

2016 TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETING, ENROLLMENT, AND TECHNOLOGY

November 2015

In the following report, Hanover Research explores a variety of trends that have developed in higher education marketing and branding, as well as in student recruitment, enrollment, and advancement. A close examination of how technology will impact higher education in the future is also discussed.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

In recent years, the higher education landscape has become increasingly competitive, as universities and colleges strive to recruit and retain high-quality students. According to a 2015 *Inside Higher Ed* and Gallup survey of admissions directors, 58 percent indicated that they had not filled their fall classes by the traditional May 1 deadline. Moreover, more than one-half of the administrators reported that they were “very concerned” about meeting the year’s enrollment goals, while almost another third stated that they were “moderately concerned.”¹

Given the increasing pressure related to enrollment, some institutions have begun to take on a corporate mentality in order to attract and retain high-quality students. **Indeed, universities are recognizing that students are also customers and the need to provide an excellent customer experience across the student lifecycle.** A recent *Time* magazine article suggests that this trend originated in the late 20th century, when “policymakers began to view higher education more as a private good than as a public good.” Clayton Christensen, a Harvard professor of business administration, argues that higher education institutions are constantly striving to improve and expand, therefore “succumb[ing] to [a] cost disease”:

That’s a tough game to keep playing. For a university to compete with its peer institutions, it must engage in the arms race to expand operations, thus increasing its cost base. If, for instance, Stanford builds a new science lab to attract a star professor, Princeton will likely build a lab of equal or better quality [...] And if NYU is going to invest in a global campus in Abu Dhabi, then Yale might just have to follow suit by building a campus in Singapore.²

In today’s technology-centric world, student enrollment strategies must also incorporate the latest trends in technology. According to a 2015 survey of college-bound high school juniors and seniors, 77 to 78 percent of respondents indicated that college websites make a difference in their perception of the institution.³ Moreover, 60 percent of seniors and 55 percent of juniors stated that they are more likely to consider institutions that use digital strategies – such as email, text, and social media – to communicate. However, 40 percent of seniors and 45 percent of juniors noted that they were more likely to consider institutions that use print and phone communications, suggesting **the importance of a multichannel marketing and communications strategy.**⁴

¹ Jaschik, S. and Lederman, D. “The 2015 *Inside Higher Ed* Survey of College and University Admissions Directors.” *Inside Higher Ed* and Gallup, 2015. p. 23. <https://www.insidehighered.com/system/files/media/booklet-admission-survey-2015.pdf>

² Rossi, A. “How American Universities Turned Into Corporations.” *Time Magazine*, May 22, 2014. <http://time.com/108311/how-american-universities-are-ripping-off-your-education/>

³ “2015 E-Expectations Report.” Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2015, p. 3. https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/gated/Papers_and_Research/2015/2015_E-Expectations_Report.pdf?code=6313831167201557

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

In the following report, Hanover Research examines recent trends and developments in higher education related to branding and marketing, the student life cycle (i.e., recruitment, enrollment, and advancement), and technology. The report comprises the following sections:

- **Section I: Branding and Marketing** explores several ways that higher education institutions have focused on branding and marketing initiatives in order to differentiate themselves from competition.
- **Section II: The Student Life Cycle** highlights emerging practices in recruitment, enrollment, and advancement among colleges and universities.
- **Section III: Technology and Higher Education** examines online education and massive open online courses (MOOCs), in addition to other changing methods of educational delivery such as “flipped classrooms,” adaptive learning, and “gamified” teaching and learning.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Today, institutions dedicate far more attention to branding and marketing than they did in previous years.** Many universities have hired external marketing professionals or companies, and have invested significant time and money in creating strong institutional brands.
- **In recent years, branding, marketing, and recruitment in higher education have shifted towards online and digital strategies.** A recent survey conducted by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth found that nearly all polled institutions use some form of social media as part of their marketing. Moreover, institutions are increasingly taking advantage of social media, mobile marketing, and other digital strategies not only to recruit students, but also to research prospective students.
- **An effective and intuitive website, which is often the “ultimate brand statement” for an institution, is among the most important marketing tools in higher education.** Therefore, today’s institutions should focus on website personalization and optimization in order to enhance student enrollment. Each campus website visit can further develop a student’s user profile, therefore allowing content to become more and more targeted, encouraging prospective students to matriculate.
- **Recruitment strategies should incorporate a mix of channels in order to spark engagement with students.** A recent article explains that it is not sufficient to use direct mail, email, website, mobile, and other strategies “if they [do not] work in harmony to attract and convert new students [...] The same potential student moves across all of these places quickly, so [the] strategy and analytics need to adapt similarly.” Therefore, institutions should create an integrated branding and marketing approach that ties together the digital online and offline worlds.
- **Due to the abundance of methods of recruiting and engaging with students, institutions have begun to rely more on marketing automation tools.** Through marketing automation, institutions are able to capture and leverage a wide range of

student data in order to develop more personalized communications and marketing strategies, therefore establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships with students throughout the entire student life cycle.

- **Today's marketing automation tools are able to integrate email, content marketing, social media marketing, landing pages, and comprehensive analytics in order to perform a wide range of functions.** Examples of marketing automation services include: defining, segmenting, scheduling, and tracking marketing campaigns; building automated workflows to reduce repetitive tasks; nurturing students to enroll and advance in the lifecycle; managing email, SMS, and other social campaigns; and providing campaign analytics and ROI calculations, among others.
- **Colleges and universities use a variety of strategies to keep students engaged and enrolled, as retention is both a measure of quality and a financial concern.** According to a 2015 retention report, institutions most commonly develop academic support programs, honors programs, and practical work experiences as strategies to promote student retention. First-year student programs and one-on-one advising by professional staff have also emerged as effective practices.
- **Institutions of higher education frequently promote alumni engagement by offering lifelong learning or continuing education benefits, or by offering online resources.** For example, a number of institutions offer free or reduced-price classes to alumni, while alumni-focused online resources may include webinars, podcasts, and recorded lectures, classes, and courses.
- **According to an annual survey conducted by the Council for Aid to Education, contributions to colleges and universities reached a historic high of \$34.75 billion in 2014.** Current trends in donor engagement indicate that colleges are increasingly turning to one-day social media "blitzes" to raise money. However, methods of solicitation should be relevant to each potential donor, and the most effective stewardship programs are handled using a "multichannel" approach.
- **Newer methods of online and technology-enhanced course delivery, such as "flipped classrooms" and gamification, have seen promising student outcomes.** "Flipped" and gamified instructional models, in particular, have been linked to greater student engagement. There has also been significant interest in adaptive learning technology, and new technologies are currently under development by Fujitsu, MIT, and the Apollo Group.

SECTION I: BRANDING AND MARKETING

Successful branding and marketing initiatives have become increasingly important for institutions in order to appeal to a growing and diverse student base and to differentiate from competitor institutions. Effective branding can help with increasing enrollment, expanding fundraising capabilities, and other advantageous outcomes. A recent Perkins+Will white paper summarized the multi-faced nature of branding and its significance:

Today, effective strategic planning and brand management require more than traditional advertising, marketing or identity development. Institutions that craft, present and manage a unified brand message, experience, and environment achieve a competitive advantage in recruiting, retaining, and building loyalty amongst their students, parents, staff, faculty, alumnae and donors.⁵

Communicating a brand successfully to current and prospective students requires strategic planning and effective tools. This section explores several recent ways that higher education institutions have focused on branding and marketing initiatives.

OVERALL TRENDS

Institutions currently focus on branding and marketing far more than in previous years. In a 2015 survey measuring the state of brand strategy in higher education, 60 percent of higher education marketing administrators indicated that they had created a brand strategy to increase awareness of their institution.⁶ Furthermore, 61 percent of these administrators stated that they began their branding strategies within the past five years, highlighting the relative novelty of the higher education branding and marketing phenomenon.⁷

The majority of institutions hire external marketing professionals or companies and invest significant time and money in creating strong institutional brands. The 2015 survey respondents reported that their branding strategy processes generally took between nine and 15 months (as shown in Figure 1.1). Furthermore, 63 percent of institutions spent more than \$100,000 on their branding and marketing initiatives, with 31 percent spending more than \$200,000 on these strategies.⁸

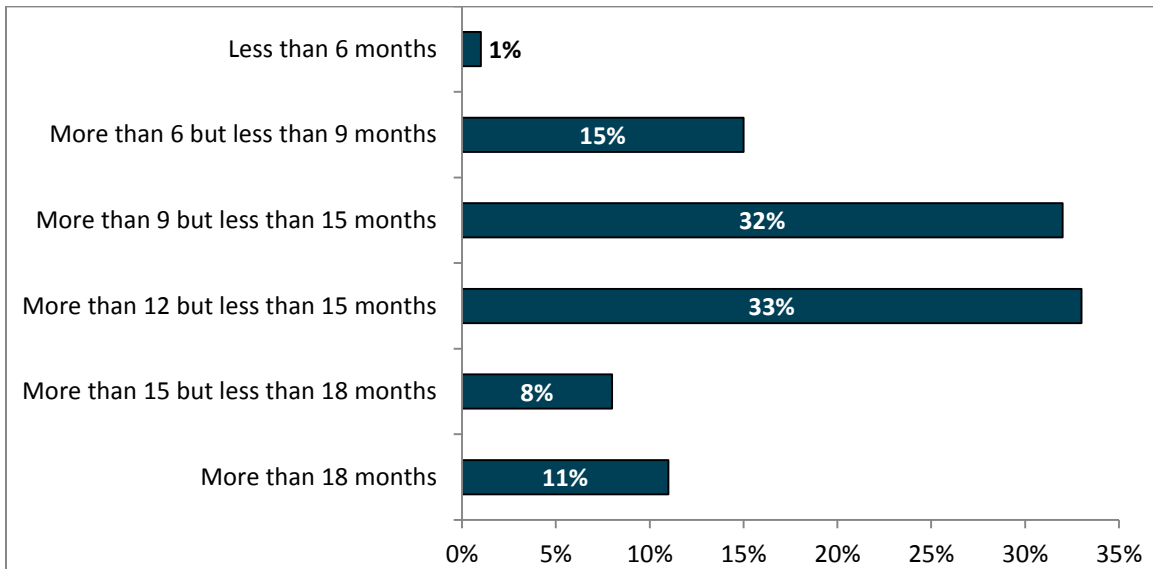
⁵ "Harnessing the Power of the University Brand: Five Steps to an Effective Branded Facility." Perkins+Will. <http://perkinswill.com/files/BrandingforHigherEducation.pdf>

⁶ Mulhere, K. "Booming Brand Campaigns." *Inside Higher Ed*, April 14, 2015. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/04/14/survey-finds-marketing-officials-pleased-outcomes-branding-projects>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Figure 1.1: Time from Start of Research to Brand Launch, 2015 Higher Education Branding Survey



Source: mStoner⁹

For some institutions, this re-trained perspective and corporate mentality has drawn praise as well as rebuke. Purdue University, for example, spent a half million dollars in 2010 on its "Makers, All" branding campaign which was poorly received by students and alumni.¹⁰

However, there is evidence that universities do not need to spend significant amounts of money to be effective. Industry experts identify several of the top trends in branding and marketing in higher education, and many of these approaches are feasible for most colleges and universities. Unsurprisingly, they are heavily centered on the use of technology:

- **Responsive design and mobile development:** Institutions are placing more emphasis on responsive web and mobile design to create intuitive and easy-to-navigate websites that can be viewed on multiple devices and platforms. Cappex, for example, finds that 2014 high school graduates used mobile devices 30 percent more than 2013 graduates. With this rise of mobile technology and connected devices, colleges and universities are making greater investments in having a mobile presence. This includes not only mobile versions of websites and other content, but also making a greater amount of course content mobile-friendly.
- **Use of web analytics:** Colleges and universities are relying on data-driven analytics to determine who, how, and where they are reaching their audiences. The use of analytics software is increasing as the higher education online ecosystem becomes increasingly complex. Getting a better handle on this data is a new area of concentration for colleges and universities.

⁹ Maue, D. and Hayes, T. "The State of Higher Ed Branding: A Survey of Market Leaders." mStoner, 2015. p. 5. http://clients.mstoner.com/white_paper/higheredbranding.pdf

¹⁰ "Purdue Spent \$500K on Controversial Branding Campaign." *Inside Higher Ed*, June 27, 2011. <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2011/06/27/purdue-spent-500k-controversial-branding-campaign>

- **Strategic social media:** Many businesses and organizations are seeing return-on-investment (ROI) on their social media approaches. To this end, *The Economist* notes that marketing professionals are “preparing themselves to boost their social media budgets to new heights.” Social media trends are explored further in this section.
- **Marketing automation:** Perhaps of most importance, higher education institutions have begun to rely more heavily on marketing automation to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with students. Through marketing automation, institutions are able to capture and leverage a wide range of student data in order to develop more personalized, multichannel messages and marketing communications.¹¹

Beyond the changes brought by technology, marketing and branding trends have shown a progressive reliance on more creative outreach efforts, as well as design and advertising campaigns. Some are more artistically-oriented than others, but **most attempts aim to appeal personally to prospective students.** Examples include text message marketing,¹² making creative advertising videos,¹³ upgrading housing and other facilities to attract students,¹⁴ and supplying students with technology such as iPads and laptops.¹⁵

Overall, it is crucial that institutions integrate their communications across various channels. As a recent article published by The Higher Ed Marketer blog explains, “[it is] not enough to set up and use a direct mail piece, email, website, blog, [etc.], if they [do not] work in harmony to attract and convert new students [...] The same potential student moves across all of these places quickly, so [institutions’] strategy and analytics need to adapt similarly.”¹⁶ Therefore, it is evident that there are benefits to creating an integrated branding and marketing approach. **As such, this underscores the importance of marketing automation software that incorporates a multichannel strategy to engage prospective students, build relationships with current students, and continue to engage alumni.**

¹¹ [1] Tudor, J. “10 Digital and Social Trends for Higher Education Marketing in 2015.” LinkedIn, January 7, 2015.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-digital-social-trends-higher-education-marketing-2015-jim-tudor>

[2] “Higher Education Marketing Trend Predictions for 2015.” *The Economist*, December 23, 2014.

<https://success.economist.com/blog/higher-education-marketing/higher-education-marketing-trend-predictions-for-2015>

[3] “7 Admission Marketing Trends 2013-2014.” Cappex, 2014.

<https://www.cappex.com/media/Cappex7AdmissionMarketingTrends.pdf>

[4] Fend, D. “The New Normal for Higher Education Marketing.” Comply, March 28, 2014.

<http://www.comply.com/blog/new-normal-higher-education-marketing>

[5] Duncan, S. “Marketing Technology Adoption in Higher Ed: From CRM to Marketing Automation.” Spark Media.

<http://sparkmediacreative.com/marketing-technology-adoption-in-higher-ed-from-crm-to-marketing-automation/>

¹² “5 Cool Trends in Educational Marketing.” SimplyCast, May 10, 2014. <http://www.simplycast.com/blog/5-cool-trends-in-educational-marketing/>

¹³ “Top Trends for Marketing to College Students in 2015.” US Postal Solutions, Inc., January 16, 2015.

<http://uspostalsolutions.com/stampfreeads/top-trends-for-marketing-to-college-students-in-2015/>

¹⁴ “How Do Schools Market Themselves to Attract Students?” U.S. News and World Report, September 22, 2014.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/college-of-tomorrow/articles/2014/09/22/how-do-schools-market-themselves-to-attract-students>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ DeBrey, F. “4 Must-Haves to Master Your Multi-Channel Marketing Campaigns.” The Higher Ed Marketer, December 17, 2014. <http://blog.directdevelopment.com/the-higher-education-marketer/4-must-haves-to-master-your-multi-channel-marketing-campaigns>

BRANDING AND MARKETING STRATEGY

According to a report by communications agency Noir sur Blanc, “93% of administrators in higher education already considered their institution to be a brand.” However, that same report notes that “in many cases, this is really more wishful thinking than objective truth. In reality, only the larger institutions have adapted their communications policies to include the brand angle and integrated it into their strategies.”¹⁷

As institutions turn more to guidance from corporate CMOs or otherwise develop or redesign their marketing and branding strategies, several successful guidelines have emerged. The Noir sur Blanc report emphasizes four crucial elements in higher education branding strategies:

- **Branding requires “patient and rigorous effort,”** and relies heavily on timing. As a university brand can be damaged much more quickly than it can be successfully built, consistency in purpose and messaging is necessary. For instance, “a mediocre ranking is not catastrophic, but a series of low rankings can do long-term damage to the image.”
- **It is crucial to “keep promises, particularly when it comes to the quality of the education provided.”** Institutions must be committed to maintaining and improving quality. In turn, their “communications must constantly be underpinned by facts, data, and irrefutable evidence: rankings, accreditations, applicant data (number and quality), recruitment of professors, placement of graduates, agreements with prestigious partners, media presence [...] anything that demonstrates the quality, as the excellence of the institution helps craft and strengthens its brand.”
- **It is important to “ensure consistency among positioning, identity, strategy, stated goals, and communications.”** It is not only important to carefully monitor the consistency of the messages expressed by the communications department, but professors, students, and governing authorities must also “speak with the same voice.” At the same time, institutions should ensure that their brand is not diluted by attempting to “cover every market at once and meet everyone’s expectations.”
- Institutions should **leverage multiple angles in order to maximize growth of a brand.** This includes mobilizing alumni networks and current students to be brand ambassadors; maximizing merchandising potential (e.g., branded clothing and apparel, gifts, and other items, particularly related to athletics); and taking advantage of event organization in order to attract greater public attention (e.g., conferences, galas, or forums for students and businesses).¹⁸

¹⁷ “Higher Education and the Challenges of Communication.” Noir sur Blanc White Paper. p. 26.

<http://www.case.org/Documents/Browsebyprofessionalinterest/HigherEdandCommunicationEnglish.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 27-29.

MARKETING AUTOMATION

Higher education institutions are relying more on marketing automation to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with students and alumni.

Through marketing automation, institutions are able to segment their database by student behavior, and serve and track personalized communications based on the behavior. Although the first marketing automation tools were fairly limited, today's marketing automation tools are able to integrate email, content marketing, social media marketing, landing pages, and comprehensive analytics in order to perform a wide range of functions, including:

- Definition, segmentation, scheduling, and tracking of marketing campaigns;
- Build automated workflows to reduce repetitive tasks associated with the marketing process;
- Nurture students to enroll and advance in their lifecycle;
- Manage email, SMS, and other social campaigns through deploying, tracking, and ROI assessment;
- Provide development, testing, and integration of website calls to action, forms, and landing pages for lead generation;
- Scoring to identify lead quality of students and follow-up priorities; and
- Provide campaign analytics and ROI calculations to attribute engagement and admissions by channel.¹⁹

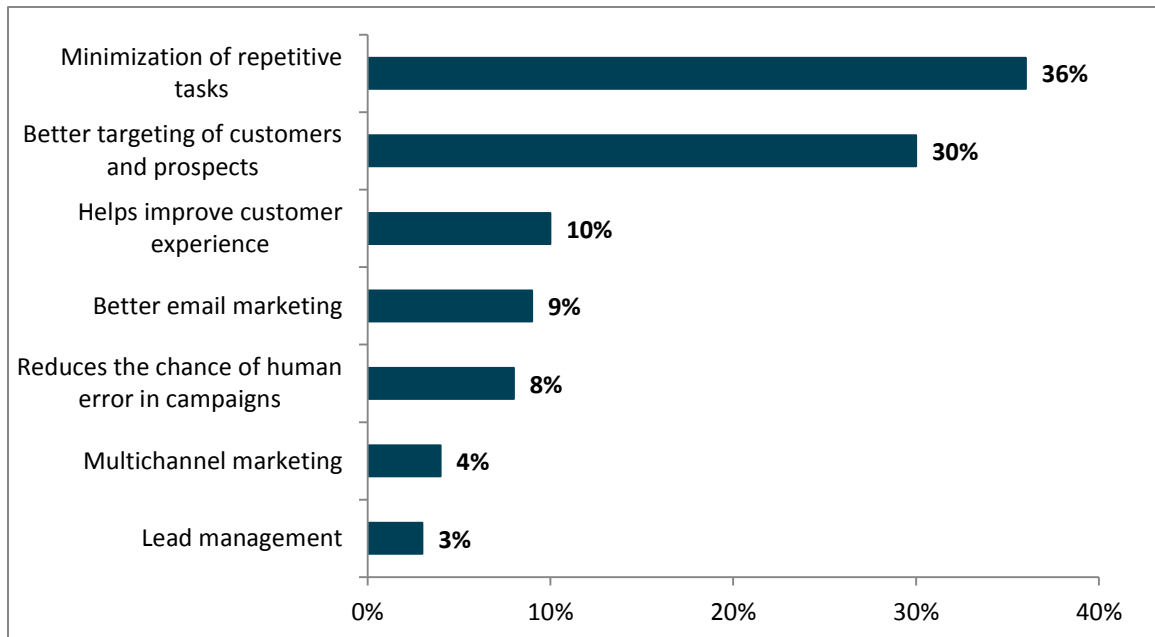
Marketing Automation:
“Software platforms and technologies designed for marketing departments and organizations to more effectively market on multiple channels online (e.g., email, social media, websites, etc.) and to automate repetitive tasks.”

- *Technology for Marketing Insights*

A recent survey about perceptions and adoption of marketing automation strategies indicates that organizations enjoy many tangible benefits. As shown on the next page in Figure 1.2, when asked about the main benefit of marketing automation, adopters were most likely to indicate that the process works to minimize repetitive tasks (36 percent) and to better target customers and prospects (30 percent). Other key benefits include: helping to improve the student experience; improving email marketing strategies; reducing the chance of human error in campaigns; incorporating multichannel marketing; and helping with lead management.

¹⁹ Bullet points quoted verbatim from: “Marketing Technology Adoption in Higher Ed: From CRM to Marketing Automation,” Op. cit.

Figure 1.2: Main Benefits of Marketing Automation (According to Adopters)



Source: TFM Insights²⁰

According to Higher Ed Live, **personalized communication – a key component of marketing automation – is a beneficial strategy** that institutions of higher education can use to enhance relationships with their students. Both traditional and non-traditional students respond positively to proactive and personalized communication that makes them feel connected and supported.²¹ A 2015 article published by The EvoLLLution, a higher education database, similarly touts the benefits of personalization as a method of specifically attracting and retaining “swirling students”, or those who may transfer back and forth among several institutions:

From the moment they express interest (or renewed interest) in us, we want to be sure that they have an experience of personalized attention. For some, this begins [...] by attracting them through personalized marketing content. Once they show interest, we need to offer them opportunities for real time connection and then be proactive in communicating with students as they begin an application. Then, once they are accepted, we need to provide multiple means for them to connect with their program and encourage their success through advising and dedicated faculty and staff.²²

Given the importance and benefits of a personalized communication strategy, marketing automation has become a critical tool in enrolling, retaining, and advancing students. As a

²⁰ “The Marketing Automation Report 2014.” TFM Insights, 2014. <http://tfmainsights.com/marketing-automation-survey-2014/>

²¹ Sousa, T. “Improve Student Communication to Boost Student Enrollment.” Higher Ed Live, July 20, 2015. <http://www.higheredlive.com/improve-student-communication-to-boost-student-enrollment-2/>

²² Burns, J. “Personalization Key to Attracting and Retaining Swirling Students.” The EvoLLLution, March 30, 2015. <http://evollution.com/opinions/personalization-key-attracting-retaining-swirling-students/>

testament to the importance and rapid growth of this marketing strategy, in 2014, there were 11 times as many organizations using marketing automation than there were in 2011.²³

Jordie van Rijn, an independent email marketing consultant, notes that although the field of marketing automation is growing extremely rapidly, “adoption and investments in marketing automation differs heavily [by] industry.”²⁴ Van Rijn explains how industries can be described as maintainers, transformers, skeptics, or laggards based on their adoption or non-adoption of marketing automation strategies:

- **Maintainers** (technology, financial markets, life sciences, and oil and gas industries) are fine-tuning their earlier marketing automation investments.
- **Transformers** (insurance, health insurance, media, retail, and telecoms) are investing in business change, of which marketing automation is potentially a key component.
- **Skeptics** (manufacturing, professional services, and retail banking) are evaluating how marketing automation can best be applied to their industries.
- **Laggards** (higher education, education, government, healthcare, and utilities) are yet to actively consider wholesale adoption of marketing automation.²⁵

Higher education falls under the category of “laggards,” meaning that the industry has not yet actively considered wholesale adoption of the marketing automation strategy. Therefore, **this suggests that marketing automation would benefit institutions seeking to gain a competitive advantage.**

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL

In recent years, branding and marketing in higher education have significantly changed in the online space, with an increased focus on new platforms for external engagement and communication. The terms “social” and “digital” refer to the use of both social media and digital marketing more generally, and include the roles of effective and intuitive websites and mobile optimization. Institutions continue to take advantage of social media and digital platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and podcasts to market their programs, while website design has been an additional crucial component in how colleges and universities present themselves to prospective students.

²³ “The Business Case for Evolving from Email Marketing to Marketing Automation.” Real Magnet, March 2015.
<http://www.realmagnet.com/blog/2015/03/evolving-from-email-marketing-to-marketing-automation/>

²⁴ Van Rijn, Jordie. “The Ultimate Marketing Automation Statistics Overview.” Email Monday, November 2015.
<http://www.emailmonday.com/marketing-automation-statistics-overview>

²⁵ Bullet points adapted from: Ibid.

INSTITUTIONAL WEBSITES

According to one recent analysis, which refers to the university website as “the ultimate brand statement,” a homepage is a key component in the student experience, and can make or break decisions about whether to attend:

A university's homepage is the hub of its web presence and in attempting to appeal to a diverse range of visitors, the challenge is staying intuitive and uncluttered... If visitors have to go back to your homepage every time to find the content they're seeking, they aren't likely to stay on your site very long. Website navigation is an integral component of overall site architecture from which all content can flow.²⁶

To this end, universities commonly ensure their homepage is a clearly laid out portal to all of the content that students are looking for online. Specifically, a 2015 survey of college-bound high school juniors and seniors indicates that prospective students are most drawn to pages about **academics** (e.g., program listings, details, and rankings), **money** (e.g., cost and scholarships), and **enrollment** (e.g., application process, admissions events, and counselor contacts). Fewer students look for content about student life (e.g., residence and athletics) and wayfinding (e.g., location and directions).²⁷

Furthermore, other trends in higher education marketing indicate that today's institutions should focus on website personalization and optimization. An April 2015 LinkedIn article suggests that “personalized website experiences [...] can be tailored to a prospect's needs from the first visit,” and can “improve the prospective student journey, make [the] admissions team more focused and efficient, [and] lead to increased enrollments.”²⁸ The article explains how website personalization can improve student enrollment:

- First, website personalization provides a better, more relevant experience for the 85 percent of applicants who are not applying on their first visit to [the] site. With each visit, the user profile builds and the content can become more targeted. Personalization encourages application and prepares prospects to matriculate.
- Second, once the prospect identifies himself by taking an action and sharing personal information – application, inquiry, or campus visit – all of the anonymous website visit data is tied to this user. All past and future website activity can be linked to the CRM and used by the enrollment team to target additional communications or pick up the phone and engage the prospect.²⁹

The importance of integrating personalized content into institutional websites indicates the value of specialized marketing automation strategies, which can serve to capture a wide range of student data to create personalized communications.

²⁶ Quinn, P. “Consistent Website Experiences with Intuitive Navigation.” *Higher Education Marketing*, November 12, 2013. <http://www.higher-education-marketing.com/blog/intuitive-navigation>

²⁷ “2015 E-Expectations Report,” Op. cit., p. 8.

²⁸ Smith, J. “Fix Your College Website to Increase Yields.” LinkedIn, April 14, 2015. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-ways-website-personalization-can-impact-your-colleges-jason-smith>

²⁹ Bullet points quoted from: Ibid.

MOBILE

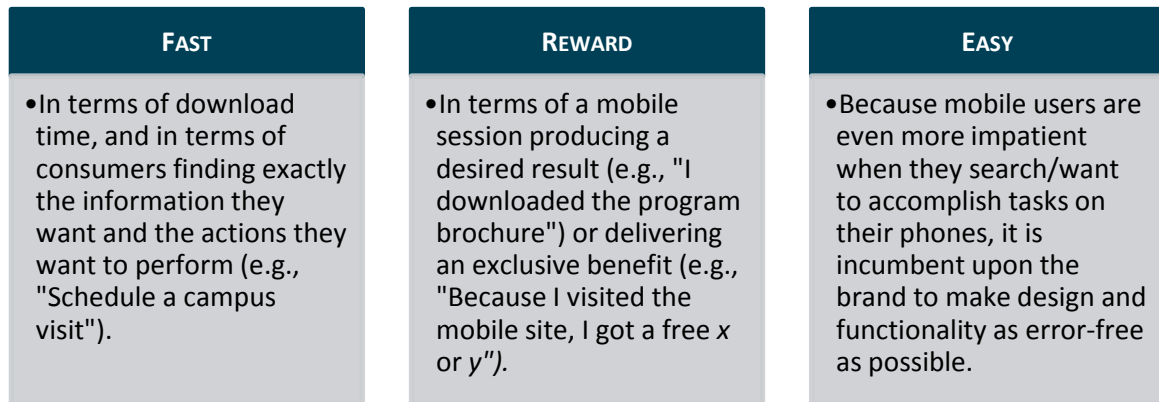
In recent years, colleges and universities have increasingly invested in their mobile presence, from the institution’s website to the development of mobile-friendly course content. The following statistics underline the importance of mobile marketing in today’s world:

- Almost one-half of Internet consumers across the world are now using mobile devices as their primary mechanism for surfing the Internet.
- Mobile subscriptions will reach 9.3 billion by 2019, and of these, 5.6 billion will be for smartphones.
- Smartphone subscriptions will triple and smartphone traffic will increase 10 times between 2013 and 2019.
- 91 percent of all Americans keep their mobile devices within reach at all times.³⁰

Mobile marketing is a particularly beneficial strategy for college-aged students, 43 percent of whom report “using their mobile devices for all of their web browsing,” and 68 percent of whom have “looked at a college website on a mobile device.” Moreover, two-thirds of students indicate that they would be willing to receive a text message from a prospective college.³¹ This suggests that mobile marketing is a crucial strategy in communicating with prospective and current students in relevant ways.

However, mobile optimization is “not just about making information fit on a smaller screen.”³² Instead, mobile marketing strategies must ensure that information is quickly-accessible, rewarding, and easy-to-navigate, as detailed in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3: Key Priorities in Mobile Marketing



Source: ICEF Monitor³³

³⁰ Bullet points derived from: “Marketers will focus on mobile more than ever before in 2014.” ICEF Monitor, January 22, 2014. <http://monitor.icef.com/2014/01/marketers-will-focus-on-mobile-more-than-ever-before-in-2014/>

³¹ Healy, E. “The Impact of Mobile Browsing on the College Search Process.” Lawrence & Schiller, May 13, 2014. <http://www.l-s.com/blog/the-impact-of-mobile-browsing-on-the-college-search-process>

³² “Marketers will focus on mobile more than ever before in 2014,” Op. cit.

³³ Quoted from: Ibid.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media continues to play an important role in the marketing and communications strategies of many institutions. In order to differentiate themselves from other organizations across the country and the world, **institutions must properly organize and manage their social media initiatives.** A recent Salesforce Marketing Cloud report details the steps institutions should take in creating an effective social media plan (Figure 1.4). A successful social media initiative includes choosing an appropriate audience, defining objectives, conducting social media “listening,” planning engagement tactics and content creation, and measuring efforts.

Figure 1.4: Creating a Social Media Plan Within an Institution of Higher Education

STEP	ACTIONS	
Prepare to get social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build a social media team and council ▪ Craft a social media policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Train the staff ▪ Make social media part of the curriculum
Choose audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uncover the various demographics, lifestyles, interests, geographic locations, and values of audience segments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Answer relevant questions about audience: How do they seek information? How do they use social media? What challenges are they trying to solve?
Define objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that manager and team understand and agree with social media goals ▪ Goals and objectives should be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possible objectives could include: increasing admissions, increasing student retention rate, raising awareness of specific programs, raising money, fostering faculty culture, gathering feedback
Social media listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gauge the health of the school’s brand ▪ Understand audience ▪ Flag student retention issues ▪ Handle crises – respond quickly to the right people with the right information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Find potential applicants ▪ Keep tabs on rival schools ▪ Collect student feedback ▪ Identify influential advocates and detractors
Plan engagement tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give a glimpse of student life (e.g., video campus tours) ▪ Spread good news (e.g., university accolades, stories about faculty, research accomplishments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foster student-to-student or faculty-to-faculty discussion ▪ Help students make connections ▪ Ask and answer questions
Plan for content creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Choose themes and topics (ask students/admissions teams/faculty, join higher education LinkedIn groups, follow higher education news sources, discover keywords in web analytics, monitor competing schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Select media types (blog posts, e-newsletters, webinars, e-books, success stories, videos, podcasts) ▪ Use a content calendar to stay on track ▪ Distribute content
Measure efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on metrics that relate to objectives: awareness, attention, and reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measure and optimize conversions

Source: Salesforce Marketing Cloud³⁴

³⁴ “Social Media for Higher Education.” Salesforce Marketing Cloud, 2013.
<http://www.exacttarget.com/sites/exacttarget/files/social-media-for-higher-education.pdf>

Since 2007-2008, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has conducted frequent surveys that track the use of social and digital media by universities as part of outreach and marketing.³⁵ The latest study demonstrated that “colleges and universities are using social media, especially social networking sites, not only to recruit but [also] to research prospective students.” Institutions are **“adopting an array of relatively new social media tools and demonstrating a more strategic approach to their online communications.”**³⁶

The study indicated that “nearly all” respondent institutions are now using some form of social media. The exceptions were typically small institutions dedicated to religious studies. Additional key highlights about social media usage among colleges and universities include the following:

- Over two-thirds of U.S. colleges and universities have some official school blogging activity on their campus.
- 41 percent of officials believe they can directly attribute an increase in enrollments to their social media efforts.
- Institutions report spending less on printing (30 percent), newspaper ads (23 percent), television (17 percent), and radio (16 percent) as a result of increased online presence.
- Even though there is significant online activity, much of it by students, half of the institutions surveyed report that they do not have written guidelines for acceptable online behavior.³⁷

Finally, Clayton Dean, an expert on digital marketing in higher education, has identified several U.S. institutions with particularly effective social media marketing practices. A list of these institutions, along with the social media platform and the exemplary features of each institution’s approach, is provided in Figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5: Model Institutions in Social Media Marketing

PLATFORM	MODEL INSTITUTION	STANDOUT FEATURES
Facebook	Texas A&M University	Effective use of photos, video, and user polls
Twitter	Carlson MBA, University of Minnesota	Connects directly with potential students
Google+	Harvard University	Effective use of hashtags; content is interesting and relevant to target audience
Instagram	Tufts University	Multiple Instagram accounts; photo contests
YouTube	Vanderbilt University	Weekly campus newscast; admissions videos; featured lectures

Source: Higher Ed Marketing Journal³⁸

³⁵ Barnes, N. and Lescault, A. “College Presidents Out-Blog and Out-Tweet Corporate CEOs as Higher Ed Delves Deeper into Social Media to Recruit Students.” UMass Dartmouth Center for Marketing Outreach. <http://www.umassd.edu/cmr/socialmediaresearch/collegepresidentsoutblog/>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Bullet points adapted from: Ibid.

³⁸ Dean, C. “Social Media and Higher Education – Tips for Success and Who’s Doing It Right.” Higher Ed Marketing Journal, April 10, 2013. <http://circaedu.com/hemj/social-media-and-higher-education/>

SECTION II: THE STUDENT LIFE CYCLE

Emerging trends in recruitment, enrollment, and advancement have a significant impact on how institutions aim to attract and engage students and alumni. A 2015 Lawlor Group report, for example, highlights a number of recent developments in higher education that will affect enrollment, recruitment, and advancement. As shown in Figure 2.1, impactful higher education trends include: a shift towards providing more personalized attention and support opportunities; delivering more market-driven educational outcomes; reducing the burden of high tuition costs; targeting non-traditional students; and exploring cost-effective, technology-enabled ways of engaging with students, such as marketing automation.

Figure 2.1: Emerging Private Higher Education Trends

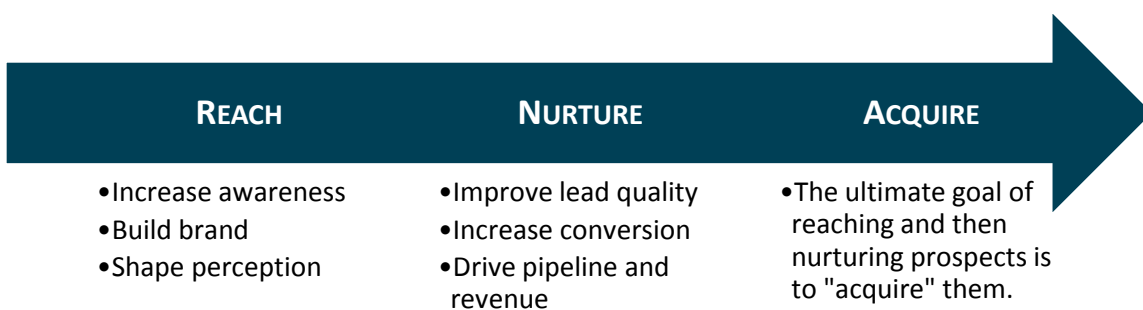
TREND	EFFECT/IMPACT
Line ‘Em Up	In order for a college to provide a compelling value proposition, the outcomes of the experience must line up with the expectations of the marketplace. So institutions are exploring modularized course content, competency-based learning, and other ways to verifiably deliver specific market-driven educational outcomes.
Demonstrate and Translate	Measurement is a must for colleges when it comes to proving the cost-benefit of their value proposition, so they can demonstrate their students are learning what is intended, graduating on time, and achieving their immediate post-graduation goals. Yet institutions should also help their graduates better translate (in terms that the marketplace understands) exactly how their academic experiences directly develop desired skills and abilities—especially when it comes to liberal arts majors.
Reduce the Burden	Institutions are exploring locked-in tuition rates for all four years, degree programs that can be completed in three years, four-year graduation guarantees, guaranteed job programs, dual bachelor’s/master’s degree programs, and more to help families manage the cost of college. And given that Sallie Mae finds 44% of families have eliminated an institution based on cost before even applying to it (so presumably, due to its sticker price), tuition “resets” can improve consideration along with financially benefiting some.
Guide the Way	Providing personal attention, listening and caring, and displaying a high level of responsiveness are the hallmarks of private institutions, especially those that are small-sized. These attributes reinforce value (and can improve yield), but families have come to expect them and will note their absence. So institutions are exploring ways to better guide their students’ success, such as by incorporating career mentorship or by utilizing data analytics to identify support opportunities.
Dare to Differentiate	To stand out in the marketplace, an institution must publicize that which converges in the sweet spot of being (a) something that is a genuine strength of the institution, (b) something that is relevant to and desired by students, and (c) something that clearly distinguishes it from its competitor institutions. When an institution can identify its distinctive niche, it can then go about targeting specific audiences that have a propensity toward appreciating its specialty.

TREND	EFFECT/IMPACT
Persuade with Precision	Tracking tools and data analytics are making it easier to capture information and make it actionable. Enhanced targeting capabilities enable institutions to send messages that are highly relevant to an individual prospective student—even those who haven’t explicitly made their interest known to the college. So institutions are exploring such practices as analyzing behavioral data to create predictive models and sending more sophisticated triggered emails.
Be All Over the Map	A convergence of population, ethnicity, and socioeconomic trends is straining “backyard recruitment” at many institutions, but at the same time technology tools are enabling them to more easily and affordably target students outside of their primary geographic market. So institutions are exploring ways to expand their recruitment markets by targeting nontraditional-age students, running predictive models, using lead generation providers, and retargeting online.
Do It in SoLoMo	Prospective students are using collaborative, location-based, and on-the-go (social-local-mobile) technologies to research colleges. Since this pushes institutions to deliver content where and how the audience wants it, colleges are exploring ways to make such engagement with students cost effective. And since audiences seek authenticity, institutions are collaborating with their alumni to leverage familiarity and favorability as they communicate with influencers of college-bound students.

Source: The Lawlor Group³⁹

Overarching trends in student recruitment, enrollment, and advancement also highlight the importance of **lead nurturing programs**. These are strategies that use a multichannel approach to target prospective students, and continue to build lifelong relationships with students, through relevant, targeted, and personalized communication. Below, Figure 2.2 summarizes the lead nurturing process. As shown in the figure, the first step of lead nurturing involves increasing awareness and building the brand. Then, the strategy works to improve lead quality, increase conversion, and drive pipeline and revenue. The hope is that finally, the combination of reaching and nurturing prospects will drive them toward becoming “customers,” or enrolled students.

Figure 2.2: Lead Nurturing Process



Source: LinkedIn⁴⁰

³⁹ Adapted from: “Private Higher Education Trends for 2015.” The Lawlor Group, January 2015. <http://www.thelawlorgroup.com/private-higher-education-trends-2015/>

A recent higher education marketing article describes the benefits of nurturing students throughout their college search experience:

People are busy. Lead nurturing is all about sending the right messaging at the right time without interrupting people's lives [in order] to create demand for an education at your school. If you think you are nurturing your leads but aren't sure if you are sending the right messaging at the appropriate time, then you need to take another look at your strategy. Fixing messaging and timing in your lead nurturing efforts can greatly increase your enrollments. You can't fix your messaging and timing without truly understanding the needs of your students.⁴¹

The rest of this section details trends in recruitment, enrollment, and advancement in more detail.

RECRUITMENT

A 2015 poll conducted by Ruffalo Noel Levitz examined high school students' preferences for communication with colleges, shedding light on effective recruitment strategies.

Figure 2.3, on the following page, shows students' preferred first contact communication channels in 2011 and in 2015. The data indicate that students are interested in a variety of communication channels, though students typically prefer email and direct mail over telephone or text message. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that today's students prefer direct mail significantly more than students in 2011.

Overall, the data suggest that recruitment strategies should incorporate a mix of channels – such as a marketing automation strategy – in order to spark engagement with students. Ruffalo Noel Levitz recommends that institutions of higher education “set a scene and evoke emotion with direct mail, and then maintain that engagement online”:

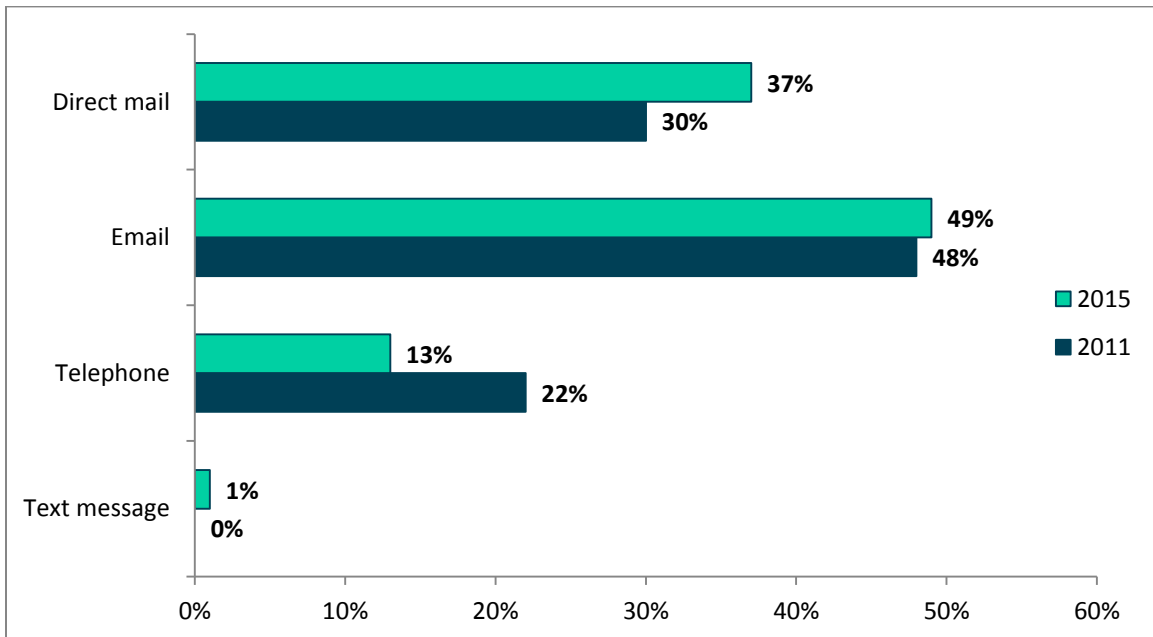
Students are much less likely to respond directly to direct mail. They will instead go online to gather information. Try high-impact self-mailers and postcards to grab student interest, and let students answer the question, “Is this a place I can see myself?” Then, encourage them to go online to gather details, assess their fit at your institution, and make a connection with your campus. Likewise, use email not just to tell your story, but to ask questions and start a conversation with prospects.⁴²

⁴⁰ Quoted nearly verbatim from: “The Sophisticated Marketer’s Crash Course in Lead Nurturing.” LinkedIn, p. 4. https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/marketing-solutions/global/en_US/campaigns/pdfs/linkedin-sophguide-to-lead-nurturing-crashcourse-r7.pdf

⁴¹ Pflaum, S. “Higher-Ed Marketers: Stop Thinking About Leads and Start Thinking About Students.” The Fathom Knowledge Center, August 12, 2014. <http://www.fathomdelivers.com/blog/higher-ed/higher-ed-marketers-stop-thinking-leads-start-thinking-students/>

⁴² “2015 High School Students’ and Parents’ Perceptions of and Preferences for Communication with Colleges.” Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2015. p. 27. https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/gated/Papers_and_Research/2015/2015_Perceptions_Preferences_Report.pdf?code=3913351183201512

Figure 2.3: Students’ Preferred Communication Channels for First Contact from Campuses, 2011 vs. 2015



Source: Ruffalo Noel Levitz⁴³

INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT

The international student market is among the most competitive areas of recruitment for colleges and universities across the globe. A 2015 Lawlor Group report, for example, notes that “having students from other countries on campus can boost diversity, infuse the curriculum with a global perspective, and possibly provide a new source of revenue for many schools.”⁴⁴ Therefore, in recent years, there has been increasing pressure to compete for international students.

In addition to the marketing and recruitment strategies outlined above, some institutions have elected to hire companies such as Pearson to engage in direct targeting of international students on their behalf. The company’s “Progression +” website gives “students (most likely exam clients) admission and pathway information” on universities that partner with Pearson:

Alongside its Degree Course Finder service for students, Pearson is now enabling a new marketing channel direct to students, for a fee. Institutions can decide their level of collaboration with the website, starting at just a listing and extending to being specifically promoted at one of the company’s 80 centers worldwide.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁴ Buege, V. “International Recruitment: Today’s Issues and Opportunities.” The Lawlor Group, April 2015. <http://www.thelawlorgroup.com/international-recruitment-todays-issues-and-opportunities/>

⁴⁵ Custer, S. “What’s next in student recruitment for the year ahead?” The Pie, January 10, 2014. <http://thepienews.com/analysis/whats-next-in-student-recruitment-trends-to-watch-in-2014/>

The United States has been particularly aggressive in its recruitment of international students. According to the Institute for International Education, international student enrollments in the United States for the 2013-2014 academic year increased by 8.1 percent over the prior year, resulting in a record high of 886,052 total international students. The most common places of origin for international students in the United States were China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Canada.⁴⁶

To achieve high numbers of international students, U.S. institutions have had to change their strategies for recruitment, such as maintaining a presence at conferences and job fairs overseas, offering generous financial aid packages to international students, and improving social media outreach efforts.⁴⁷

ADULT LEARNERS

Outside of international student recruitment, trends in higher education indicate that another key audience for enrollment is adult and non-traditional learners. In the United States, the number of adult learners returning to higher education, particularly for continuing education, is expected to rapidly increase. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, “in recent years, the percentage increase in the number of students age 25 and over [...] has been similar to the percentage increase in the number of younger students, but the rate of increase is expected to be higher for students age 25 and older [...] in the coming years.”⁴⁸ From 2012 to 2023, the organization expects an increase of 20 percent for students age 25 and over, compared with an increase of only 12 percent for students under age 25.⁴⁹

Recruiting these non-traditional students has required marketing strategies that speak directly to this demographic. While some of the methods are the same as recruiting “traditional” students (e.g., quality communication methods, effective websites, using social media, etc.), other strategies aim to make programs more attractive to adult learners. One of the most common practices is the design of highly flexible programs that meet the needs of working professionals, including expanding part-time and evening course offerings, and increasing the number of options for online education.⁵⁰ Additional strategies institutions have pursued include providing greater flexibility for transfer credits, improving lead quality when identifying students, and designing programs specifically for students as opposed to merely adapting existing programs.⁵¹

⁴⁶ “Open Doors 2014 – Fast Facts.” Institute for International Education, 2014.

<http://www.iie.org/~media/Files/Corporate/Open-Doors/Fast-Facts/Fast-Facts-2014.pdf?la=en>

⁴⁷ “International Recruitment Resources: Education USA.” National Association for College Admission Counseling.

<http://www.nacacnet.org/media-center/briefing/international/Pages/InternationalResources.aspx>

⁴⁸ “Fast Facts - Enrollment.” National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Quinn, P. “Recruiting Students for Continuing Education.” Higher Education Marketing, October 25, 2013.

<http://www.higher-education-marketing.com/blog/recruiting-students-continuing-education>

⁵¹ “Nontraditional Student Recruitment: Key Trends and Case Studies of Effective Practices.” Hobsons.

http://www.hobsons.com/uploads/documents/hobsons_whitepaper_mediaservices.pdf

ENROLLMENT

Student retention is increasingly viewed as a measure of an institution's quality by important external stakeholders, including government agencies and the general public. Retention also represents a financial concern for colleges and universities, as funding is closely tied to enrollment levels. Furthermore, higher education institutions invest significant institutional resources in students during their course of study, and losing students can result in major losses in revenue.⁵² All of these concerns underscore the importance of retention, spurring scholars and practitioners to seek to understand attrition, and to develop means of keeping students engaged and enrolled.

It is now generally accepted that both *student* and *institutional* characteristics play a role in student retention, and a number of theoretical models on students' relationship with their institution are used as bases for student retention programs. The most widely-accepted of these models was originally proposed by Vincent Tinto in 1975, building on the premise that **a student's likelihood of graduating is directly correlated with the degree to which the student is academically and socially integrated into the institution.**

Tinto's model states that a student's pre-entry attributes (e.g., family background, skill and ability, prior education) combined with his or her initial goals and commitments, interact with formal and informal experiences in the academic and social systems of the institution. This interaction determines the degree of the student's integration in the institution's academic and social spheres, which, when combined with the student's goals and commitments, determines whether the student decides to continue or drop out.⁵³

Ruffalo Noel Levitz's 2015 retention benchmark poll report for higher education institutions supports Tinto's notion that student learning and integration must be a constant priority in order to promote retention. As shown in Figure 2.4, **academic support programs, honors programs, and practical work experiences were the most effective retention practices.** First-year student programs and one-on-one advising by professional staff also emerged as effective practices.

⁵² Raisman, N. "The Cost of College Attrition at Four-Year Colleges and Universities." Educational Policy Institute, February 2013. p. 3. http://www.educationalpolicy.org/pdf/1302_PolicyPerspectives.pdf

⁵³ This explanation of Tinto's model is partially based on a Seidman (2006) presentation. See: <http://www.cscsr.org/docs/RetentionFormulaUpdateForWeb2006.pdf>

Figure 2.4: Top 10 Most Effective Strategies for Student Retention and College Completion, by Institution Type

	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS	TWO-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
1	Giving students practical work experiences in their intended major (e.g., internships, volunteer work, experiential learning, service learning)	Honors programs for academically-advanced students	Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)
2	Required on-campus housing for first-year students	Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)	Tutoring
3	Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)	Giving students practical work experiences in their intended major (e.g., internships, volunteer work, experiential learning, service learning)	Providing guided pathways with fewer course options to keep students moving to graduation
4	Honors programs for academically-advanced students	Advising by professional staff, one-on-one	Programs designed specifically for first-year students (e.g., orientation)
5	Programs designed specifically for first-year students (e.g., orientation)	Supplemental instruction	Honors programs for academically-advanced students
6	Tutoring	Programs designed specifically for first-year students (e.g., orientation)	Giving students practical work experiences in their intended major (e.g., internships, volunteer work, experiential learning, service learning)
7	Programs for first-generation students	Mandatory first-year experience or orientation course	Programs for first-generation students
8	Mandatory first-year experience or orientation course	Training residence hall staff to recognize at-risk students	Mandatory advising by professional staff, one-on-one
9	Advising by professional staff, one-on-one	Providing each student with an academic plan/roadmap of courses	Advising by professional staff, one-on-one
10	Student success coaching	Mandatory advising by professional staff, one-on-one	Using on-campus student employment as a strategy to engage/retain students

Source: Ruffalo Noel Levitz⁵⁴

Meanwhile, the top five practices for retaining *online learners* are detailed in Figure 2.5. Overall, mandatory faculty training and mandatory academic advising were reported as the most effective practices for retaining online learners.

⁵⁴ “2015 Student Retention and College Completion Practices Benchmark Report.” Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2015. p. 3. <https://www.ruffalonl.com/papers-research-higher-education-fundraising/2015/2015-student-retention-and-college-completion-practices-benchmark-report-for-four-year-and-two-year-institutions>

Figure 2.5: Top 5 Practices for Retaining Online Learners, by Institution Type

	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS	TWO-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
1	Mandatory training program for online faculty	Mandatory training program for online faculty	Mandatory training program for online faculty
2	Mandatory online interaction between faculty and students	Faculty development and support in online technology and online teaching pedagogy	Faculty advisor assigned to each online learner
3	Mandatory academic advising	Mandatory academic advising	Mandatory academic advising
4	Faculty development and support in online technology and online teaching pedagogy	Online readiness assessment for incoming students	Faculty development and support in online technology and online teaching pedagogy
5	Faculty advisor assigned to each online learner	Early-alert and intervention system for online learners	Early-alert and intervention system for online learners

Source: Ruffalo Noel Levitz⁵⁵

ADVANCEMENT

Maintaining contact with alumni after graduation can provide valuable support to higher education institutions for decades. Engaged alumni may support institutions in a variety of ways, including:

- Donating funds to their alma mater through the annual fund or with high-value single gifts;
- Sponsoring research, student projects, or courses;
- Commissioning consultancy from academics;
- Leaving legacies – financial as well as through personal bequests (e.g., art or property);
- Participating in peer-to-peer fundraising;
- Brokering introductions to create new partnerships for the university with their employers, governments, and other affiliated organizations;
- Providing expert advice and guidance to the university’s leadership;
- Providing case study material, guest lectures, or equipment to enhance teaching;
- Supporting student recruitment both at home and overseas;
- Providing career advice, mentoring, placements, or internships to current students; Contributing to the positive international public profile of the university; or
- Contributing to the positive online profile of the university.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

⁵⁶ Bullet points adapted from: “The Role and Importance of Alumni Relations.” Council for Advancement and Support of Education.
https://www.case.org/Publications_and_Products/Fundraising_Fundamentals_Intro/Fundraising_Fundamentals_section_1/Fundraising_Fundamentals_section_12.html

The rest of this section details current trends and strategies governing alumni and donor engagement.

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), the professional organization for alumni relations officers, outlines 12 guiding principles for these professionals. This list of principles, shown on the next page in Figure 2.6, describes the ways that administrators should approach their responsibilities and the ways to improve alumni engagement. CASE divides its guidelines into three categories: respect, inform, and involve.

Figure 2.6: Alumni Engagement Principles

RESPECT	INFORM	INVOLVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote and embrace alumni as vital stakeholders. ▪ Advocate for alumni, representing their interests in working with institutional departments as well as the broader community. ▪ Communicate in a transparent and timely manner. ▪ Ensure personal information provided by alumni is handled in a professional and confidential manner. ▪ Recognize alumni contributions of service, leadership, advocacy, and philanthropy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inform alumni about institutional mission, vision, and goals. ▪ Educate students about their future responsibilities and opportunities as alumni. ▪ Ensure the mission and goals of alumni programs are consistent with and support the mission and goals of the institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage alumni to support their alma mater through service, leadership, advocacy, and philanthropy. ▪ Involve alumni to serve the broader community as ambassadors for their alma mater and education in general. ▪ Actively engage alumni in the planning and designing of alumni programs, services, and events. ▪ Involve students with alumni programs, services, and events. ▪ Involve alumni – seeking their ideas, input, and feedback. ▪ Recruit alumni to leverage their networks on behalf of the institution.

Source: Council for Advancement and Support of Education⁵⁷

OFFERING LIFELONG LEARNING

Institutions of higher education also frequently promote alumni engagement by offering lifelong learning or continuing education benefits. For example, a number of institutions offer free or reduced-price classes to alumni, such as Rice University (offers a 20 percent

⁵⁷ “Principles of Practice for Alumni Relations Professionals at Educational Institutions.” Council for Advancement and Support of Education, July 2014.
https://www.case.org/Samples_Research_and_Tools/Principles_of_Practice/Principles_of_Practice_for_Alumni_Relations_Professionals_at_Educational_Institutions.html

discount to its MBA alumni on all executive education open enrollment programs)⁵⁸ and Oklahoma Baptist University (allows alumni to enroll in five credits of undergraduate courses each semester for a nominal fee).⁵⁹

However, offering online resources is perhaps the most common form of lifelong learning programming that serves to promote alumni engagement. Online resources may include webinars, podcasts, and recorded lectures, classes, and courses. For example, George Washington University offers a series of professional development webinars which are delivered live, and then made available on demand after the event.⁶⁰ Past webinars include the following: “Making LinkedIn Truly Work for You,” “Tips and Tasks for Planning a Career Move,” “Leading with Ethics: Creating a Culture of Character,” “Current Trends and Opportunities in Government Contracting,” and “Take Your Writing to the Next Level.”⁶¹ Meanwhile, the Caltech Alumni Association posts lectures and presentations on a video-streaming website,⁶² while the Rochester Institute of Technology holds a professional webinar series for alumni twice per month.⁶³

Institutions employ other strategies to engage alumni, including holding online book clubs. Amherst College, for example, connects “alumni, students, faculty members, parents, and friends to the intellectual life of the college” by featuring a new book by an Amherst author each month.⁶⁴ The institution provides a variety of resources to its online book club members, including excerpts, audio interviews, and discussion questions.⁶⁵ Similarly, Johns Hopkins University has offered the Hopkins Online Book Club that “connects alumni through participation in a virtual book group and online discussion.”⁶⁶ Each month, a different faculty member hosts the club and begins with a recording of a conversation about the book. Discussion continues online among alumni for the rest of the month.⁶⁷

DONOR ENGAGEMENT

According to an annual survey conducted by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE), in 2014, contributions to colleges and universities reached a “historic high of \$37.45 billion.”⁶⁸ From 2013 to 2014, donations increased by 10.8 percent – the largest increase in support since

⁵⁸ “Lifelong Learning.” Jones Graduate School of Business, Rice University. http://business.rice.edu/Alumni_Lifelong_Learning.aspx

⁵⁹ “Lifelong Learning Policy for OBU Graduates.” Oklahoma Baptist University. <https://www.okbu.edu/academics/lifelong-learning>

⁶⁰ “GWebinars.” George Washington University. <http://alumni.gwu.edu/gwebinars>

⁶¹ “Webinars on Demand.” George Washington University. <http://alumni.gwu.edu/webinars-demand>

⁶² “Downloads and Resources.” Caltech Alumni Association. <http://www.alumni.caltech.edu/downloads/>

⁶³ “Educational Benefits.” Rochester Institute of Technology Alumni Association. <https://www.rit.edu/alumni/benefits/educational>

⁶⁴ “Amherst Reads.” Amherst College. <https://www.amherst.edu/alumni/learn/bookclub/featurehome>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Hopkins Online Book Club.” Johns Hopkins University Alumni Association. <http://alumni.jhu.edu/bookclub>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Colleges and Universities Raise \$37.45 Billion in 2014.” Council for Aid to Education, January 28, 2015. p. 1. <http://cae.org/images/uploads/pdf/VSE-2014-Press-Release.pdf>

2000. Despite the increase in financial support, the alumni participation rate dropped slightly to 8.3 percent (down from 8.7 percent in 2013).⁶⁹

According to a 2014 *Inside Higher Ed* article, colleges are “increasingly turning to one-day social media blitzes to raise money, especially from their youngest alumni.”⁷⁰ For example, at the University of Vermont, administrators organized a “Move in Day Challenge,” during which officials posted videos and news of students moving into school via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter all day. The online blitz, which also included a special website for donors, was meant to “help welcome new students, reach out to alumni – particularly recent graduates – and raise a little bit of money.”⁷¹ Similarly, Colgate University recently hosted a day of giving, which involved radio, email, phone, social media, and personal visits. The institution was able to raise more than \$5.1 million in donations in a single day.⁷²

Furthermore, a 2014 RuffaloCODY report on creating strategic programs that inspire loyal donors suggests that methods of solicitation should be relevant to each potential donor, and that “stewardship programs should be handled using a multichannel approach.”⁷³ The organization makes several suggestions related to donation solicitation channels, highlighting the importance of electronic communication as well as more traditional approaches:

- Direct mail has long been a staple of stewardship programs. Give significant thought to direct mail packages for specific segments of the institution’s donor base. A grassroots donor may enjoy receiving a handwritten thank you note from a student more than a higher-end donor.
- Email, social media, and other electronic methods are great channels to incorporate for quarterly stewardship updates. One of the benefits of electronic communication is the ability to use video. A short video or podcast has the potential for greater impact than a few extra paragraphs of text.
- Crowdfunding platforms represent another channel that not only requires consistent stewardship updates but is, in fact built to incorporate that very element of the donor cycle. Make sure any premiums related to gifts on a crowdfunding platform are received by donors in the promised time frame.
- Personal thank you calls or a broadcast voice message, both via telephone, may be useful stewardship approaches.⁷⁴

That said, however, **institutions must communicate that their outreach is not singularly focused on enticing alumni to make financial donations.** While encouraging financial

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁷⁰ Rivard, R. “Hat in Hand on Facebook.” *Inside Higher Ed*, August 22, 2014.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/08/22/colleges-turn-social-media-blitzes-raise-money>

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “Stewardship: Creating Strategic Programs that Inspire Loyal Donors.” RuffaloCODY, 2014. p. 5.

https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/gated/Papers_and_Research/2014/Stewardship_Creating_Strategic_Programs_That_Inspire_Loyal_Donors.pdf?code=2515251033201584

⁷⁴ Bullet points quoted from: Ibid., pp. 5-6.

donations is often a key goal of alumni engagement efforts, overemphasizing financial contributions can alienate some alumni and discourage participation altogether. Alumni may view correspondence and event invitations as thinly-veiled attempts to solicit donations.⁷⁵ Therefore, colleges and universities must be sure to re-engage with alumni for many purposes and events – not solely for securing financial support.

⁷⁵ Campisi, A. "Look Beyond Donations When Reaching Out to Alumni." The EvoLLLution, January 14, 2015. <http://evollution.com/opinions/donations-reaching-alumni/>

SECTION III: TECHNOLOGY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

ONLINE LEARNING

As a method of educating and a platform for global branding, online education bears little resemblance to what it was merely a few years ago. Institutional strategies for engaging with the latest developments in online learning have also evolved. Specifically, changing trends in educational technology have been the driving force behind a variety of new delivery methods, increased access to courses (e.g., MOOCs), and different methods of employing technology in teaching (such as “flipped classroom” teaching, “gamified” courses, and adaptive learning).

The online medium of education is growing at a robust rate. A 2015 report from the Babson Survey Research Group, made available by the Online Learning Consortium, found that 70.7 percent of active institutions currently offer at least some distance offerings, and both four- and two-year public institutions offer online courses at high rates.⁷⁶ It is slightly less common for private institutions to have distance offerings.

The report also notes that “every year since 2003 [...] the number of students taking at least one online course has grown at a rate greater than that of the overall higher education student body.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, more than 70 percent of chief academic leaders, an all-time high, report that online learning is critical to their long-term strategy.⁷⁸ **Overall, the online medium continues to grow quickly, forcing many institutions to engage with this online space more vigorously or perhaps for the first time.**

However, not all institutions are shaping their online strategies around the simple popularity of courses, or even the public discussions surrounding concepts like MOOCs. Indeed, most top-tier universities do not offer online courses at all, save for limited engagements with MOOC providers such as Coursera or EdX. A 2014 article published in *The Economist*, for example, notes that “most universities and employers still see online education as an addition to traditional degree courses, rather than a replacement,” and that many prestigious institutions, such as Oxford and Cambridge, do not intend to join the MOOC movement.⁷⁹ The 2015 Babson report indicated that a plurality of institutions (39.9 percent) are still undecided about MOOCs, while almost one-half (46.5 percent) have no plans for a MOOC.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Allen I.E. and Seaman, J. “Grade Level: Tracking Online Education in the United States.” The Babson Survey Research Group, February 2015. p. 9, 11. Accessed full report from: <http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/read/survey-reports-2014/>

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁹ “The Digital Degree: The Staid Higher-Education Business is About to Experience a Welcome Earthquake.” *The Economist*, June 28, 2014. <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21605899-staid-higher-education-business-about-experience-welcome-earthquake-digital>

⁸⁰ Allen and Seaman, Op. cit., p. 6.

The trend towards online education is not without its critics. The disruptive innovation of online learning may offer “education for the masses” in addition to increased revenue, but many have argued that it comes at the price of inferior quality, diminished performance, and technical hitches.⁸¹ Critics of moving away from standard practices and expanding delivery methods and revenue generation models through online education underscore the risk-averse nature of traditional postsecondary institutions, and those currently running them. Given recent financial troubles experienced by for-profit institutions, many in the non-profit world feel validated in their skeptical position – and have even argued that the troubles of for-profit educators will prove beneficial for non-profit education.⁸²

In addition, there remains a problem with the legitimacy that faculty grant to online education, and this may be the lasting impediment to wider adoption. In a 2015 survey of faculty attitudes on technology, for example, only 17 percent of faculty members indicated that “for-credit online courses taught at any institution can achieve outcomes that are at least equivalent to those of in-person courses,” and more than one-half of faculty members (53 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.⁸³ Moreover, more than one-half of faculty members (58 percent) indicated that MOOC-like programs “threaten traditional faculty roles.”⁸⁴

CHANGING METHODS OF DELIVERY

Among technology trends in higher education, online courses are not necessarily the most dynamic. Several new forms of content delivery also have the potential to change pedagogical norms. **Recent developments include the “flipped classroom,” adaptive learning and experiential learning, and innovative approaches to instruction such as “gamified” teaching and learning.** These trends are explored further below. The focus in this section is, however, on emerging technologies as opposed to more established ones such as hybrid or collaborative teaching/learning platforms, multimedia-driven instruction, and other technology employed to attract new students over the last few years.

GAMIFICATION

A number of changes to learning management in the last decade go beyond Web 2.0 integration. One example is the **trend of introducing game-based learning platforms and “social learning” models,** as presented by companies like Curatr and others.⁸⁵ The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) explains that gamification

⁸¹ “MOOCs and Online Learning: Research Roundup.” Journalist’s Resource, January 22, 2014.

<http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/education/moocs-online-learning-research-roundup>

⁸² Ladd, L. “For-profit higher education setbacks may transform nonprofit learning.” Grant Thornton. April 29, 2013.

<http://www.grantthornton.com/issues/library/articles/nfp/2013/NFP-2013-04-For-profit-higher-education-setbacks.aspx>

⁸³ Straumsheim, C. “Partial Credit: The 2015 Survey of Faculty Attitudes on Technology.” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 14, 2015. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/partial-credit-2015-survey-faculty-attitudes-technology>

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ “Curatr - Overview.” Curatr. <http://www.curatr3.com/>

is “the idea of adding game elements to a non-game situation,” and that in educational settings, gamification systems “add an adventure game layer on top of the existing course infrastructure.”

Students create a character, play as part of a team, and earn experience points and rewards based on class-related behaviors. Students are rewarded for helping other students, producing exemplary work, etcetera. Likewise, students can receive consequences for behaviors that are inconsistent with the desired learning environment.⁸⁶

These platforms and models involve much more “engaged” e-learning, and borrow from concepts and experiences seen in video and computer gaming. It is based on the idea that students in the current generation have undergone a different neurological development than previous generations, due to growing up in a technology-centric learning environment.⁸⁷

Studies have identified several areas where gaming has a positive impact on learning more generally:

- Engaging learners in learning environments
- Increasing motivation
- Intensifying retention of information
- Improving problem-solving skills⁸⁸

As a model of learning in an online higher education environment, game-based or gamified learning involves a much more significant level of interaction from students than more passive activities such as message boards.⁸⁹

FLIPPED CLASSROOMS

“Flipping” the classroom refers to a “pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed,” and in-classroom experiences are reconstructed to rely less on passive learning and more on active engagement.⁹⁰ The concept behind flipped classrooms again has much to do with accessibility and convenience, as it allows students to consume the core elements of a course whenever, regardless of time or place. Therefore, professors can re-allot classroom time and make

⁸⁶ Isaacs, S. “The Difference Between Gamification and Game-Based Learning.” Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, January 15, 2015. <http://inservice.ascd.org/the-difference-between-gamification-and-game-based-learning/>

⁸⁷ Tham, R., et. al. “Is Game-Based Learning an Effective Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Higher Education in Singapore? A Pilot Study.” *Journal of the Research Center for Educational Technology*, Vol. 8 (1), Spring 2012. p. 3. <http://www.rcetj.org/index.php/rcetj/article/view/160/261>

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Trybus, J. “Game-Based Learning: What It Is, Why It Works, and Where It’s Going.” New Media Institute. <http://www.newmedia.org/game-based-learning--what-it-is-why-it-works-and-where-its-going.html>

⁹⁰ “7 Things You Should Know About Flipped Classrooms.” *Educause*, 2012. <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli7081.pdf>

room for other activities, such as experiential or collaborative learning opportunities as opposed to passive learning through lectures.⁹¹ In-class problems and activities that promote active learning may involve small group problems, discussions, open-ended problems, peer instruction, and reflection time.⁹²

The “flipped” model has gained some high-profile supporters, particularly in the United States. Among the more high-profile institutions using the flipped classroom model include Stanford University, which is currently working in conjunction with the Khan Academy to deliver medical education.⁹³ At Stanford, course lectures move online in the form of videos and other digital content, and in-person sessions become optional interactive sessions. By moving content out of the classroom, the hope is that students will both progress faster and be able to narrow in on a specialization more quickly.⁹⁴ In addition, the flipped model engages students more effectively – it pays attention to why students miss classes in the first place, and allows them to swap lectures for something practically-oriented during their classroom time.⁹⁵

Several other top-tier universities have also adopted a flipped classroom approach to various subjects, including engineering at Boston University, chemistry and biology at Duke University, and economics at Vanderbilt University. At Boston University, a computational fluid dynamics course was “flipped” to turn classroom lectures into a mixed cohort of graduate students and seniors. Classroom periods offered an opportunity for students to interact and compare software solutions and notes on individual progress. The shift was one from whiteboard to workshop: “Creating an active and engaged learning environment is automatic when flipping a class, and with today’s technology for creating multimedia learning materials, it can be done without losing any of the content.”⁹⁶

Figure 3.1 details four crucial components of flipped learning – flexible environments, intentional content, learning culture, and professional educators.

⁹¹ “Introduction to Flipped Classroom Teaching.” Scalable Learning, February 2015. p. 2. https://www.scalable-learning.com/external_documents/Manual%20-%20Flipped%20Teaching%20v.1.0.pdf

⁹² Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁹³ Straumsheim, C. “Flipping Med Ed – Stanford University and Khan Academy use flipped classroom for medical education.” *Inside Higher Ed*, September 9, 2013. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/09/09/stanford-university-and-khan-academy-use-flipped-classroom-medical-education>

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Dwortzan, M. “‘Flipped Classroom’ Energizes Computational Fluid Dynamics Course.” Boston University. <http://www.bu.edu/phpbin/news-cms/news/?dept=666&id=59184>

Figure 3.1: Four Pillars of Flipped Learning



Source: Flipped Learning Network⁹⁷

ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Adaptive learning platforms are another emerging technology in higher education. According to Dreambox Learning, adaptive learning is “a computer-based and/or online educational system that modifies the presentation of material in response to student performance.” The most successful systems are able to “capture fine-grained data and use

⁹⁷ Text in figure quoted nearly verbatim from: “The Flipped Learning Model: Executive Summary.” The Flipped Learning Network, 2013. p. 2.
http://flippedlearning.org/cms/lib07/va01923112/centricity/domain/41/execsummary_flippedlearnig.pdf

learning analytics to enable human tailoring of responses.”⁹⁸ Advocates of adaptive learning have suggested that the modification and personalization of learning materials may serve as a support to students, therefore bolstering retention and graduation rates.⁹⁹

Particularly innovative work related to adaptive learning has come from a partnership between Fujitsu and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In mid-2013, the two organizations jointly announced the creation of a new adaptive e-learning platform, which stems from an asynchronous learning concept.¹⁰⁰ Named “Guided Learning Pathways,” the platform aims to address challenges in online learning, such as the lack of customizability for individual learners’ needs, and finding the proper fit between students and appropriate learning materials.¹⁰¹ The organizations’ joint research program led to two new breakthroughs:

Two technologies have been developed and applied in the research. One is navigation technology, which can organize massive online learning materials into multi-layer topics. The other technology developed is the students’ learning behavior simulation based on an advanced probabilistic learner model.¹⁰²

These technologies break up atomized elements (“nuggets”) of student learning based on students’ online interactions, similarly to how companies such as Google, Facebook, or Netflix use algorithms to estimate user preferences. Examples of learning nuggets, according to the two organizations, are: online homework problems; video snippets; animations; simulations; web-based lab experiments; short educational games; or short texts.¹⁰³ Therefore, the platform is able to “eliminate the Industrial Age ‘course’ and tailor each individual’s education to suit their interests.”¹⁰⁴

In 2013, the Apollo Group – a standard-bearer in online education – announced it had made a near \$1 billion investment in its own adaptive online learning platform and associated infrastructure.¹⁰⁵ The company recently received a patent “for an adaptive activity stream related to its online learning platform,” which is likely key to the success of its future in online learning.¹⁰⁶ Observers have pointed to the importance of data mining and related personalization processes to its success – much like Fujitsu and MIT have seemingly operationalized.

⁹⁸ “Adaptive Learning.” Dreambox Learning. <http://www.dreambox.com/adaptive-learning>

⁹⁹ Fain, P. “Learning to Adapt.” *Inside Higher Ed*, June 13, 2014.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/06/13/profits-lead-way-adaptive-learning-becomes-more-popular>

¹⁰⁰ “Fujitsu and MIT Announce First-of-its-kind Breakthrough Higher Education Learning Platform.” Fujitsu, June 17, 2013. http://www.fujitsu.com/us/news/pr/fla_20130617.html

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Hill, P. “The Billion-Dollar Bet on an Adaptive Learning Platform.” *e-Literate*, February 1, 2013. <http://mfeldstein.com/the-billion-dollar-bet-on-an-adaptive-learning-platform/>

¹⁰⁶ Hill, P. “University of Phoenix Patents Adaptive Activity Stream for Its Learning Platform.” *e-Literate*, January 29, 2013. <http://mfeldstein.com/university-of-phoenix-patents-adaptive-activity-stream-for-its-learning-platform/>

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Emerging trends related to higher education marketing suggest that there are numerous methods of recruiting and engaging with students, including institutional websites, mobile marketing, and social media, among others. As such, it is a crucial time to create an integrated branding and marketing approach that ties together these various approaches.

Today's marketing automation tools work to integrate a variety of effective higher education communications – email, content marketing, social media marketing, landing pages, and comprehensive analytics – in order to perform a wide range of functions. Through marketing automation, institutions are able to capture and leverage a wide range of student data in order to develop more personalized communications throughout the entire student lifecycle.

CAVEAT

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