

Recruitment Best Practices: Finding Ideal Students for Your Program



best practice noun

plural best practices

A method or technique consistently shown to bring about results superior to those achieved with other means. ***See also best in class.***

SOME FACTS ...

- First-time graduate enrollment decreased 0.1% from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017; however, it increased 2.0% from Fall 2012 to Fall 2017, and increased 2.2% from Fall 2007 to Fall 2017.¹
- Total graduate enrollment increased by 1.2% for U.S. citizens and permanent residents.¹
- “New enrollments of international students fell by 6.6 percent at American universities in academic year 2017–18 compared to the year before, marking the second straight year in declines in new enrollments, according to new data from the annual Open Doors survey.”²
- The number of new international students fell by 6.6% at U.S. universities in fall 2017.²

1- CGS Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2007 to 2017 https://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CGS_GED17_Report.pdf

2- “Redden, Elizabeth. (November 13, 2018). *New International Enrollments Decline Again*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/11/13/new-international-student-enrollments-continue-decline-us-universities>

RECRUITMENT BEST PRACTICES

WHY are best practices for recruitment so important?

WHO do you need to target?

HOW are you going to reach prospective students?

WHEN is the best time to reach out?

WHAT is the most important thing to communicate?

NOW WHAT?

Measure your success and reevaluate continuously to make improvements.

WHY

ARE BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT SO IMPORTANT?

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With fewer students to begin with in the applicant pool, and a rising number of other challenges, institutions and programs are faced with significant hurdles when trying to attract students to meet their admissions goals.



Navigating without a plan = wasted dollars

Incongruent plan = wasted dollars, inconsistent results

Insufficient plan = wasted dollars, missed opportunities, subpar results

WHY ARE BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT SO IMPORTANT?

GROWING RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES



- Explosion of competition
- Rising costs of graduate education
- Student questioning cost/benefit of graduate education
- Budget restrictions
- Political climate
- Lack of diversity
- Predicting achievement, student success and completion

WHY ARE BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT SO IMPORTANT?

A STRATEGIC APPROACH

Develop a **STRATEGIC** enrollment roadmap around your institution's (or program's) mission:

- Analyze where you are and where you need to be
- Set enrollment goals
- Build target student profiles
- Develop strategies for achieving goals
- Construct a recruitment toolkit
- Set strategies into motion
- Review annually to make improvements

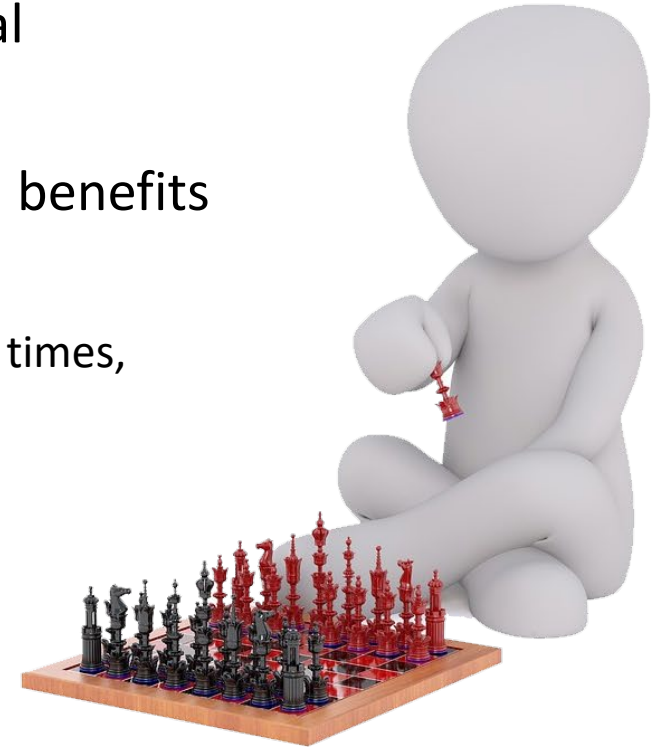


WHY ARE BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT SO IMPORTANT?

A STRATEGIC APPROACH

Strategies to Consider for Prospective Applicants:

- Use and develop search engine optimization (SEO) to ensure your program can be found from web searches
- Develop web pages specifically designed to enhance international student interest
- Ensure program web pages are up-to-date and highlight program benefits effectively
 - Never have long periods of “down time”— even during slower application times, prospective students may still be looking for information
- Make inquiry process as easy and seamless as possible



WHY ARE BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT SO IMPORTANT?

A STRATEGIC APPROACH



Strategies to Consider for Inquiries:

- Follow up with inquiries immediately, and on an on-going basis
- Employ personal outreach to students who start but don't complete applications — including email and phone calls
- Host face-to-face events to showcase your institution and program — applicants are interested, keep it that way
- Keep the communication going through the whole application process and acceptance

WHO

ARE THE STUDENTS YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?

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STUDENTS ARE KEY

You're looking for students that are highly qualified and likely to succeed, plus they need to be a "good fit" for your program.

The best candidates are multifaceted:

- GPA
- Test scores
- Overall academic background
- Character
- Commitment
- Grit/tenacity
- Work experience
- Social support
- Financial support



WHO ARE THE STUDENTS YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?

CREATING BRAND AMBASSADORS

Getting the right prospective students to enroll, succeed and eventually become brand ambassadors is paramount to on-going success of any program or institution.



KEEP IN MIND: Shaping the most prestigious class and growing enrollment doesn't have to be mutually exclusive.

- Program growth can lead to more qualified and diverse students.
- Increased revenue strengthens the future cycles of success.

HOW

ARE YOU GOING TO REACH PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS?

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START WITH A SOLID RECRUITMENT PLAN

Build strategic recruitment planning around audience and goals — start with a plan that captures end-to-end communication

- Email
- Text messages
- Print
- Personal outreach
- Local events and face-to-face activities
 - Campus visits with matriculated students/alumni
 - Classroom sit-ins
 - Lab visits
 - Local events/activities



HOW ARE YOU GOING TO REACH PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS?

ENLIST THE RIGHT TOOLS

Even for institutions with decentralized recruitment and admissions protocol, all programs should work together to strengthen communications and collaborate between departments to ensure institutional cohesion.

- If budgets allow, consider working with a 3rd party marketing team that specializes in student recruitment
- Use the *GRE*® Search Service and *TOEFL*® Search Service to target the ideal candidates you are looking for
- Use automated marketing tools to make the job easier and more repeatable with less effort



WHEN
IS THE BEST TIME TO REACH OUT?

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NOW!

- Don't wait.
 - Prospective applicants are thinking about what to do and where to go long before applications are due.
- Students often commit to the first university to contact and admit them.
 - Reach out early.
- Begin communicating with prospective students early and often.
 - Build relationships early — it is the best way to move prospective students toward applying and enrolling.
 - Make sure students know you want them.
- Carefully plan the timing and messaging strategy for all stages of communication.
 - Plan ahead to make sure that your outreach is timed based upon your enrollment schedule.
 - Include the most relevant information based on the stage of communication.



WHAT

ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO COMMUNICATE?

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CONNECT WITH STUDENTS ON WHAT MATTERS MOST TO THEM

Engage with students (and their families) and make sure to tell them about:

- **School Culture:** What is the overall “vibe” of the school? Are students laid-back or competitive? Are there clubs on campus they would be interested in?
- **Career Opportunities:** How well does this school set students up for future career opportunities? Does it specialize in a particular industry they are interested in?
- **Cost:** What is the final price tag? Is there any financial aid or scholarship money available for the program?
- **People:** What will fellow students be like? Is it a diverse class? Do students seem like people they would want to be friends with?
- **Location:** Is the school located somewhere they could live for two (or more) years?
- **Academics:** What does the curriculum look like? Is there a balance between classroom learning and hands-on projects?
 - quality/competitiveness of program
- **Affordability:** Be upfront about costs, but also communicate the ROI a degree from your program can yield.

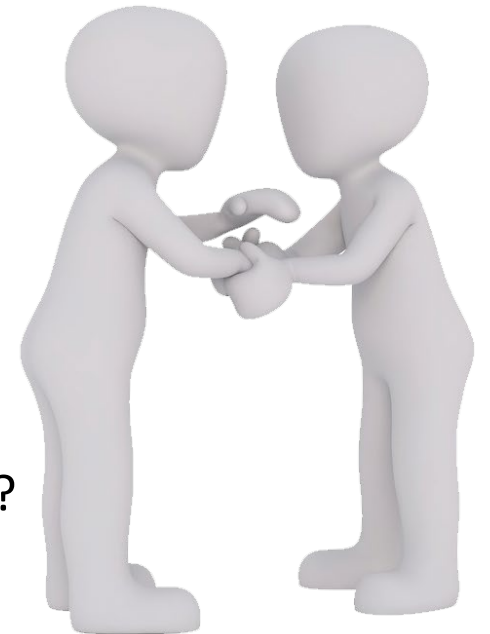


WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO COMMUNICATE?

MAKE A CONNECTION

Encourage face-to-face contact with prospects — campus fairs, regional brunches, alumni events — develop comradery and make a good first impression.

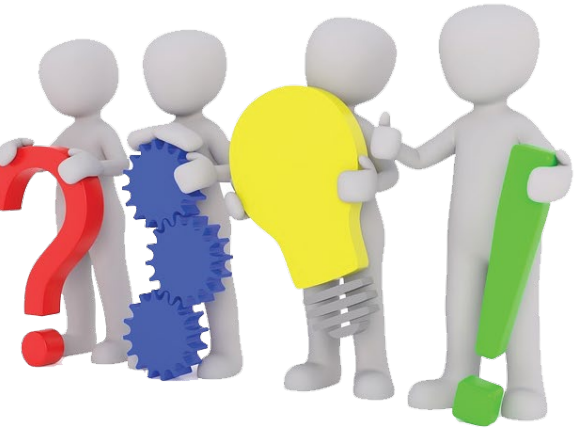
- Offer students timely information about your school and programs the moment they request it
- Develop personal relationships — customize messaging based on each individual prospect and their program of interest
- Utilize your admissions counselors — tap into their hands-on knowledge
- Create well-informed applicants who become more and more inspired to become a part of your program/institution
- Leverage your success — why are current students thriving at your institution? Find out and develop a compelling messaging strategy that includes your distinguishing attributes
 - Focus groups (students and alumni)



WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO COMMUNICATE?

BEYOND RECRUITMENT

Continue to engage with students to encourage acceptance of your admissions offer. The best students are likely going to get multiple admissions offers — make sure they wind up on your campus.



- Provide them with faculty and peer contacts that they can speak to directly — faculty, current students and alumni can be one of the strongest resources in the admissions toolkit.
- Arrange for class visits, lab tours and social events to get them further acquainted with your program and school culture.
- Give them a taste of local culture to get them excited about studying in your region.

Stay in touch with prospects through the enrollment process.

SO...
NOW WHAT?

NOW WHAT?

MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS

- Build your enrollment management plan around data that allows you to track success, inform decisions and evaluate effectiveness of strategies through every step of the graduate student lifecycle.
- Gather data and analyze effectiveness of:
 - Outreach
 - Applications
 - Admissions
 - Enrollment
 - Commencement
- Did you meet enrollment objectives?
- Did you achieve improvements in access, retention and graduation?
- Did you improve processes and find efficiencies along the way?
- Adjust, repeat what worked; fine-tune what didn't.





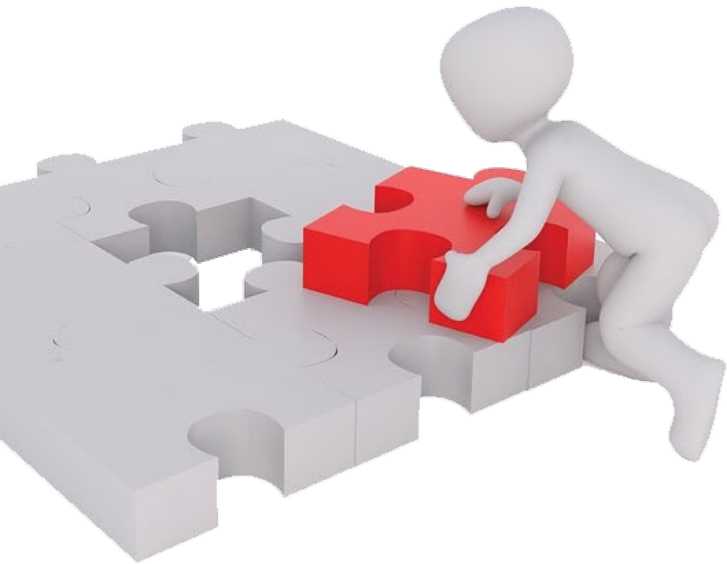
TOOLS

TO SUPPORT YOUR PLAN

ONCE YOU HAVE A PLAN

FIND YOUR BEST PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Leverage the **GRE® Search Service** and the **TOEFL® Search Service** as an important component of your recruitment strategy. Find — and communicate with — the students who are the best fit for your programs.



Flexible and adaptable customized searches and targeted recruiting for every program.

- Identify qualified applicants who have personally opted in to hear from programs like yours.
- With the **GRE Search Service**, reach prospects worldwide who have demonstrated graduate-level readiness.
- Use the **TOEFL Search Service** to reach international students with the right English-language proficiency for your undergraduate, graduate and English-language programs.

ONCE YOU HAVE A PLAN

FIND YOUR BEST PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Identify prospects based on qualifying factors:

- Intended field of study
- Grade point average (GPA)
- GRE scores
- TOEFL total and/or section scores
- Years of work experience
- Geography
- Planned date for enrollment

Expand reach

- Be creative — think differently
- Search countries with untapped populations of prospects
- Look at non-traditional students
- Determine student populations that are not being targeted



ONCE YOU HAVE A PLAN

FIND YOUR BEST PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS



Identify your ideal candidates with powerful criteria:

- Utilize score bands.
- Choose test date ranges that indicate active pursuit of continuing education.
- Geotarget to support road shows, local events, specific cities within target countries.
- Use intended major to ensure you receive names of students who are interested in the programs you offer.
 - Don't limit search based only on majors that have a 1:1 correlation — include all majors that are related to or covered by the programs for which you are recruiting.
 - Don't be afraid of undecided or students who didn't respond — hearing from your program may be just the catalyst prospects need.

ONCE YOU HAVE A PLAN

FIND YOUR BEST PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

- Adjust search criteria rather than using the “Limit” option when ordering to decrease number of names.
- Once you’ve purchased a list, they are yours to use and reuse so reach out first and often.
- Keep the funnel fresh.
 - Use recurring order option or order weekly or monthly throughout the year — get new names on **your** schedule.
- Engage with students quickly after acquiring the search list.
- Nurture those students who have engaged.
- Track recruitment efforts.
 - Employ tools to track and build communications with highly engaged prospects.
 - Add and change as needed to build the size list you plan to reach out to.



YOU'VE FOUND YOUR STUDENTS

START COMMUNICATING!



- Develop communications plans with help from award-winning enrollment marketing experts
- Deliver dynamic campaign content and engage with prospects throughout the application, admissions and enrollment processes
- Create a unique experience for each prospective student with personalized landing pages
- Get powerful insights into prospect behaviors with advanced analytics

Build a bigger, better class starting with immediate, personalized, relevant and targeted communication.

[Visit www.higheryield.org](http://www.higheryield.org) for more information.



QUESTIONS



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