The ADMISSIONIST

by LIAISON

Spring 2019

BIG Data
BIG Decisions

The Art — and Data — of Admissions Decisions

There is certainly an art to admissions decision making, but there is a science to this work as well.

In fact, admissions is becoming even more scientific. Technology is facilitating the collection of granular data about individual applicants and a more thorough analysis of institutional trends. Admissions leaders are also recognizing what Erin O'Brien, assistant dean and director of graduate programs for the University at Buffalo School of Management, shares in our interview with her on pages 10-11: "Having multiple strong data sources moving forward is going to be critical."

In this issue of *The Admissionist*, we explore why admissions leaders like Erin believe data is so integral to leaders in higher ed, no matter the specific discipline in which they work. On pages 8-9, we speak to Dr. Rick Valachovic, who has witnessed the introduction of a new "literacy" centered around data over his two decades in dental education and during his time as President and CEO of the American Dental Education Association (ADEA). Then, we get the nursing field perspective from Dr. Deborah Trautman, the CEO of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), on pages 12-14. Dr. Trautman shares more information about the promise that Big Data offers to improve the overall quality of healthcare services and educational activities.

As you have likely come to expect from *The Admissionist*, you will also find stories about CAS™, EMP™, Time2Track™ and SlideRoom™ throughout this issue as well. Our content team can be reached at editorial@liaisonedu.com, and they would love to hear your thoughts about these stories.

Please accept our gratitude for allowing us to be your trusted partner as you make the big decisions that build tomorrow's workforce.

Best,

G. Haddad

George Haddad
Founder and CEO

LIAISON

IN THIS ISSUE

H1GHER ED BY THE NUMB3RS

Just as popular e-commerce and entertainment services use algorithms to recommend what you should buy, watch or listen to next, many higher education institutions use big data to build their best classes. In this edition of Higher Ed by the Numbers, we're exploring data's role in helping institutions make their recruitment marketing and admissions strategies more powerful and cost effective.

THE DATA BEHIND ADMISSIONS DECISIONS

Colleges are reporting that they are focusing more on whether a student's parents attended college than on race or ethnicity, despite the front-page debate over affirmative action in college admissions. Of the seven personal characteristics that admissions decisions can be based on, race/ethnicity makes up only **2.4%** while first-generation status is almost twice as important at **4.2%**, in terms of having a "considerable influence" over admissions decisions. However, the percentage of first-generation freshmen admitted has dropped about **3%** since 2014.

Source: Inside Higher Ed

BRANDING — NOT JUST FOR CORPORATIONS ANYMORE

Most higher education institutions **(76%)** have done a brand strategy project, and increasing institutional awareness is the most common primary goal of their marketing and brand strategies. **93%** of those who invested in brand strategy work found that it was worth it. They learned that increasing internal communication, presenting realistic expectations on the time it takes to complete a rebrand and utilizing good market research were among the most important takeaways.
Source: The State of Higher Ed Branding: A Survey of Marketing Leaders

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CONCERNED OVER TUITION RATES

The growing concern over decreasing rates of international student applications has admissions officers seeking solutions. Political consequences aside, the cost of American education is something international students take very seriously. Students from outside the European Union spend **$3,500** per year in Germany, as opposed to the **$25,000** a year that they would pay at a U.S. college or university. Finances are a concern for all students, but for international students, this may be the last straw.
Source: VOA News

TRANSFER STUDENTS YIELD HIGHER ADMISSIONS NUMBERS

While transfer students were admitted at a slightly lower percentage rate than first-time freshmen during the Fall 2017 admissions cycle, a higher percentage of them enrolled. Over **50%** of transfer students enrolled upon being admitted, while only **28%** of freshmen enrolled. Colleges are using new and broader marketing techniques to reach these transfer students. Some of the successful techniques include limiting the use of a wait list, increasing the number of those in the early decision/early admittance program and using email to reach potential transfer students.
Source: NACAC

REPUTATION SPEAKS VOLUMES

In a 2013 study of American freshmen, the reputation of a school was the most important factor when deciding where to study. Listening to students and preparing a strategy to improve reputation should go hand in hand with brand strategy. However, only **20%** of the *U.S. News and World Report's* ranking reflects subjective information such as reputation. Using the knowledge gained from peer surveys and other data in marketing will increase interest and applications.
Source: US News & World Report

STUDENTS SHOW THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY

Admissions officers have been learning various new social media platforms to gain insight into their potential students. Over half of admissions officers believe that looking at students' social media profiles is a fair practice, but only **25%** of them do so. One of the reasons the practice has decreased is because Gen Z and Millennial students are one step ahead. They know their data is being collected from online activity and they know how to hide things.
Source: AP News

IS TEST OPTIONAL THE NEW TREND?

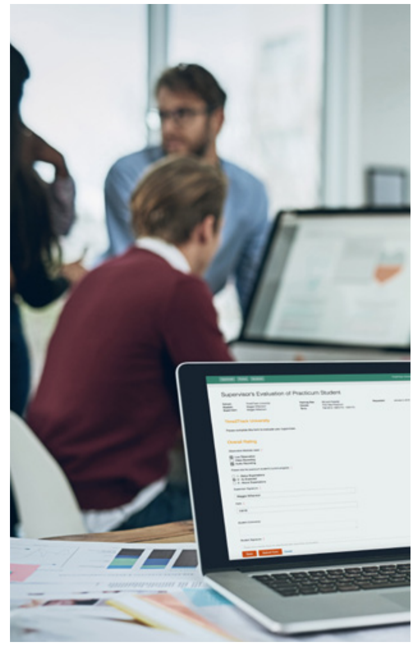
Over the past **10** years, colleges have shown that they don't consider test scores to be as important as they once did. In 2007, **59%** of schools ranked tests as of considerable importance, and in 2018 that number was **52%**. On the flip side, the importance of grades rose from **52%** to **81%**. When the University of Chicago dropped its test requirement, in light of information showing that family income and test results had strong correlations, it may have prompted other schools to follow along. Along with the overall importance of grades, colleges are looking at the importance of standardized testing. Will more schools follow the trend of making — at least portions of — the test optional, like Harvard, Yale and Columbia have done?
Source: Inside Higher Ed

For links to full articles, check out our weekly Highlights from Higher Ed blog series at liaisonedu.com/blog

Adler University Translates Greater Data Visibility to More Successful Grants

How Time2Track™ helps Adler University deliver comprehensive and mission-consistent training experiences

ADLER UNIVERSITY



Adler University knew that visibility into training experiences would help its programs meet their accreditation requirements and its students achieve their learning outcomes. After careful review, the institution decided that Time2Track™ was just the partner to provide that visibility. "Prior to Time2Track, we had an internal system we were using for hours tracking that did not provide the level of details or real-time data we have from Time2Track," said Dr. Kevin Osten-Garner, associate vice president of academic affairs.

Before implementing Time2Track, Adler lacked insight into student progress during the course of the semester. Without knowing what types of training experiences students were having, supervisors and training directors were limited in the ability to guide students on how to best round out their training.

"One of the best features we're hearing from both training directors and our supervisors in the field is the dashboard," said Dr. Osten-Garner. "They can see the progress students are making in their training placements, as well as the progress in their range of experiences. Training directors are able to see if students are getting enough direct patient contact hours, or too much in individual and not enough group or family work — both supervisors and training directors can help students diversify their training experiences based on that data, and that's something that we've not had before."

In addition to individual student progress, staff can aggregate data by program, cohort or class. "We can easily see what level of service they're providing the community," said Dr. Osten-Garner. That level of detail also allows Dr. Osten-Garner to save time when applying for grants to support Adler Community Health Services. "I can pull up how many people we've served in a given year, their demographics, the type of services performed… that information has helped our grant applications be more successful. And we've cut the time down for preparing applications substantially."

Dr. Osten-Garner said Adler appreciates the complete customization Time2Track has provided to meet the University's needs. "The support from Time2Track has been exceptionally responsive — unlike anything we've seen from any other company," he said.

WITH TIME2TRACK, ADLER UNIVERSITY HAS:

Gained real-time views into student progress and the types of clinical experiences they are having

Identified training sites that provide in-depth clinical experiences, allowing the University to focus on expanding those partnerships

Reduced the amount of time needed to prepare applications and reports for grants

New Opportunities to Get More Out of Your Admissions Data

Liaison's Training & Knowledge Management Team rang in 2019 with a new WebAdMIT™ webinar series. Since Liaison Academy officially launched in January, this year has brought plenty of different and exciting training opportunities for all Liaison product users.

WebAdMIT's monthly webinars have been upgraded into a multi-layered webinar series focusing on beginner, mid-level and expert WebAdMIT features. Each webinar will focus on an admissions-related task allowing users to understand how they can apply WebAdMIT to their application review process. Read below for a sneak preview of some of the upcoming webinars.

Intro to CAS

Learn about the Centralized Application Service (CAS™), how it works and how it relates to WebAdMIT. Dive into the advantages of adopting a CAS, how the application is structured, how applicant data becomes available for you to review and how WebAdMIT can help improve your admissions workflow.

Making WebAdMIT Work For You | Beginner/Mid-level

Review some of the commonly used WebAdMIT workflows. Save time with the List Manager and Clipboard, make use of Local Statuses and Custom Fields and create a process to identify new applicants.

Analyzing Your Applicant Data in WebAdMIT | Mid-level

Take an in-depth look at the Export Manager. Learn how to take advantage of the Report Manager, the PDF Manager and WebAdMIT's data integration tools.

Evaluating Your Applicants with WebAdMIT's GPAs | Mid-level

Learn about GPAs in WebAdMIT, including how they are calculated and how you can customize and work with Local and Prerequisite GPAs. We'll also help you determine which of the GPA options might be best for you.

REGISTER

for these webinars at academy.liaisonedu.com.

Reflecting Back on Two Decades in Service of Healthcare:

An Interview with Dr. Rick Valachovic

Liaison recently spoke to Dr. Rick Valachovic, the current president and CEO of American Dental Education Association (ADEA) who announced that he will be retiring from the Association during the summer of 2019. Dr. Valachovic has served ADEA for an impressive 21 years and in that time, the Association's focus has expanded to include the full breadth of dental professions, and the organization has grown from having 10 staff members and a $3 million operating budget to 75 staff and an almost $30 million budget. In this interview, he shares what he's learned along the way and what he predicts for the future of dentistry.

Liaison: Thank you for your time today, Dr. Valachovic! Let's start with some reflection on your impressive career — Over your two decades with ADEA, what have been the three most dramatic changes that you've seen in the dental education field?

Dr. Rick Valachovic (RV): There have indeed been dramatic changes in dental education over the past 21 years. When I started at ADEA in 1997 (then known as the American Association of Dental Schools), six dental schools had closed in the previous decade and others were at serious risk for closure. The future for dental education was looking bleak. There was a realization that one of the key factors in decisions to close schools was the self-imposed isolation of many dental schools on academic health center campuses.

To me, the first dramatic change that occurred was the strategic pursuit of collaborations between dentistry and other health professions. Dental educators now work in concert with faculty in medical, nursing, pharmacy, social work and other schools in promoting interprofessional education and collaborative care in a way that was unthinkable two decades ago.

Second, the impact of technological advances in all aspects of dental education has been incredible. Think of all of the changes over the past twenty years — the growth of speed and the capacity of computing, the expansion of the internet, the introduction of smartphones, social networks, MOOCs, flipped classrooms, CAD/CAM, digital printing…amazing!

Third, there has been a dramatic change in the focus of the dental curriculum from rote memorization and regurgitation of facts to critical thinking and lifelong learning. The dental graduates of 2019 will still be practicing in 2060. We need to prepare the next generation of learners for a career that will include knowledge, techniques and procedures that do not even exist today.

Liaison: You're known for having driven change in many aspects of the healthcare field throughout your career, but one of your main passions has been ensuring that ADEA and its partner associations in other healthcare fields are a part of federal and global policy discussions. What have you learned about effectively advocating for this level of change? What lessons would you want to pass on to the next generation of healthcare leaders?

RV: Shortly after I arrived in Washington in 1997, colleagues asked me what the biggest surprise was being "inside the Beltway." My answer was simple: that one person can make a difference. There is a perspective that only money talks in DC; that large PACs and other sources of influence with big checking accounts are the only ways to influence public policy. I quickly found that politicians and their staffs are willing to listen to the story that we have to tell about the value of oral health and the education of those who will provide dental care.

Most of the people who I have interacted with in Washington have a relative who is a dentist or a dental hygienist, and they can relate personally to me about the issues I want to discuss. The advocacy lesson for those who follow me is that governmental support for healthcare for all Americans is not a drain on the federal budget but an investment in our future. Ensure that the message about oral health and national security is clear to all with whom you interact, even though it may be a surprise to them. After all, the number one reason for military draft deferments for health reasons from the Civil War through the end of the Vietnam War was dental status — primarily not having enough teeth to eat on the battlefield. The National Institute of Dental Research was one of the first three institutes when NIH was founded in 1948 to focus research on finding an answer for future recruitment strategies.

Liaison: Studies like Stanford's One Hundred Year Study on Artificial Intelligence (AI100) suggest that artificial intelligence (AI) does not pose an imminent threat to workers, but many still fear that their jobs could soon be taken over by advanced robots. This fear is understandable when you consider that many of the world's major players are participating in the race to fund such technological advances.

What do you think technological advances like AI mean for the future of dental education? Beyond AI, what other technology trends are you and ADEA's other leaders tracking?

RV: The evolution of AI and robotics has been much more rapid than most experts had predicted just a decade ago. The significant role that these technologies will play in healthcare and in dentistry are already being realized. But I believe that the highly personal and interactive relationship between providers and the people who come to us for their care will remain.

Technology will continue to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the care we provide, but not replace it. I agree with Joseph Aoun, the president of Northeastern University in Boston, who argues in his book *Robot-Proof* that students must now master three new literacies — technological, data and human — to fill societal needs that robots and AI will not be able to provide. I believe that this is true for dental students as well. We are tracking many new technologies that are already entering our world, such things as CAD/CAM, 3-D printing, digital imaging, regenerative dentistry, tissue engineering, salivary diagnostics and so many more.

Liaison: In addition to your work as President and CEO of ADEA, you've also been quite active in the Interprofessional Education Collaborative, an organization that's dedicated to connecting health professions for better care. Beyond being prepared for interprofessional collaborative practice, what are the five key traits that you see as non-negotiable for a successful 21st-century healthcare worker?

RV: My five non-negotiable key traits for the success of future providers are:

1. Become a lifelong learner.
2. Become a critical thinker. There is no such thing as "certainty" and the ability to read the literature critically and introduce new concepts and procedures into practice will be even more important.
3. The focus must be on person-centered care; an individual in your care is not just a "patient" but is someone connected to a family, to a community and to society at large.
4. Acknowledge that dental care is part of overall healthcare and that the future is best lived learning about and with other health professions to provide care that is collaboratively delivered to those who have entrusted us with their care.
5. Prepare for even more consumerism in the future but do not be afraid. People who come for dental care in the future will have much more information about their health status and the options for their treatment. Be respectful of their knowledge and engage them as partners with you in determining the best course of personalized care for them.

Liaison: Dentistry is similar to all fields in that developing and maintaining a workforce with ethnic, racial, gender and sexual diversity is critical to the success of the profession. This field is interesting in that it's also experiencing diversity in the form of applicants' ages as more people are applying to dental school later in life. Can you tell us more about this trend? How does ADEA suggest that dentistry programs appeal to and meet the needs of these "NON-TRADITIONAL" students?

> **"My conversations with dental school admissions officers support the changing public view that we had known all along: Dentistry is a vibrant and attractive career for those who want to be a part of the health professions."**

RV: The traditional student starting dental school right after graduation from college is about 22 years old. When I started dental school in 1973, the average first-year dental student was about 25 years of age. Many of my classmates had been in the military during the Vietnam War or were otherwise distracted by the events of that era. We are now seeing an increase in applicants who have been out of college for a couple of years or more, or who have been in another profession and are ready for a change.

One of the key attractions for dentistry as compared with most others at the doctoral level is that at the end of just three or four years one can begin practicing and caring for people. DSOs and other large group practices also offer new employment opportunities that do not require major investments of time and finances that independent private practice traditionally does. But our work at ADEA is to expand opportunities for anyone who wants to become a dentist. When I applied to dental school in 1972, 83% of applicants were white and 88% were men. The ADEA AADSAS applicant pool for the dental class that entered this fall was majority women and majority not white. This portends a future in which the face of the dental profession more closely reflects the face of the American population in general. ■

TESTS OF THE TIMES

Assessing Outcomes and Decoding Data at University at Buffalo School of Management

In her almost six years as assistant dean and director of graduate programs for the University at Buffalo (UB) School of Management, Erin O'Brien has witnessed changes in the world of graduate management education.

Whether she's talking about the dramatic shift in international applications away from U.S. B-schools, the increasing number of non-traditional MBA students considering a wide range of educational options or the growing trend of schools creating barrier-free pathways into their programs, O'Brien circles back to two themes: 1) the old ways of pursuing organizational goals are no longer entirely adequate and 2) leveraging new sources of data-driven insights is essential for program survival in today's student market.

For instance, consider the ramifications of the evolution of the standardized test score-focused application review process, the gold standard of the past: "Test scores have long been a chief data source for strategic decision making in our schools and programs," O'Brien says. "What happens to those data sources if we move into a test-optional world? Having multiple strong graduate management data sources is going to be critical."

Quantifying Success

O'Brien is an advocate of continuing to harness data after students have been admitted. For that reason, UB will soon begin updating its internal validity study, which links full-time MBA students' GMAT and GRE scores to in-program academic success and post-MBA career outcomes.

"The validity study we originally conducted was designed to predict academic success in the MBA program by using an algorithm that incorporates all the quantitative data we generate during the admissions process — including test scores, GPA and number of months of work experience," she explains.

"Historically, we've used this study to understand academic performance, like how many students are likely to struggle in the first MBA semester. That helps us to plan and to provide resources for those students before they know they're in trouble."

Times have changed, however, and so will UB's next study.

"Our class five years ago looked very different than it does today," she says. "Five years ago, we had a large concentration of international MBA students. They accounted for nearly 40% of our full-time MBA. Our dual-degree students — those who are in another graduate or professional program on campus or in a joint MBA/engineering program — represented less than 20% of the class. Today, those numbers have flipped. Just on that basis alone, our validity study needs to be refreshed," O'Brien says. "It's a different population. Again, five years ago, 80% of students provided GMAT scores. Compare that to the Fall 2018 semester, where at UB, one-third of the enrolled pool provided GMAT scores, one-third provided GRE scores and the rest either provided other scores or received a waiver exempting them from testing requirements." O'Brien is quick to note that the higher number of dual-degree students is one of the factors behind UB's shift in GMAT and GRE score reports.

However, revisiting her continual need for data for program decision making, she believes this shift in test taking could have a risky impact. "I've been asking people for years, 'What are we going to do in a test-optional world?' More and more schools are building programs that eliminate barriers to entry because we need enrollment. And one of the easiest ways to do that is by rethinking your approach to test requirements, which many applicants consider a big barrier."

To emphasize her point, O'Brien notes that in their new methodology, Bloomberg BusinessWeek did not include GMAT or GRE scores in the foundational four core dimensions of their 2018 rankings of graduate business schools, a big shift in how rankings are typically calculated.

Peer Access, Partner Power

In O'Brien's opinion, one of the best ways to answer the test-optional question is by working with academic peers and other admissions professionals to address their shared needs and challenges. That's why she decided to join Liaison's BusinessCAS™ advisory board. The company also has strategic partnerships with ETS and other organizations that are innovating standardized testing to keep it relevant to today's graduate management admissions leaders.

"I need contact with my peers on a regular basis," O'Brien says. "Liaison's BusinessCAS advisory board creates a human connection we don't get sitting in our offices. Knowing there are others I can reach out to and talk with about the issues we face is incredibly powerful."

O'Brien continued: "I think Liaison is in a unique position within our industry because they have critical data resources. For me personally, capitalizing on that was another motivating factor in getting behind the BusinessCAS initiative. Those in graduate management education are data hungry and Liaison is in the perfect position to address this need." ■

The UB School of Management is changing the world of business. Its mission is to discover and deepen its understanding of management concepts and applications that drive effective organizations and use them to produce principled and insightful leaders who create positive change in the world.

A flagship institution in the State University of New York system, UB is the largest and most comprehensive campus in the 64-campus SUNY system. In this photo, Assistant Dean and Director of Graduate Programs Erin O'Brien (second from left) guides some of the big thinkers and even bigger doers that UB is proud to call students.

CHALLENGES NURSING FACES AND SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME THEM:

THE AACN'S PERSPECTIVE

Liaison recently caught up with Deborah Trautman, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, president and CEO of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), to discuss the challenges facing nursing, how technology is preparing nursing professionals to address these challenges and how schools can help prepare students for the workforce before they've even left the classroom.

Liaison: Thank you for your time today, Deborah! Let's start with an overview of the field of nursing and your organization's work: What are three challenges facing nursing now and how is the AACN working to address them?

Deborah Trautman (DT): As the voice for academic nursing, AACN is committed to advancing the work of our nation's baccalaureate and graduate programs to prepare a nursing workforce able to thrive in a healthcare system undergoing rapid change. Our commitment to supporting this critical work extends to addressing a number of challenges, which include raising the education level of the workforce, enhancing diversity in the student population and removing barriers to advanced nursing practice.

AACN is working closely with the education and healthcare communities to create a highly educated nursing workforce able to meet the challenges of contemporary nursing practice. We strongly believe that encouraging all nurses to advance their education is in the best interest of patients and an important step toward enhancing patient safety. A growing body of evidence showcases that nurses with baccalaureate and higher degrees are linked to lower patient mortality rates, shorter hospital lengths of stay and other positive care outcomes. Employers in greater numbers are seeking entry-level nurses with at least a baccalaureate degree given the connection between education and outcomes. Data collected by the AACN (October 2018) show that 84% of employers are now requiring or expressing a strong preference for nurses with bachelor's degrees.

AACN recognizes the strong connection between a culturally diverse nursing workforce and the ability to provide quality patient care. Greater diversity will strengthen cultural competence among care providers and help to eliminate health disparities that persist within minority populations. AACN and other patient advocates agree that recruiting underrepresented groups into nursing is a priority for the profession and an important step toward heading off a potential nursing shortage. Our nation's ability to meet healthcare's Triple Aim — improving health, enhancing the experience of healthcare and containing costs — hinges on having a diverse nursing workforce that is representative of the patient population.

In addition, the national dialogue about access to healthcare and primary care providers would change dramatically if all advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), including nurse practitioners (NPs), were allowed to practice to their full legal authority in all 50 states. The current restrictions on NP practice in 28 states should be removed since evidence shows that these providers are educationally prepared for their roles. Now is the time for lawmakers and other stakeholders to re-examine the regulatory environment at the federal and state levels to secure full practice authority for APRNs.

Liaison: It's clear that you're making progress on building a diverse nursing workforce. Specifically, though the nursing industry is still dominated by women, the U.S. Bureau of Labor has reported that the number of men who work as nurses has tripled since 1970, rising from 2.7 to 9.6 percent.

What do you think has led to that significant growth? What can other healthcare disciplines that suffer from a lack of diversity learn from nursing's approaches to increasing gender diversity?

DT: Bringing more men into the nursing profession has been a priority for our nation's nursing schools for more than 20 years. Schools have taken deliberate steps to reach out to prospective male students through direct advertising efforts, scholarship programs and information campaigns that show the professionally satisfying, lucrative opportunities that exist within nursing.

Liaison: Let's pivot a little to discuss technology's role in nursing and in nursing education. From facilitating needle-free blood draws to making it possible to conduct consultations from the comfort of the patients' homes, technology is increasing the service level that nurses are able to provide to their patients. Technology is changing nursing before these healthcare professionals get to the workplace, too. Baby simulators are giving students an opportunity to practice balancing the care of new mothers and their newborns. Adaptive learning technology is making it possible to ensure retention of knowledge gained in nursing school classrooms.

Dr. Trautman enjoys a speaker at the recent Academic Nursing Leadership Conference presented by AACN in Washington, DC in October 2018.

From your perspective, what will technology's role in nursing education be in 10 years? What about in nursing as a field in general?

DT: Technology is a powerful catalyst that is changing how nurses are educated and how they practice. Nursing and other health profession schools are increasingly using a host of educational technology — including simulation, virtual reality, gaming and other high-tech systems to prepare tomorrow's clinicians. AACN recently profiled how artificial intelligence (AI) is shaping the future of nursing education, research and practice. Simply stated, AI uses computers and algorithms to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. Because computers can instantly synthesize data from a wide variety of sources, AI has proven effective at enhancing clinical decision-making, recognizing patterns (predictive analytics), empowering student learning and faculty effectiveness and harnessing the power of Big Data to improve the overall quality of healthcare services and educational activities. Nursing's reliance on technology in the classroom and practice settings will continue to expand as the move toward precision healthcare, telehealth, the electronic health record and other innovations continue to take hold and enhance the healthcare experience and patient outcomes.

Liaison: AACN clearly recognizes the value of considering nursing school applicants' unique experiences in addition to traditional quantitative measures of academic achievement. Can you tell us more about your Holistic Admissions Review Training and the other ways that your organization is helping colleges and universities implement holistic review?

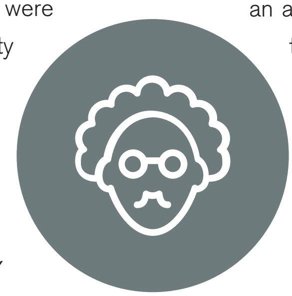
DT: Increasing diversity in the nursing workforce begins with ensuring a robust pipeline of racially and ethnically diverse students in our nation's schools of nursing. AACN encourages schools looking to advance strategic goals related to diversity and inclusion to implement a holistic admissions review process to ensure the student body is representative of the local community and the nation at large. Holistic review is an admissions strategy that assesses an applicant's unique experiences alongside traditional measures of academic achievement such as grades and test scores. It is designed to help schools consider a broad range of factors reflecting the applicant's academic readiness, contribution to the incoming class and potential for success both in school and later as a professional. Oftentimes, a one-on-one interview, essay questions and admissions staff training are all used as part of the holistic review process. Among institutions using holistic admissions, more than 80% report that moving in that direction led to increased diversity among students. Evidence collected within the past year shows health profession schools using holistic reviews have increased diversity while student performance remained unchanged or improved.

Since June 2017, AACN has been working directly with 31 schools of nursing nationwide that received funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration to implement a new system of Holistic Admissions Review at their institutions. These schools are making great progress at changing the cultural climate at their schools and welcoming a more diverse student body. AACN is open to working with all schools of nursing and providing the training needed to move to a holistic review process. ■

Once waitlisted by MIT and rejected by Harvard, Pasterski is now earning her Ph.D. at Harvard.
(Image credit: Michel Noble, Jr./Landov)

How Admissions Missed the Next Einstein

When Sabrina Pasterski was applying for undergraduate admissions, she was rejected by Harvard and waitlisted by MIT… until they saw a video of her building an airplane. Due to Sabrina's persistence, this video was eventually seen by Professors Allen Haggerty and Earll Murman who strongly advocated for her. "Our mouths were hanging open after we looked at it," Haggerty said. "Her potential is off the charts." She was ultimately accepted by MIT, and later graduated with a perfect GPA of 5.0.



Sabrina is now earning her Ph.D. at Harvard, earning major grants and creating waves in the physics community. An OZY profile titled "This Millennial Might be the New Einstein" wonderfully summarizes her rocket-like launch into the world.

While Sabrina's story may be an extreme example, it perfectly highlights the value of seeing STEM projects (a.k.a. Portfolios) within the admissions process. Seeing what a person actually makes provides unique insight into how they think, their level of curiosity and the type of skills they possess. And yet, the majority of STEM departments don't provide applicants an avenue to show off what they've made in school nor their extracurricular projects that would enrich an admissions office with a better understanding of their potential and personal qualities.

However, the new economy has created an unprecedented demand for people who can make things within STEM fields and incoming students who are more likely to enroll with schools that prioritize making. So, leading schools such as Stanford, MIT and Yale have recently created an option to include STEM portfolios as part of the admissions process. Using portfolios to gather evidence of "technical creativity" is a trend that's gaining steam.

If you're interested in learning more about Maker Portfolios, visit slideroom.com.

RECRUITMENT & ENROLLMENT

HOW TO CRAFT AN EFFECTIVE GRADUATE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

LEVERAGING THE 4 Ws TO RECRUIT BEST-FIT STUDENTS

For-profit businesses, non-profit organizations, schools and graduate programs have one goal in common: finding and implementing new — and better — ways to engage their target audiences.

As proof, look no further than the seemingly endless array of white papers, presentations, think pieces and studies devoted to exploring the nature and metrics of engagement. Clearly, engagement is a force to be reckoned with.

But what does engagement really mean? And what are the specific challenges faced by institutions of higher education that want to engage prospective graduate students?

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

When it comes to current students, engagement is relatively easy because they already have a relationship with the institution they are attending. They're invested in the ongoing story of the university because now it's their story, too.

Throughout our over two decades of powering admissions and enrollment marketing solutions for higher education, Liaison has recognized that prospective students, on the other hand, present a greater challenge.

It's not that prospects aren't interested in engagement; it's simply that they are interested in developing connections with people they already know. Because they don't know the institutions yet, institutions have to work harder at reaching out consistently and in ways that feel personal — without crossing the line into invasive — to prospective students.

The Golden Circle

In 2009, author and motivational speaker Simon Sinek gave a TED Talk titled "How Great Leaders Inspire Action." While his message was tailored for the business community, it's just as relevant for anyone trying to run a successful graduate program. Let's start with his primary concept, which he calls "The Golden Circle." The Golden Circle illustrates how businesses and organizations think, act and communicate. The outermost ring represents the "What" which would be your graduate program.

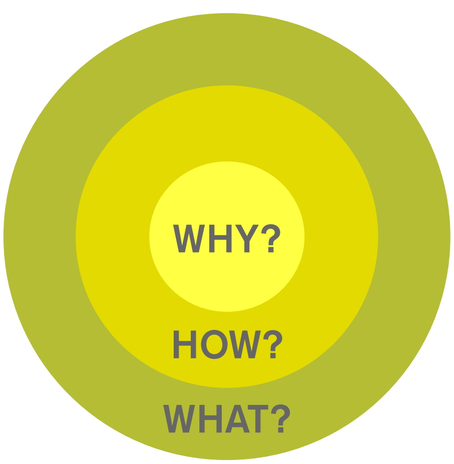
Moving into the next ring, we encounter the "How," or ways and means by which you get your "What" out into the world. Finally, we get to the heart of the circle, which is where we locate our "Why" — also known as our purpose and reason for being.

Communicating from the Inside Out

In his talk, Sinek points out that many companies, organizations and schools work from the outside of the circle in: They start with the "What," the product or program that they're offering.

What's wrong with that, you might ask. Isn't the "What" important? Absolutely – but research and real-life experiences have proven time and time again that as human beings, we are not nearly as guided by logic and reason as we like to believe. Whether we like it or not, we tend to make decisions based on emotional motivations – and then we use our rational brains to construct reasonable justifications for whatever decisions we've made.

In an abstract for their academic paper titled "Emotion and Decision Making," a team of researchers proclaimed, "A revolution in the science of emotion has emerged in the last few decades, with the potential to create a paradigm shift in thinking about decision theories. The research reveals that **emotions constitute powerful, pervasive and predictable drivers of decision making."**



At this point you may be thinking, "Interesting stuff, but what does any of it have to do with creating a meaningful engagement strategy for my program's prospective students?"

Understanding the driving forces behind how people — including your prospective students — decide to interact with you is an important part of crafting an effective engagement strategy.

In the end, engagement is actually much more than a strategy. It's a natural outcome of relationships that have been nurtured over time. Engagement with our prospects is more likely when we are able to emotionally inspire them to connect, share and engage.

So, how do we do that?

THE FOUR Ws OF ENGAGEMENT

Your institution is unique, which means your reason and purpose for being will be, too. So how you define the metrics of successful engagement will depend on factors that are unique to your program and institution — in other words, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all engagement strategy. What works for another program may not work for yours, and vice versa. Which isn't to say that there's not much to be learned from how other institutions have managed to connect with their respective audiences. There's a wide array of best practices that can apply in almost any situation, so we should definitely seek to learn from the experiences of our peers.

What's important to keep in mind is that just because a certain tool is being used effectively for another program doesn't mean it's the exact right one for your needs and goals.

Who? What? When? Why?

In order to create and maintain an effective engagement strategy, we need to know more than just **Who** we're trying to reach — we also need a deep understanding of **What** tools are best to use, **When** it's best to use them and **Why** we should have an engagement strategy in the first place.

Defining the "Who" of engagement is actually the easy part — it's your prospective students! But building a strategy on only one W is a little like trying to drive a car with three flat tires. The other Ws — Why, When and What — need to be equally balanced.

Let's look at each of them in turn.

WHY DOES WHAT WORKS WORK?

These days there are so many social media tools, apps and resources available that it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that you should be using all of them, all the time. Instead, as you craft your engagement strategy, ask why you use the tools you're using.

As an example, take a look at Snapchat. According to a 2014 report by Sumpto based on 1,650 responses, 77% of college students

WHY:
Choosing the tools you use

The wrong approach:
Jumping onto the next big trendy social tool without stopping to consider why it's trending in the first place.

The right approach:
Understand the different uses for the different channels, and analyze the reasons behind a trending tool or app before adopting.

use Snapchat daily — and that was in 2014. It's still the most popular app currently in use by millennials. However, it's not enough for institutions to use it simply because a large percentage of their prospective applicant pool does. If we don't look at why we want to use a particular tool, we run the risk of using it in ways that aren't effective.

It's Time to Get Personal

In a report by CKSyme Media Group called "Your Guide to Advanced Snapchat Marketing Strategy," the author looked at the way the Saints, New Orleans' football team, drove engagement with fans through calculated use of the popular app. The team's social media manager, Alex Restreppo, points out that, "Snapchat isn't a regular social media outlet. When you send a snap, it's perceived as a direct message from the brand or team... if it's a snap, they see it as more of a personal touch." So how could this work in higher education? One great

> **"People don't buy what you do. They buy why you do it."**
>
> – Simon Sinek

example is the University of Wisconsin, which started using Snapchat to send acceptance notifications to students before mailing their official packet. *U.S. News & World Report* recently highlighted the University of Wisconsin for using Snapchat to send acceptance notifications to students before mailing their official packet. Students responded with excitement, often replying back with a selfie and also sharing the news with friends.

"Of course you want the prestigious acceptance letter, but I think students also enjoy having the wall brought down and being able to communicate with the institution that they have chosen," said Brittany Shope, the web coordinator at Tennessee Wesleyan College (TWC), in a 2014 Time.com article.

WHAT DO YOUR STUDENTS EXPECT?

You know what you expect from prospective graduate students. Now it's time to ask yourself if you know what they expect from you at every step of the admissions process — and whether you have the tools and resources in place to deliver what they need. With more people expecting a greater level of transparency from businesses, nonprofits and governing bodies, you can bet that prospective students will expect it from your program as well. But what does "transparency" mean?

Think about your program's admissions process. Are you communicating quickly and personally with students when they reach out for information? Do students understand what happens once they've applied? Are the different steps of the process clear to them, and are they confident in knowing where they are at each stage?

Keeping Students Informed

Businesses like Amazon and Domino's have instant progress trackers that allow people to stay on top of their order status any time, from anywhere. For example, when you order a pizza from Domino's, you can find out in a moment whether your pizza is still being prepared, or whether it's on the way to your house.

You may want to consider using similar technology to help streamline your process while allowing prospective students to feel more connected to your institution.

WHEN ARE STUDENTS INTERACTING WITH YOU?

Over the past 25 years, our culture has changed dramatically in its relationship to time. For example, banks and grocery stores have adapted to the increasing demands of a growing 24/7 culture by expanding hours of operation and adding greater online accessibility.

Institutions have been doing a lot of adapting as well. A generation ago, students would typically send letters or make phone calls to institutions requesting program information and admissions materials. In return they would receive a packet of information in the mail — days, if not weeks, later. If they had questions after perusing the printed materials, they could write back, or call on the phone during office hours.

Today, students can access most of the information they need at the exact moment they need it. They can peruse university websites for program details and download brochures, program resources and applications to their desktops at home, or even to their cell phones while they're on the go.

But is all that enough?

Times have changed. Technology has evolved. Why are we using the same engagement strategies?

> **WHAT:**
> **Exploring process and student expectations**
>
> **The wrong approach:**
> Maintain an air of mystery around your process. Make it difficult for prospective students to get a sense of where they are within the application timeline.
>
> **The right approach:**
> Develop ways for students to be more involved and up to date with every step of the process as it unfolds.

Continue exploring the four Ws of engagement by downloading our white paper at bit.ly/gradengagement.

Grow and shape your best class with CAS

How Liaison's Centralized Application Services (CASs™) helped Samford University grow its applicant pool by 125%

Samford University wanted to combine its various health-related degrees — more than 30 programs — to create the College of Health Sciences. At the same time, the school wanted to maintain quality while increasing efficiency and growing enrollment. Bringing different programs together created an opportunity to revisit admissions processes to better support Samford's strategic enrollment goals.

Samford was already using NursingCAS™ for nursing programs and PharmCAS™ for pharmacy programs with great results, so the school opted to add seven additional Centralized Application Services (CASs™) to manage admissions for communication sciences and disorders (CSDCAS™), athletic training (ATCAS™), physical therapy (PTCAS™), nutrition (DICAS™), occupational therapy (OTCAS™) and health administration (HAMPCAS™), as well as campus-wide programs that were not affiliated with a national professional association (UniCAS™).

> **"In a highly competitive market, we've been able to maintain our high standards and fill our classes."**
>
> - Jonathan Parker, M.A., Ed.S., assistant director of pharmacy admission, McWhorter School of Pharmacy

Dr. Marian Carter, assistant dean of enrollment management and student services, worked to implement Liaison's CASs across the College's schools and programs to help admissions committees identify, evaluate and enroll right-fit students more efficiently. For programs unaffiliated with an association-sponsored CAS, the University licensed UniCAS, which delivers powerful enrollment management capabilities and supports a comprehensive view of enrollment efforts by program, by school and across the institution. Dr. Carter spent time working with new chairs to develop an application and review process for each program. With CAS, scoring rubrics can be created to support a program's unique requirements and student applications can be accessed online. Faculty were delighted.

"We're very committed to holistic review here," Dr. Carter said. "When we get together we know extraordinary details about these students — their personal goals, mission trips or community service experiences. We have rubrics in place to score all of these different elements and weigh them fairly."

Jon Parker, assistant director of admissions at Samford's McWhorter School of Pharmacy, attributes the efficient processing of complex applications to superior workflows within the CASs. "Other solutions have the capability to pull in the application and let you see transcripts in their original form, but with PharmCAS that same information is displayed in a format that is more directly associated with what we need to see during the application process. That makes admissions committee meetings work a lot more smoothly."

Dr. Carter calls the system's automatic GPA calculation a game changer: "I'm not spending my time typing every grade and every credit hour into an Excel spreadsheet and then calculating GPAs myself." Both Dr. Carter and Parker appreciate the robust analytics delivered

With Liaison's CASs, Samford:

- **INCREASED PHARMACY APPLICANTS BY 125% and** attracted students from all over the country rather than just regional candidates.
- **FREED THE EQUIVALENT OF 1 FTE** to focus on student service rather than manual grade calculation.
- **SUPPORTED UNIQUE ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS** across a variety of programs through customized scoring rubrics that support holistic application review.

with every CAS. Standard reports built into the system allow them to gain a deeper understanding of their applicant pools for more targeted recruiting. "It allows you to look at your current strategies to see what's working," said Dr. Carter. "It's great to be able to look at where our applicants are coming from and which undergraduate programs are the largest feeders of the national applicant pool," Parker said, noting that the information allows him to understand where to apply critical recruiting dollars. ■

Setting New Standards:

How Weill Cornell Uses Data to Keep Pace with Evolving Admissions Trends

As 2019 unfolds, it's clear that the ongoing *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* lawsuit has the potential to reshape affirmative action — and may become more important for U.S. higher education institutions than the multiple rulings in *Fisher v. The University of Texas.*

Of course, this is unfolding at a time when many programs are placing more emphasis on "holistic admissions" policies designed to look beyond the metrics traditionally used to assess applicants, such as standardized test scores. To gain insight into how using new sources of data can bolster the admissions process, Liaison recently spoke with Matt Cipriano, associate director of enrollment and education operations, at Weill Cornell Medicine Graduate School of Medical Sciences.

Liaison: Can you tell us more about how you see the Harvard lawsuit affecting admissions at your institution and beyond?

Matt Cipriano (MC): The basis of the Harvard lawsuit is that admissions policies are allowed to consider the race of applicants — especially underrepresented applicants — and consider that as a plus. When we eliminate these pluses in terms of race it standardizes how we look at all applications, but it doesn't take into account the implicit biases that are in place when you only look at standardized test results.

If schools have a cutoff score for their admissions processes and they do not take race or ethnicity into account, that is going to affect the composition of the student body they are recruiting and what their incoming classes will look like.

Liaison: What are you doing at Weill Cornell now regarding standardized tests? Overall, what do you see as the role of standardized tests in higher-education admissions processes in the next couple of years?

MC: My program required the GRE until last year. We did not use cutoff scores, but we certainly took scores into consideration in respect to the whole application. This year Weill Cornell waived the GRE as a requirement for four out of our five programs.

There have been research studies that show a very low correlation between graduate student success and GRE success. For women and underrepresented students there is often a negative correlation. Taking that into account, we made the GRE optional and have really focused on a holistic admissions practice in reviewing the entirety of the application. We now put much more weight on student research experience, for example, which is one of the factors that can help show the potential for success in graduate school. We give a lot of consideration to the length of time and quality of students' previous experiences as well as to other aspects of the applications, such as letters of recommendation, especially from research mentors. We try to get a sense of what the applicants have done and whether that will help them be successful students at Weill Cornell, as opposed to simply looking at how they scored on a standardized test.

Liaison: Weill Cornell uses Liaison's Centralized Application Services (CASs™) to help streamline and enhance admissions processes. How does that allow you to use new sources of data to look beyond standardized test results?

MC: As I mentioned, research experience is something we look at closely. With CASs, students are able to enter their research experiences, capturing both the type of work and research they've participated in as well as how many hours per week. The CASs then total the research hours so we have a quantifiable number to consider. Utilizing these types of data points has really played a much larger and more important role this year.

With CASs, we can also mine data to compare current applicants to applicants from previous years. For example, although we dropped the GRE as a requirement this year, we are able to still cross-compare data from year-to-year. Also, we've been using CAS since before we started looking more closely at research experience, but we're still able to go back into those older applications and pull that data. We can still compare previous classes with incoming classes.

Liaison: Do Liaison's CAS technology and related services facilitate a holistic approach to admissions?

MC: They really do. The way information is displayed in our CASs makes it easy to use. There's no weight put on anything unless you choose to assign values to different categories on the application in order to review it based on your own school or program criteria. That's not something we do here. We look at the application in its entirety. With CASs, the different sections of the application are really easy to review quickly and at a glance. Or, if you want to do a more thorough review, you can very easily download the entire application as a PDF to really do a deep dive into it. All the information is there. With the tools available, it's very easy to look at an application and make an initial decision on it. ■

LIAISON in the NEWS

BusinessCAS™ Advisory Board Members Discuss "What's Next For GME Admissions" At GMAC Leadership Conference 2019

BusinessCAS Advisory Board Meeting Convened Post-Conference

Liaison is proud to have moderated a timely, interactive panel discussion at this year's GMAC Leadership Conference. The session entitled "What's Next for GME Admissions" addressed the factors putting pressure on GME admissions professionals and provided the approaches schools are taking to confront trends such as the recent drop in MBA applications.

Following the GMAC conference, all members of Liaison's BusinessCAS™ advisory board convened at University of Miami for additional discussions on pertinent topics impacting GME. "We were very excited to host the board on our campus," stated Dr. Loubna Bouamane, director of admissions at University of Miami and a member of Liaison's BusinessCAS advisory board. "Having the ability to brainstorm with my colleagues helps us maneuver more effectively through the changing GME landscape and I am grateful to be part of this forward-thinking group."

Dr. Toby McChesney, senior assistant dean of graduate programs for Santa Clara University's Leavey School of Business and BusinessCAS advisory board chair, added, "What began as a decision to implement a more efficient way to process applications via BusinessCAS has turned into an opportunity to engage in strategic conversations and exchange ideas with my GME colleagues through the advisory board. We face the same challenges and we all benefit from the collective wisdom we can share to improve and strengthen our admissions processes."

Indiana University To Manage Cross-campus Graduate Enrollment With Liaison's UniCAS™

IU Chooses Liaison's Centralized Application Service (CAS™) as Admissions Platform for Graduate and Professional School Applications

In choosing UniCAS, IU will join the over 31,000 programs on more than 1,000 campuses that streamline admissions and offer better applicant experiences with Liaison's Centralized Application Services (CASs™). IU's rollout of UniCAS will begin in Fall 2019.

UniCAS will bring greater simplicity and efficiency to IU's application processes, reducing administrative costs and creating a streamlined process for students applying to colleges and campuses across the University. In providing a centralized place for students of all academic interests to apply to IU, UniCAS will also provide the University valuable analytics tools to understand trends in enrollment and better tailor application processes to the needs of its students.

"IU is committed to excellence in all aspects of the education we provide, which is why we are so excited to implement Liaison's UniCAS as our enrollment platform," said James C. Wimbush, vice president of Diversity, Equity and Multicultural Affairs, dean of The University Graduate School and Johnson Chair for Diversity and Leadership. "UniCAS will not only cut down on administrative costs and improve efficiency, but it will also foster a transparent and simple application process for all who look to call IU home."

To read full news articles, visit liaisonedu.com/news

THE FOURTH QUADRANT

In each edition of *The Admissionist*, a Liaison team member joins us in The Fourth Quadrant to share their unique perspective on one of the issues facing higher ed today. This quarter, we sat down with Scott Mallen, president of Liaison's EMP Division, to hear his thoughts on which strategies help — and hinder — an institution's ability to conduct effective marketing campaigns. Scott's views are informed by his extensive work as a marketing and strategy leader in higher education, the non-profit sector and private business. He specializes in overseeing omni-channel marketing campaigns.

Here's What's Keeping Your Marketing Campaigns from Being Successful

While I have been fortunate to work with several colleges and universities that I consider trailblazers in the art — and science — of marketing, there are still many other schools that have the ability to become just as successful. With that in mind, I thought this would be a great time to talk about what I see as the biggest misconceptions that keep marketing initiatives from reaching their full potential.

Fiction: You don't need to think like a marketer to do marketing.

Fact: You don't have to be a professional marketer to do marketing, but you'll be much better at it if you have a team of professional marketers at your side.

While the admissions professionals I work with are exceptional recruiters and salespeople, they don't necessarily eat, breathe and think marketing every day the way professional marketers do. It's not entirely fair to ask salespeople to be in charge of marketing. Yet, they still need to embrace the challenge, and the best way to accomplish their goals is often by teaming up with an experienced professional marketing partner, such as Liaison. We help institutions identify their needs and then create the solutions that will help advance their recruitment and admissions initiatives.

When you work with Liaison, you don't need to worry about mundane, time-consuming tasks such as getting postcards printed, or writing and tracking emails. It just happens. We do all that for you and much more. That, in turn, allows your school to begin creating a more personalized applicant experience. And it gives you more time to identify and track people who are actually interested in applying. At that point, the cream rises to the top. It's truly amazing. These days, you're at a competitive disadvantage if your recruiting and marketing efforts are focused primarily on buying huge lists of names. It's much better to have a system where you can filter students by specific criteria. Then you can prioritize your outreach to get the most bang for your buck. You don't need to spend time focusing on the wrong people.

I've also noticed through the years that once admissions officers understand the benefits of having an effective marketing strategy, they can't imagine reverting to the old ways of doing things. By taking all that work off their shoulders, we free them up to concentrate on other important aspects of recruiting. That's invaluable to schools.

Fiction: You don't need a CRM, and you definitely don't need a CRM and marketing platform.

Fact: These tools are integral to effective, efficient marketing.

In my view, some people in the world of higher education tend to be a bit behind the times when it comes to marketing technology. It's not uncommon to see trends emerge in the business world a few years before they reach admissions offices. For example, in the fairly recent past there were still people in higher ed who were not thinking about CRMs. But in corporate marketing, everyone was getting a CRM. They knew they needed one to coordinate their sales efforts with their sales team and other departments. Today we're finally seeing more widespread recognition of the fact that if you don't have a CRM on your campus, you're behind the times.

That's also true of marketing platforms. Five years ago, it seemed like every B2B was starting to get marketing platforms because they recognized that a CRM alone wasn't going to manage their communications. Doing the same thing year after year isn't going to work forever. Generations are changing. Technology changes. You've got to think outside the box and embrace new resources in order to be innovative. It's our goal at Liaison to help you do that in the most efficient, productive ways possible.

A school that installs a marketing platform is immediately going to make its communications better. How? By making them immediate, automated, relevant and trackable, as those are the four keys to any modern marketing campaign. All successful businesses use that model. Consider Amazon, for example:

- It's immediate — Amazon ships your packages to you immediately.
- It's relevant — When you ask to see bike pedals, they show you bike pedals.
- It's automated — You never have to talk to someone. And everything is trackable.

Think about it. You can take those four keys and apply them to any successful marketing program out there today. Yet, you still can't apply that model to a lot of college recruitment marketing. Many institutions have yet to discover the benefits of being immediate, relevant, automated and trackable. Fortunately, it's a lot easier and more affordable to embrace that model than you might imagine. Liaison already has the tools and experience to help you do it.

Fiction: You don't need targeted digital strategies.

Fact: You're wasting your limited resources if you aren't using all the data that's available to you in this day and age.

Is your digital marketing strategy doing enough to help attract and enroll the students you want in your classrooms? If you're not yet using targeted digital strategies, the answer may be, "no." Given the incredible amount of data now available to help us analyze everything from application information to enrollment trends, it's easier and more important than ever to craft and deliver highly targeted digital marketing communications.

For example, we can now use Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram to deliver specific targeted content to a relatively small number of people we've identified as important recruitment priorities. That's very innovative and it's a lot less expensive than buying a list with millions of names. It allows us to reach out to the people we'd like to enroll and then deliver messages on their social media that will relate to their current application status and unique personal interests. With targeted digital strategies, your program acquires a laser-like focus.

Fiction: Innovation is too risky.

Fact: Innovation can be scary, but it's critical to your success in the long run.

Admissions professionals and program administrators often work under very challenging conditions. They need to make their numbers, and they need to weigh the benefits of innovating in order to do so. I get it. But it's important that you don't let fear of change stand in the way of strategic innovation. How do you take the risk out of innovation? By making data-driven decisions, by relying on experienced partners and by looking to other schools for inspiration. Liaison never makes a suggestion to a client unless we know that it is actually going to work and it's not going to waste their money. Being creative doesn't have to be associated with taking unnecessary risks. Schools and admissions officials alike need to associate creativity with innovation and success.

Fiction: Quantity is the most important KPI.

Fact: It's the quality that actually matters.

Finally, make this your mantra: "I won't lose track of the end goal." I've seen so many schools focus on what I call the markers in the middle, such as getting a certain number of inquiries. But at the end of the day it's irrelevant if you get 5,000 or 20,000 inquiries. What really matters is that you have your 500 enrolled students in May. You want to look at quality — that's more important. My advice is to stay focused on the end game, which is your enrollment number. If you get your 20,000 inquiries and end up with the softest applications in the world, then that middle marker number isn't really helping you achieve your goals. ■

So, what do you think? Are these the biggest misconceptions holding back higher ed marketing campaigns? Share your opinion by tweeting @liaisonedu and using #buildabetterclass.

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