

4 Reasons

Why You Need a New Graduate Admissions Management Solution





Each graduate program has different requirements and unique application processes. Is your current admissions solution working for you or creating more work?

Most traditional admissions management solutions were not developed to meet the complex needs of today's evolving graduate admissions processes. In addition to falling short of the admissions team's needs, these tools lack the ability to quickly and easily provide strategic insight for provosts, deans and other institutional leaders.

Graduate admissions offices attempting to manage decentralized programs face many obstacles. Your admissions management solution shouldn't be one of them.

In this ebook, you'll learn how graduate schools are overcoming challenges, streamlining admissions processes and providing a far better applicant experience. How many of these four reasons to consider a new solution apply to your institution?

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One of the biggest challenges for higher education institutions is to balance the need for coordination and centralization with supporting local control, innovation and differentiation. Historically, graduate recruiting has been substantially left to individual programs and departments with little centralization. In today's environment, this approach is likely to cause institutions to fall short of their graduate enrollment goals both in terms of quality and quantity. Instead, leveraging some level of centralized recruiting expertise with local department experience is likely to lead to a much more successful outcome and is a better answer to the question of how to effectively recruit graduate students.”

Michael Harris, associate professor of higher education and director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Southern Methodist University³

Reason 1

Institution-wide insight and unique graduate program requirements aren't conflicting needs.

You want to provide your school's leadership team updates on your admissions and enrollment numbers across the board. You also want to be able to drill down into program specifics — which have totally different admissions requirements. Teachers and MFA students need wildly different skills to succeed in their chosen careers. Naturally, you're looking for different qualities and criteria in your applicants for each program.

In her book *Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity and Faculty Gatekeeping* Julie R. Posselt, assistant professor of higher education at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, explained, "There is no singular idea of merit that faculty everywhere should use. It is context-specific, and it needs to be context-specific because programs and disciplines vary in their missions and the work that it takes to be successful. What programs can do is be clear with themselves and with prospective students about their mission and priorities."¹

Setting up separate requirements for each program doesn't need to be difficult — that is, if you're using the right tools. Specifically, GradCAS™, Liaison's Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for graduate programs, allows each graduate program at your college or university to easily:

- Configure required parts of the application to their needs.
- Integrate with specific testing services.
- Track supplemental credentials and requirements.
- Schedule applicant interviews.
- Develop their own decision-making workflows.
- Manage their specific admissions requirements.

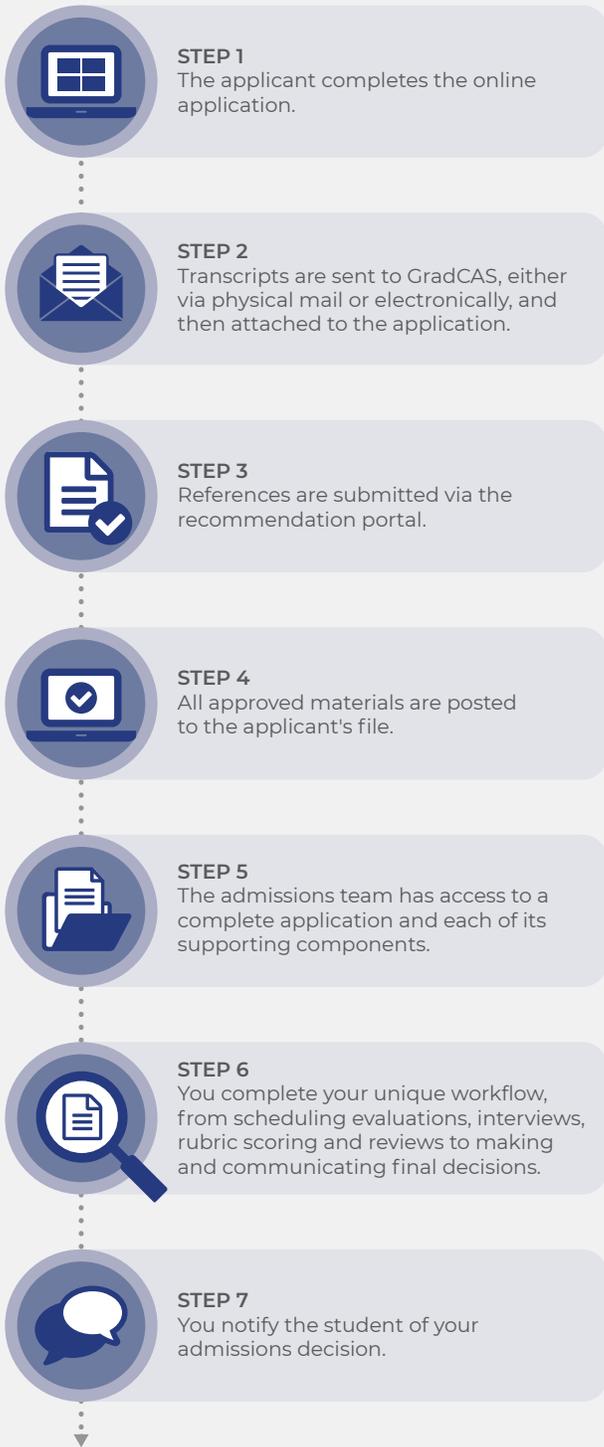
At Samford University, Dr. Marian Carter, assistant dean of enrollment management and student services, spent time working with chairs to develop an application and review process for each of her programs. With a CAS, scoring rubrics can be created to support a program's unique requirements and student applications can be accessed online. "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," she said. Dr. Carter said faculty were delighted with the centralized service, especially those who were new to holistic review.

Dr. Julie Masterson, associate provost and dean of the Graduate College at Missouri State University, said the school needed a new graduate admissions tool for a variety of reasons. In addition to delivering a better user experience and improving access to critical data about applicants, adopting a new CAS provided an opportunity to reexamine admissions processes to ensure effectiveness. Dr. Masterson said one of the main reasons she chose GradCAS was the ability to configure applications for individual programs. "I absolutely had to have something that worked for a wide range of programs. For example, our master's in music needs students to upload or link to a YouTube video of them conducting an orchestra or sharing something they've written, which is very different from the experimental psychology program that wants to know what statistical programs students have used and what leadership qualities they have. Finding something that could accommodate that was really important to me."

The GradCAS Application Process in 7 Steps



Reason 2

You'll be able to spend far more time evaluating applicants.

A recent Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) survey of 625 institutions found that U.S. graduate programs received approximately 2.2 million applications for admission for study beginning in Fall 2016. With acceptance rates averaging about 22.2% for doctoral applicants and 48.7% for master's and other programs, that's a lot of applications to review.⁷

Liaison's integrated applicant services mean you can leave administrative tasks like transcript authentication, application completion verification and GPA calculation to GradCAS. We'll also take care of coursework entry and test score evaluation. Reducing the administrative workload means your staff is free to focus on more strategic admissions work and to work on building relationships with applicants. Getting to know individual students better and understanding their motivations and goals can help you better assess potential fit.

With GradCAS, you can quickly determine which applications are complete and which require additional components, then send automated notifications to applicants, saving your admissions team time while moving students through the pipeline. You can also easily capture the data necessary for holistic review, allowing you to evaluate students across a broad range of variables. Reviewers can evaluate applications online, whenever and wherever it's convenient. Multiple reviewers can access applications simultaneously, reducing bottlenecks and speeding time to decision. Matt Cipriano, associate director of enrollment and education operations at Weill Cornell Medicine, reported that implementing Liaison's CAS solution offered significant time savings for his school: "The results are impressive since implementing Liaison's CAS solution. Our applicant pool has risen by 12% — due in part to our new application — our incomplete applicant pool is less than 1% and our application review time has reduced from 8 days to 1-2 days."

Dina Batlivala, director of marketing and admissions for Rush University's College of Health Sciences, explained that having a CAS in place helps identify qualified applicants easily. "Each program has minimum requirements that are rarely malleable; they're set for students to be successful in each program. We're able to gauge quickly who meets the minimums right off the bat and see how the quality is trending," she said.

Reason 3

You can bring data from all of your programs together into a single reporting solution to get a global view of your graduate admissions performance.

A recent CGS study found that academic units were responsible for admissions for 75% of master's programs and 78% of doctoral programs.⁵ With decentralized admissions, big picture reporting can pose a challenge. Institutions looking to track graduate admissions and enrollment trends across the entire college or university often struggle to bring data from disparate sources into a single location to evaluate overall progress.

In addition, the 2016 Campus Computing Survey revealed “analytic angst” across American higher education. Analytics performance has fallen short of campus needs and anticipated benefits, with less than one-fifth of survey respondents reporting that recent campus investments in analytics have proven “very effective.” Kenneth C. Green, founding director of the Campus Computing Project, said, “The campus angst with analytics should not be surprising. As with so many new technologies in the consumer, corporate and campus sectors, the actual, implied and inferred promises often fall short of initial performance.”²

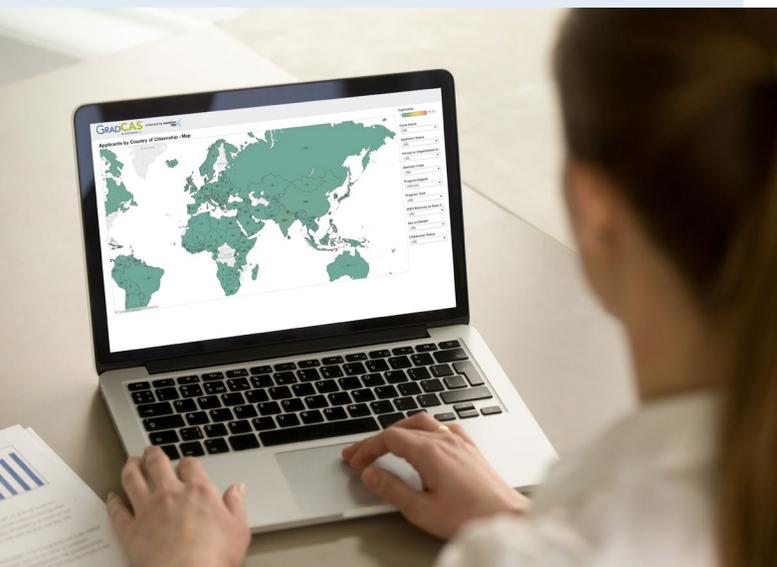
Taking the angst out of analytics is possible. GradCAS provides easy and intuitive reporting that offers a window to your graduate programs' enrollment management performance across the board. Developed specifically for managing complex application processes, GradCAS provides a single reporting platform and visual analytics tools that delivers graduate admissions — and institutional leaders — the information you need by program, by school and across the institution.

Information that previously required going to multiple colleagues and pulling from multiple solutions is now available in a unified view. GradCAS has common data standards that allow for comprehensive and consistent reporting across graduate schools and programs:

- Its analytics tools forecast and model enrollment trends for current and future applicant cycles.
- Executive dashboards provide strategic insight into performance at all levels of the institution, facilitating strategic planning. With GradCAS, you'll know where you're growing, where you're shrinking and why so you can make data-driven investments and 5-year plans.

Whether you're looking for data on how overall graduate inquiries, applications and acceptance are trending, evaluating growth across multiple programs or examining progress toward diversity goals, GradCAS provides easy access to the information you need. Bring simplicity and consistency to all of your graduate program data, regardless of where it resides, with this service.

At Oregon Health & Science University, the University Registrar's Office was increasingly requesting reports on specific student populations, such as underrepresented groups or the economically disadvantaged — but that data wasn't all housed in one service. The admissions staff realized that implementing a CAS would allow the Registrar's Office to pull data from one place, resolving reporting nightmares and lessening the burden on Institutional Research (IR). Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs Richard Goranflo, EdD, said the choice to go with a CAS was natural. After rolling out the service, “folks are really happy with it,” Goranflo said. Faculty, staff and applicants have all had a great experience using a CAS.





Reason 4

You want to provide the optimal applicant experience.

According to Higher Education Marketing, the lead time for graduate student recruitment is typically quite long: “Students may spend months, or even years, researching postgraduate opportunities.”⁶ So, once students contact your school to request information or apply, it’s important to make a great impression.

Help prospective students understand the application process and the characteristics of a good candidate for your program. Many students — particularly first-generation college students — don’t know how to begin to think about graduate study, according to an Inside Higher Ed report.⁶ While the report focused on how undergraduate faculty can support students in researching graduate schools, the advice applies to graduate program staff as well: “Perhaps the most important thing we can do... is to demystify graduate study for all our students, so the people who don’t know much about it can feel free to ask questions... Put yourself in your students’ shoes: If you were a junior and had never thought about graduate school, what would you need to be told? What mistakes might you make?”

Think about the types of experiences today’s students expect: the ability to save an application in progress, then return to complete it another time. Real-time status updates and change

notifications. Access to information via their mobile devices. You need to make the process as seamless and user-friendly as possible.

GradCAS provides an exceptional, intuitive and highly responsive application experience for your prospective students. Applicants are guided through the application process with visual cues about their progress, next steps and deadlines — and they can manage their applications from any device, 24/7. They also receive real-time updates and reminders that keep them aware of their status. Liaison acts as an extension of your staff, providing technical support and responding to any questions about the application, such as whether materials have been received or inquiries on progress. With support available via phone or email, we ensure your applicants get the answers they need, when they need them.

Timothy Brunold, dean of admission for the University of Southern California, said, “A CAS helps deliver an excellent applicant experience while allowing each program to maintain its unique brand identity and application requirements. Best of all, with a CAS, our programs can be more self-sufficient when customizing their applications and review process.”

Streamline your applicant experience and achieve valuable efficiencies at the same time.

What if you could:

- Gain institution-wide insight into admissions performance and trends?
- Save time evaluating applicants?
- Consolidate your data?
- Provide a better applicant experience?

You can! It's possible to gain a unified view of enrollment efforts across your institution while supporting the unique recruiting and admissions needs of your graduate schools and programs. The way to streamline building a better class? Join the GradCAS community — it's available at no cost to your programs.

Not only will becoming a member of the community for graduate programs give you an opportunity to share your own best practices and collaborate with participating institutions, but you'll have access to longitudinal data and common standards that facilitate workforce projection, future trends and data-driven recruitment strategies. Extend your reach to a broader applicant pool today with GradCAS.

[Learn more at gradcas.org](https://gradcas.org)

About Liaison

For more than two decades, Liaison has streamlined the process by which higher education institutions manage their application processes and market their programs to prospective students. More than 31,000 programs on over 1,000 campuses nationwide reach prospective students, minimize administrative tasks and create exceptional experiences for applicants across the full enrollment cycle — from first interest to first day on campus — through our admissions management and enrollment marketing solutions. Across our Centralized Application Services (CASs™), we process over 2,500,000 applications per year.

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