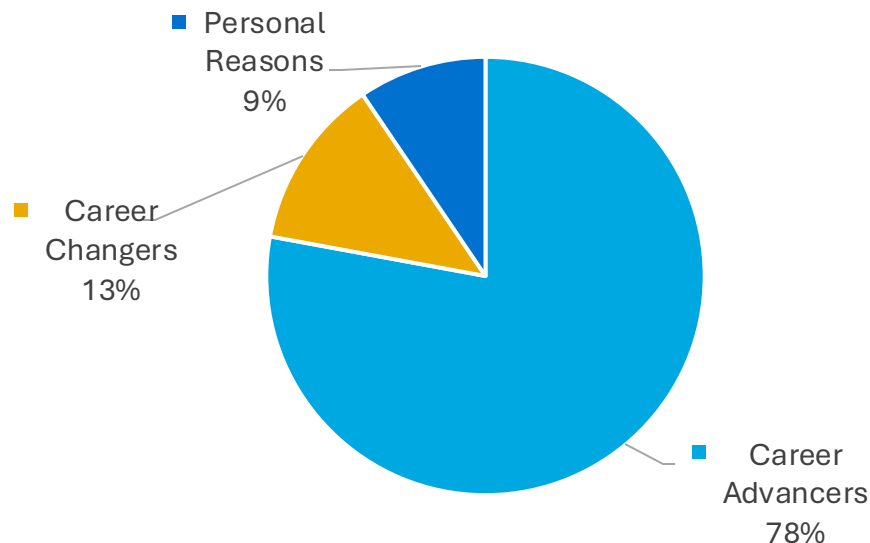


# **Who are today's professional graduate students?**



**1**

# Primary motivations for graduate enrollment



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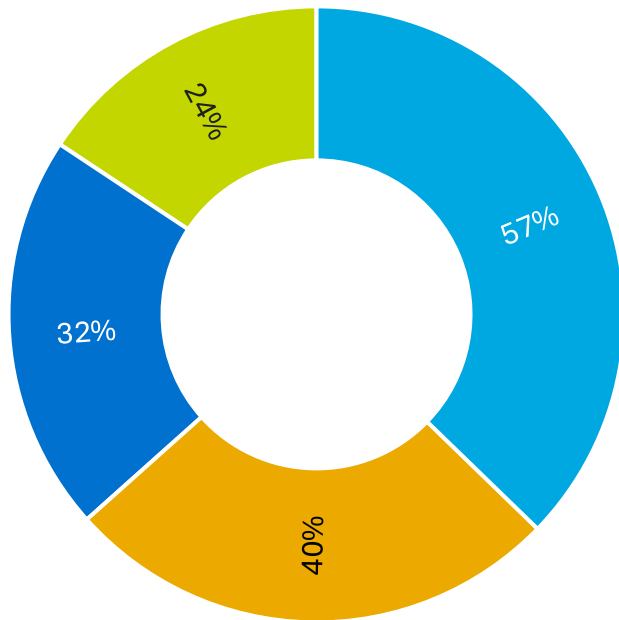
# 74%

of graduate students are motivated to enroll to advance their careers



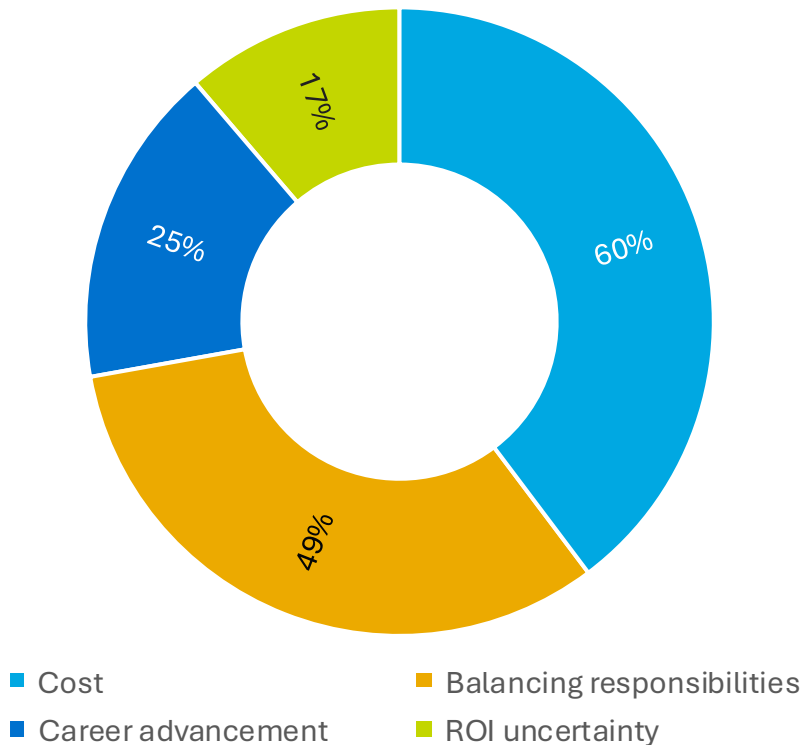
**Graduate students' motivations to enroll  
are driven by cost, flexible course  
options, and career advancement.**

# How important is **influence** on graduate students who are not yet enrolled?



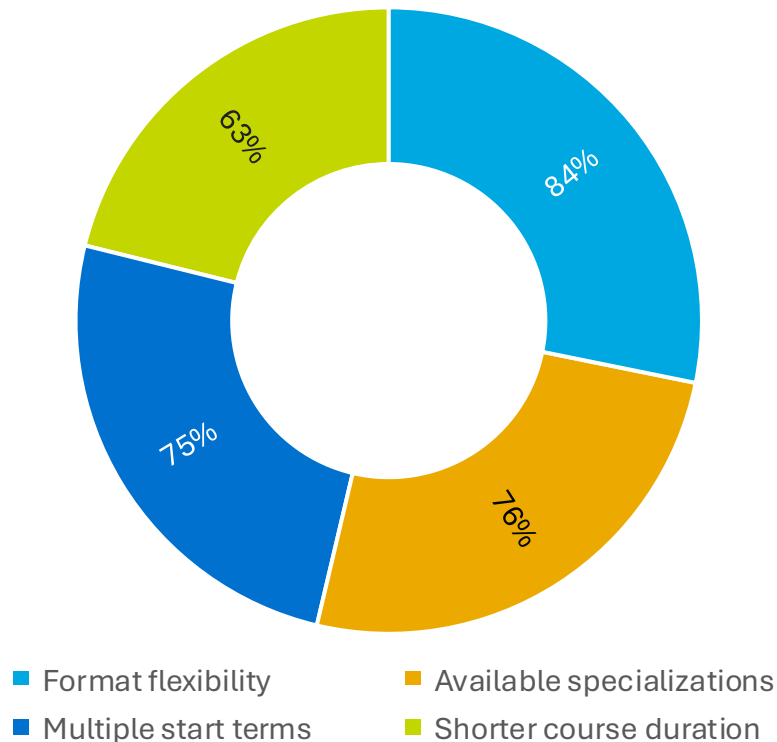
- Personal reflection
- Family or friends
- Employer or supervisor
- Colleague or mentor

# What are the main **concerns** of graduate students who are not yet enrolled?

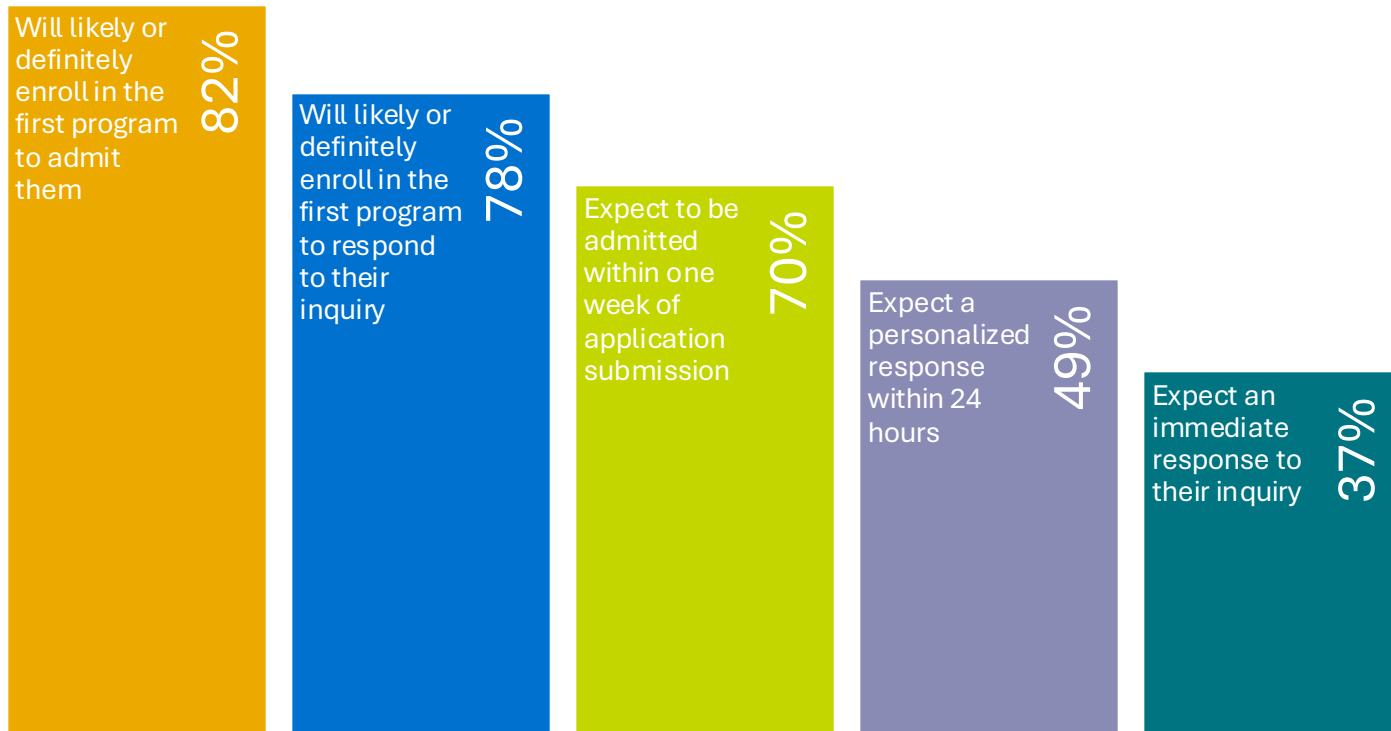




# What are the most important program features to graduate students who are not yet enrolled?



# Graduate students expect personalization and speed





# **Marketing strategies that resonate**

**2**

The background of the slide features a blue-tinted image of a graduation cap (mortarboard) and a rolled-up diploma tied with a ribbon, resting on a surface.

**What are examples  
of successful  
strategies that your  
campus  
incorporates?**

# It all starts with awareness

## Do people even know your program exists?

- Define your audience and address student motivations and concerns
- Inspire a sense of belonging through your brand messaging and digital strategy
- Understand your market and utilize your biggest differentiators accordingly
- Showcase student success stories
- Focus on your speed to lead



**53%**

Of graduate students indicate that a personalized response is important or very important when considering a program

# Leveraging your mission to distinguish yourself

## Utilize storytelling to drive connection

- Turning a traditional graduate program into your own
  - SEO matters
  - More than marketing content—embody your mission through your recruitment efforts and within curriculum
  - Maintain the integrity of programs and mission



# Identifying goals for DLG

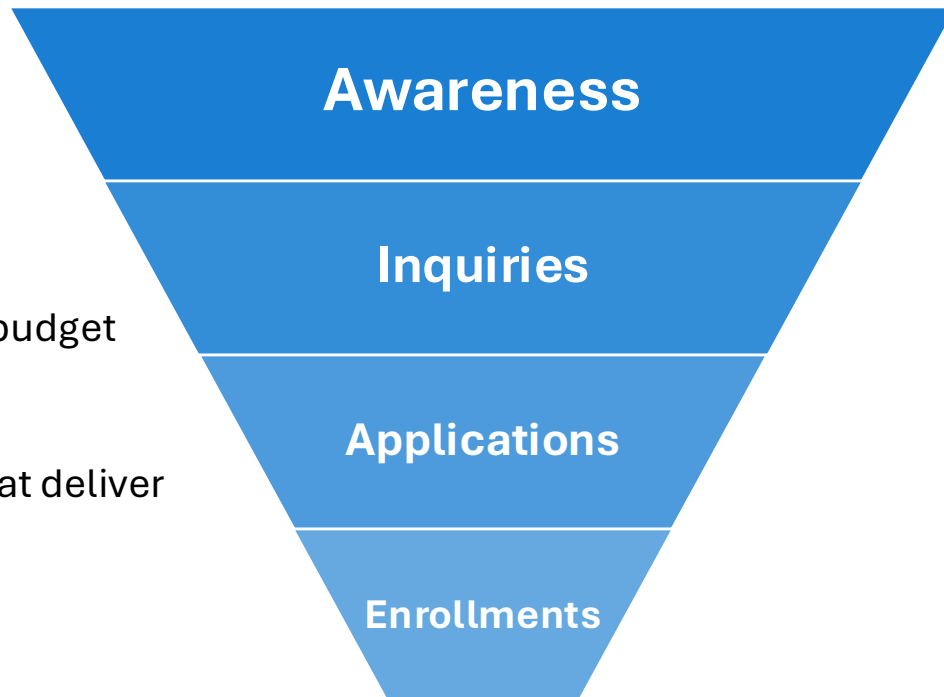


- ✓ Start with awareness
- ✓ Data-powered insights
- ✓ Understanding the conversion funnel
- ✓ Work backwards for success

# Building a strategic DLG plan

Focus on quality, not quantity

- Work backwards from your goals
  - Start with desired outcomes
- Use data to drive strategy
  - Leverage CPL benchmarks to guide budget
- Analyze and compare
  - Prioritize channels and messages that deliver engaged, qualified prospects







# **Winning the enrollment game**

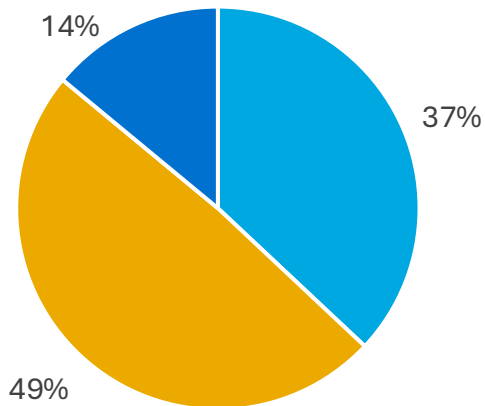
**3**

# The expectations of graduate students matter

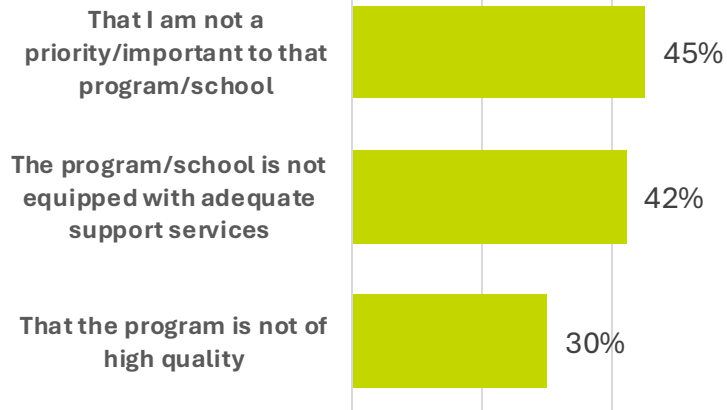
Students expect a speedy response both initially and throughout their experience

How soon after submitting an inquiry do you expect to hear from the program?

■ Immediately      ■ Within 24 hours  
■ More than 24 hours



What does a slower than expected response signify to you?





**How long does it take  
your campus to  
respond to inquiries?**

# Speed to lead impacts enrollment

## Five things graduate students tell us

1

You are actively competing with other programs—not just inertia.

2

You are competing with local institutions even if they are not your identified “peer institutions.”

3

Two-thirds of graduate students expect a response to their initial inquiry and other follow-up questions within 24 hours.

4

Nearly half of graduate students think a slower-than-expected response indicates they are unimportant to the institution/program.

5

More than 60% of graduate students will likely or definitely enroll in the program that responds to their inquiry first.

# Nurture leads with purpose

## Reducing friction in the process

- Inquiry nurturing
  - Timely enrollment contact > faculty emails
  - Simplified, personalized communication during the process
- Reducing friction
  - Streamline applications, offer concierge-style support
  - 42% of marketers lack insight into lead quality
- Know what you are up against
  - Understand your differentiators and secret shop your competitors

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44%

of career changers  
cite letters of  
recommendation as  
something that would  
stop them from applying

The background of the slide features a blurred image of a person's hands holding and reading a book. The entire image is covered by a semi-transparent blue overlay. Centered on this background is a bold, white text statement.

**Retention of professional graduate students is driven by relevance, relationships, and real-world support.**

# Driving success for professional learners

How can you incorporate AI into student success?

- Onboarding for adult students
  - Orientation should be tailored to part-time, online, or career-focused learners
- Support services and flexibility
  - Career coaching, mental health support, academic advising support life balance
- Building connections
  - Facilitate peer networking, mentorship, and employer-partnered events

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# 25%

Percent of professional graduate students who are more likely to persist with advising and career support



# **Key takeaways**

**4**



# Making the case for investment

## What did we prioritize?



### **Staffing**

What can we do to support retention while meeting our goals?



### **Curriculum**

How can we remain flexible and adapt to student needs?



### **Outsourcing**

What operations or tasks can be outsourced to increase efficiency?

# Top 3 strategies you implement today



1. Audit your speed to lead and inquiry follow-up



2. Revisit program differentiators and how they are communicated



3. Evaluate funnel performance and optimize quality over quantity

# Thank you!



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