

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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ENROLLMENT MARKETING 101: POSITIONING YOUR WEBSITE AND PRINTED PUBLICATIONS FOR SUCCESS

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Having advised over a hundred institutions about effective communications for student recruitment, we've learned a troubling truth: too often, administrators choose outmoded web and publication design strategies that appeal to their personal tastes rather than approaches tested through focus groups.

Rule number one in enrollment management is *know your audience*.

The student recruitment landscape today is driven by texting and social media. Yet many colleges and universities rely on a mixed-use publication policy—writing in a content-heavy style for alumni and friends of all generations, and then applying the same publication strategy to communicating with prospective students.

Younger audiences, the “digital natives” of our time, are unlikely to read lengthy articles; they respond better to the brevity and informality of texting and the latest, hottest social media. Print articles can be used to drive readers to the institution's website and social

media sites, and links to these should be prominently displayed throughout the publication. A college magazine, along with other print publications, no matter how beautifully designed, cannot fulfill the responsibility of informing and persuading tech-savvy high school juniors and seniors.

Hone your messaging and sharpen your media in traditional and online publications.

- Enhance the readability and graphic appearance of publications by significantly cutting text.
- Use subheads, italics, bolding, boxes and screens for greater visual impact.
- Run larger, tightly cropped photos.
- Call-outs can be used to add interest to publication content and to break up type.
- In addition to using high-quality, large, tightly cropped visuals, we recommend eliminating “potpourri” pages in favor of shots that yield greater impact and eliminate distraction.
- Replace staged, staring-at-the-camera photos of students and faculty with those showing greater interaction between students and between students and faculty.
- Eliminate photos of building exteriors without students or people. Use front and back magazine covers to reinforce strategic messaging and to display stunning visuals.
- Inconsistent headline styles and type fonts contribute to a cluttered appearance. Fonts should be clean and consistent, with no more than two, or at the most, three, different styles employed. We recommend no script, as it is difficult to read. Headlines also need to be standardized, with active verbs and no passive or “label” headlines.

ENROLLMENT MARKETING 101 CONTINUED:

- Features should showcase current student, faculty and alumni achievement. Boxes, blurbs and short text can replace some lengthier features.
- Print and web platforms need to show, not tell:
 - Strong value for tuition dollar;
 - Safe and attractive location within convenient travel time;
 - Opportunities to network and develop mentors;
 - Unique advantages of the location (i.e. Scott's college is located in Virginia Beach — a real attraction to college-aged students — and Weezie served as president in Pittsburgh, "The Most Livable City in the USA"). Other institutions might be located near independent high-tech or research centers which offer opportunities for students in math, engineering and computer science fields;
 - Close student/faculty interaction;
 - A vibrant campus with diverse opportunities for student engagement;
 - A sense of community and purpose in career preparation;
 - A variety of undergraduate and graduate programs and majors.
- Write copy with the "so what?" factor in mind, answering:
 - How will my experience translate into career opportunities after graduation?
 - Will I gain a leadership edge over those at large universities?
 - Do student athletes stand a better chance to play?
 - Does student/faculty engagement translate into a richer academic experience and mentoring that will assist in employment and graduate school opportunities?
 - How about networking opportunities compared with those available at larger schools?
- Stress outcomes. Link degree completion to specific career advantages. Highlight employers of recent graduates. Profile young alumni in hot career fields.

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ENROLLMENT MARKETING 101 CONTINUED:

- Your website and print publications should articulate ways in which your institution is distinctive, not simply different.
- Websites and print publications should complement each other, with the printed pieces driving audiences to the more interactive platforms of the website and social media.
- Use your website effectively to reach today's tech-savvy students (and young alumni).

Thanks to online technology, current and prospective students, as well as young alumni, process information that is brief and convenient to absorb. Your website should therefore anticipate the heavily visual perspective of the "millennial" generation:

- Put the admissions section at the front and make it easily navigable for prospective students to schedule a tour and to apply.
- Make a 360-degree virtual tour available from the home page to showcase the scenic beauty of the campus.
- Add quick links to profiles of current students/young alumni, showcasing successful career outcomes.
- Make a separate page for employers and referral possibilities.
- Focus on value for tuition dollar.
- Consider creating an entirely online admissions interview process and application using avatars to facilitate enrollment of international and out-of-state students.

- Develop a secure "My _____" site for admitted students to create a virtual community with other accepted students, faculty, current majors in their field and young alumni.
- Secondary pages should be designed for each academic program including specifics on internships, employment of young alumni, average starting salaries and enrollment of recent alumni in graduate and professional settings.

Increasingly, colleges and universities are embracing vehicles such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, and more. More than 60 percent of college students report visiting these sites daily, and all have great potential, with a high return on investment and nominal or no production or distribution costs for marketing compared with more traditional media. All are "musts" when used strategically to reinforce your brand and message across multiple platforms.

Remember the basics of research, analysis and evaluation that you would apply to traditional media: Who is your target audience? Where is it? When and how is it using social media? And finally, how will it advance your institutional mission?

By implementing these recommendations, you can convey messages and traditional strengths to new and future audiences in an interactive, compelling and contemporary manner.

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