

The Evolution of Search: Meeting the Needs of Partners in an Ever-Changing Landscape

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Session Agenda

1. Introductions
2. PLU Summary and Partnership Overview
3. How Search Has Shifted/How We Have Adapted
4. Key Takeaways
5. Q&A



Introductions

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Hillary Powell



Jameson Willey





PLU Summary & Partnership Overview

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PLU Summary

PLU Summary



- **Overview**

- Private, four-year, proud regional university
- 2,400 total students (undergraduate, graduate, doctoral)
- 75% of first year students come from Washington State
- 50% of incoming class are first generation students and 60% students of color

- **Traits and nuances**

- Strong in-state financial aid that allows for full tuition for certain Washingtonians
- Working to increase out of state reach to the right students
- We have a Nursing program...

- **Needs as an RNL partner**

- Outreach to grow out of state while maintaining our hold of in state students
- Qualify our inquiries through the different channels





Partnership Overview

Partnership Overview

- Partners since 2014
- Services have included:
 - Student Search (Sr and Jr/Soph)
 - Search Modeling
 - Inquiry Marketing
 - Digital Student and Parent Engagement, Personalized Video





How Search Has Shifted



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How Search Has Shifted

1. Shift from Mass Mailings to Data-Driven, Personalized Outreach

- Then: Institutions purchased large volumes of student names from College Board (via Student Search Service) and Encoura (formerly NRCCUA) to conduct blanket outreach, often through direct mail or email.
- Now: Emphasis on micro-targeting and segmentation based on student interests, behaviors, and demographics to improve yield and reduce spend.
 - Example: Institutions use enhanced segmentation filters (e.g., by academic interest, self-reported GPA, geography) to buy more targeted lists.
 - How we adapted: We use highly targeted criteria to shape our prospect acquisition (RNL Search Model, test scores, GPA, socio-political regions, CB peer groups, etc.)

How Search Has Shifted

2. Expansion Beyond Traditional Search Sources

- Then: College Board and Encoura were the primary data vendors for name buys.
- Now: Institutions supplement traditional sources with data from others, such as College Board Connections, niche platforms (e.g., Cappex, Niche), test-optional leads, parent info, etc.
 - Example: Both College Board and Encoura provide options to collect parent info for relevant purchase records
 - How we adapted: We incorporate campus prospect acquisitions through sources such as Niche into RNL outreach, we acquire opt-in leads, we capture parent info from purchased leads for campus comm flow

How Search Has Shifted

3. Decline of Standardized Testing and Its Impact

- Then: Testing was a dominant pipeline for student search.
- Now: Test-optional policies (accelerated by COVID-19) have reduced the number of students opting in to testing-related search services.
 - Example: Search volume fluctuated as fewer students took standardized tests or opted out of sharing data.
 - How we adapted: Focused usage AP and NRCCUA names with pursuit of best-fit records based on RNL Search Model and conversion data

How Search Has Shifted

4. Rise of Predictive Modeling and Enrollment Intelligence

- Then: Manual segmentation and generic CRM workflows drove outreach.
- Now: Predictive analytics help guide which students to purchase and how to engage them.
 - Example: College Board and Encoura include data integration tools to support predictive modeling directly within student search data delivery.
 - Example: campuses use predictive modeling based on likelihood of enrollment to target and prioritize records with highest ROI value
 - How we adapted: RNL Search Model informs purchases while proprietary institutional enrollment likelihood model guides institutional outreach

How Search Has Shifted

5. Increased Focus on ROI and Cost-Per-Enrollment

- Then: Success was measured by volume—how many names were purchased and contacted.
- Now: Institutions focus on ROI, measuring cost-per-inquiry, cost-per-application, and yield conversion rates.
 - Example: Institutions use tracking platforms (like Slate, Salesforce) to assess the performance of different search vendors and strategies.
 - Example: Use of analytics dashboards to monitor student behavior post-purchase.
 - How we adapted: We pay close attention to conversion rates throughout the funnel, with a focus on yield conversion. How and where are our deposited students coming in and how do we target that group better higher up in the funnel?

How Search Has Shifted

6. Digital Engagement and Behavioral Tracking Integration

- Then: Engagement was inferred primarily through application submissions or form fills.
- Now: Institutions integrate behavioral data (e.g., email opens, website visits, social engagement) into CRMs to determine which students are “warm.”
 - Example: RNL Search Non-Responder data and Inquiry Marketing service survey response data
 - How we adapted: CRM and ping follow up. Interactions within the day, 7 days, and 30 days and targeted out reach from counselor to those students.

How Search Has Shifted

7. Custom Campaigns and CRM Integration

- Then: Name buys were often disconnected from CRM systems and required manual list uploads.
- Now: Seamless integration allows real-time syncing of purchased student names into CRM systems (e.g., Slate, Technolutions).
 - Example: Direct integrations for improved efficiency and data hygiene.
 - Example: Campaigns can now be automated and personalized based on student journey stage.
 - How we adapted: What are we missing? Utilizing automated emails and outreach to better gather information on the student



Key Takeaways

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Key Takeaways

- Search is a full-funnel process
- Test-optional has permanently changed the search ecosystem
- Behavioral data and ROI analytics should always drive strategy
- Institutions must continually refine segmentation and messaging
- Know who you are and approach process based on that identity



Q&A

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Thank you!



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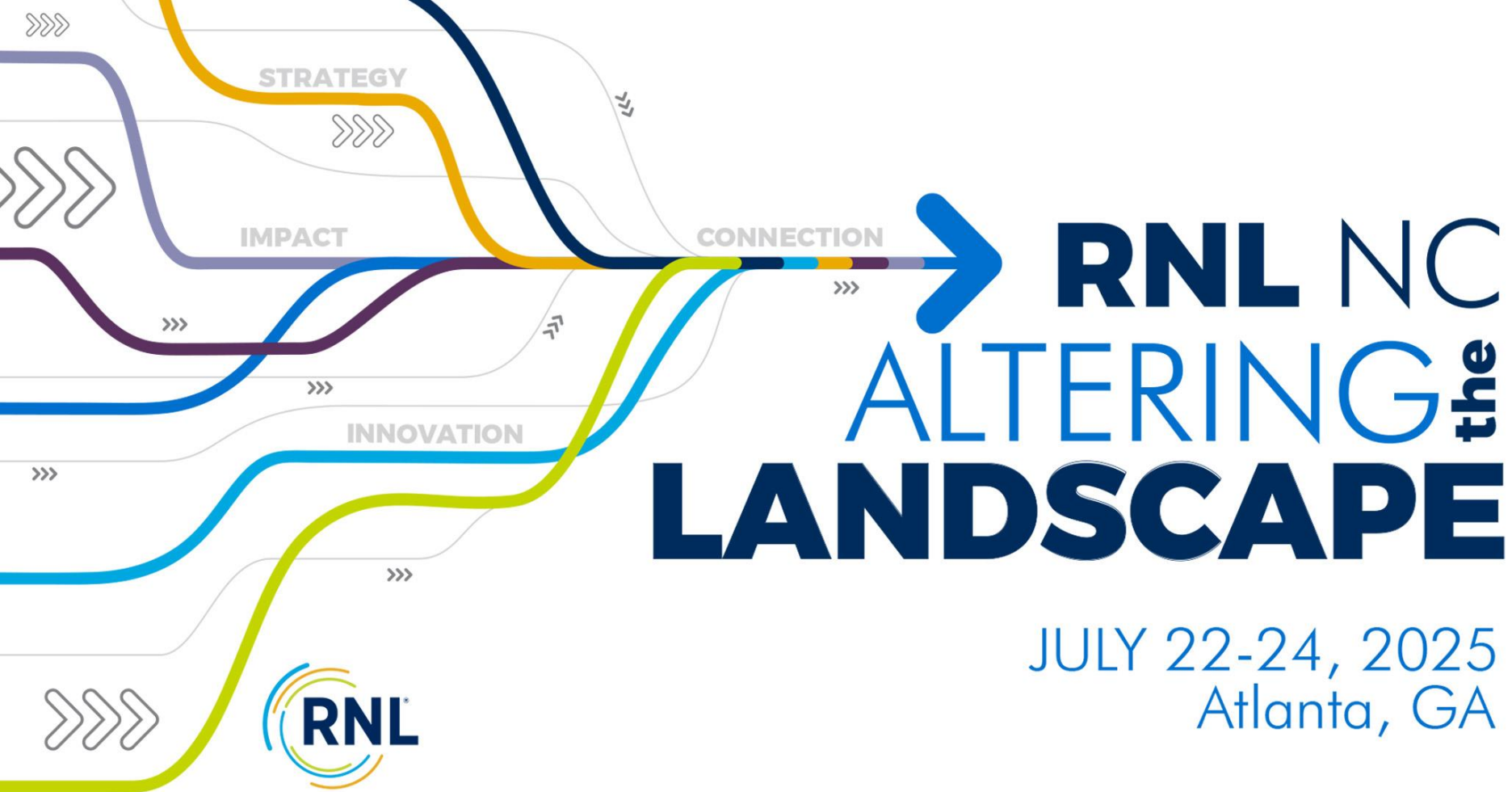


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