



Key Lessons From the 2020 Pandemic:

Overcoming Future Enrollment
Management Global Crises

Table of Contents

Lesson 1: You need to get creative	5
Q The New May 1: Yield and retention in 2020	6
Q COVID-19 adds to challenges already facing grad program enrollments	7
Lesson 2: Moving online increases efficiencies	8
Q What's next for higher education?	9
Lesson 3: Strategic partnerships can ensure business continuity	10
Q How enrollment can benefit from the cloud	11
Lesson 4: You're stronger as a member of a community	12
Q Understanding the "new normal" for graduate school admissions	13
Lesson 5: Constant change requires meaningful communication	14
Q Enrollment in the time of Coronavirus: Managing global crises on your campus	15
Q The 3 Cs of post-pandemic engineering admissions	15



Nobody knows when the COVID-19 pandemic will end, but it won't last forever. However, the lessons it has taught the higher education community about overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles will remain relevant for years to come.

Here's what admissions leaders across the country have already learned. →

1:

You need to get creative

Getting the attention of potential applicants was a challenge even before the pandemic. Today, with millions of Americans second-guessing their college plans and trying to manage dramatically upended lives, it's more difficult than ever.

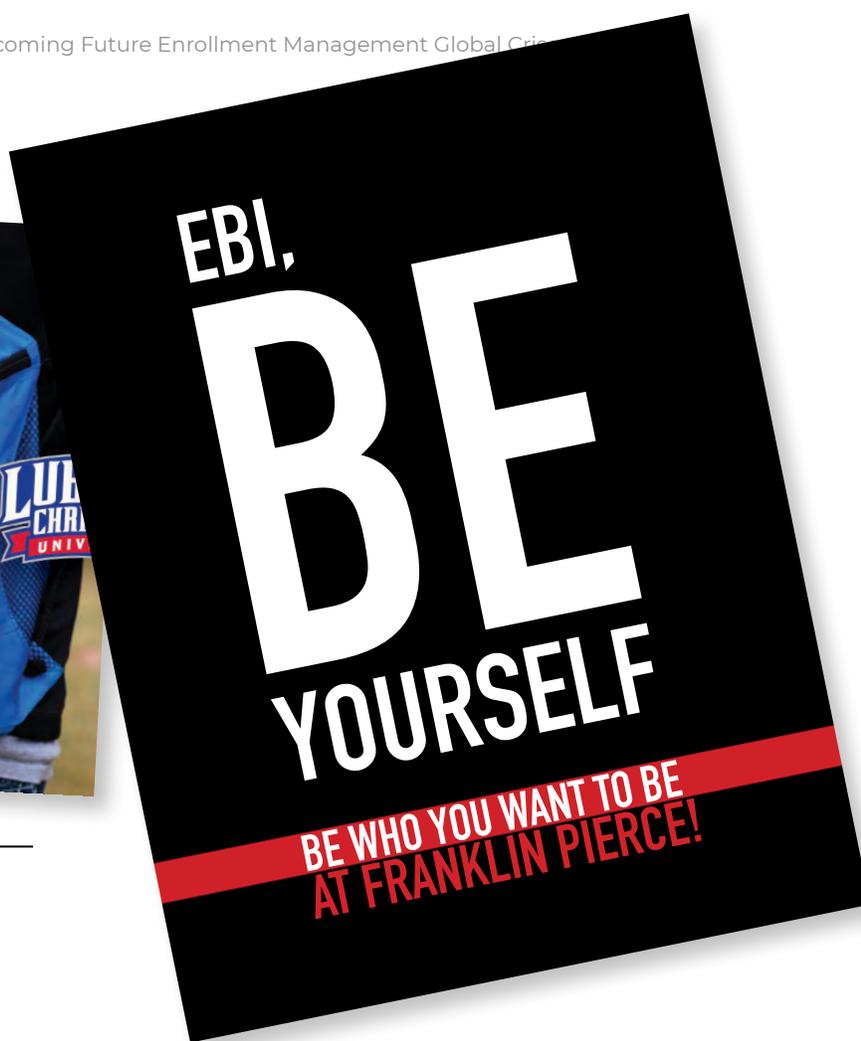
Liaison's Enrollment Marketing Platform (EMP™) makes it easier to engage best-fit students during every step of the application process by using personalized URL (PURL) pages, text messages, creative print marketing and targeted social media and email campaigns to yield better results. Liaison's marketing approach is to make messaging:

- ▶ **RELEVANT AND PERSONAL** – It must speak to the student and what the student is seeking information about. No one wants to sort through a ton of content to find what is meaningful for them. Relevancy goes way beyond just using a student's name; it's about designing communications that are specific to the student, including print pieces that are mailed to the student.
- ▶ **IMMEDIATE** – Students, like all of us who seek information, should not have to wait a week, a day or even minutes to receive responses when they inquire. In today's world, it is all about immediacy and access to information. Colleges have historically been slow to respond to students.
- ▶ **AUTOMATED** – No office has the luxury of having staff who can juggle all the communications that need to go out, and invariably something gets missed. Having all communications automated ensures that students and families receive what they want, when they want it and when they need it, freeing staff to focus on more important tasks.



For example, Kansas State University Polytechnic used EMP to increase the number of new students by 53% and enrolled more students in 12 of its 16 programs.

“We went through a period of time when millennials didn't necessarily respond to print material,” said Dr. Christopher A. Smith, executive director of enrollment management, marketing and financial aid at the University. “But that's changing, especially with younger millennials. So, I wanted to find one strategic partner I could work with throughout the entire 15-month lifecycle of my admissions process. Liaison was the right fit. Using their variable print services really separated us from the rest of the pack.”



NEXT STEP:

Use EMP to communicate more effectively about rapidly changing events.

COVID-19 adds to challenges already facing grad program enrollments

In recent years, graduate schools have faced a variety of significant new challenges, including the fact that potential students now have more non-traditional options for gaining the skills they need in order to thrive in the workforce. Yet the COVID-19 crisis may prove to be the catalyst that forces graduate programs to adapt some of the very strategies that once vexed them and threatened their ability to build better classes. According to Sean Pitzer, associate director of graduate admission at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, "One trait most successful graduate programs share is the ability to be maximally responsive to students' needs. In this environment, that involves offering non-traditional educational pathways, including digital badges and certificates as well as short-term programs, accelerated and online program offerings." He noted that approximately one-third of undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students nationwide are currently enrolled in distance education programs and that 73% of institutions now see alternative credentialing as "an important strategy for our future."

➤ Read the full *S.C. Times* article [here](#).





The new May 1: Yield and retention in 2020

Seeing yield clearly in 2020 became difficult when NACAC changed their code of ethics, and now the COVID-19 has left the vision for fall enrollment more blurred than ever. In Liaison's free on-demand webinar, **"The New May 1: Yield and Retention in 2020,"** two seasoned enrollment professionals share how they are re-creating the vision chart with no precedent, being innovative to impact both yield and retention to secure a solid class for fall.

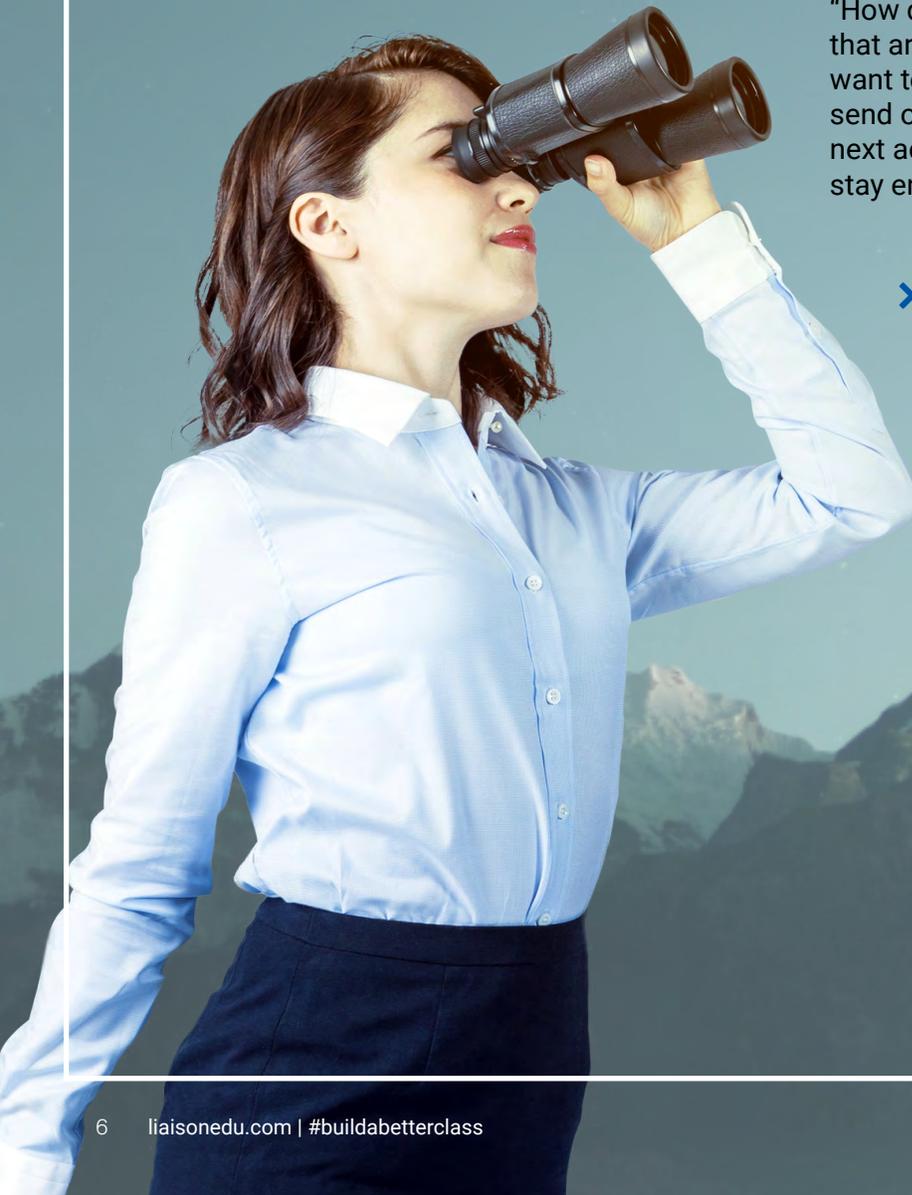
"We really had to collectively come together as a senior leadership team and determine how we were going to address the here and now as well as what

the future is going to look like for our institution," said Dr. Joe Parisi, vice president of enrollment management at Central Methodist University (CMU). "So we made several changes. Then had to challenge all of our employees, faculty, staff and students and to think about a virtual CMU."

Dr. Christopher A. Smith, executive director of enrollment management, marketing and financial aid at Kansas State University Polytechnic, said yield efforts at his institution have succeeded when customization allows his messages to applicants and accepted students to stand out from the pack.

"How do you separate yourself from other universities that are sending out information?" he asked. "We want to make sure that every single piece that we send out has value, is personalized and also has the next actions that they need to be taking so they can stay engaged and stay on track."

➤ Listen in on the rest of the conversation [here](#).

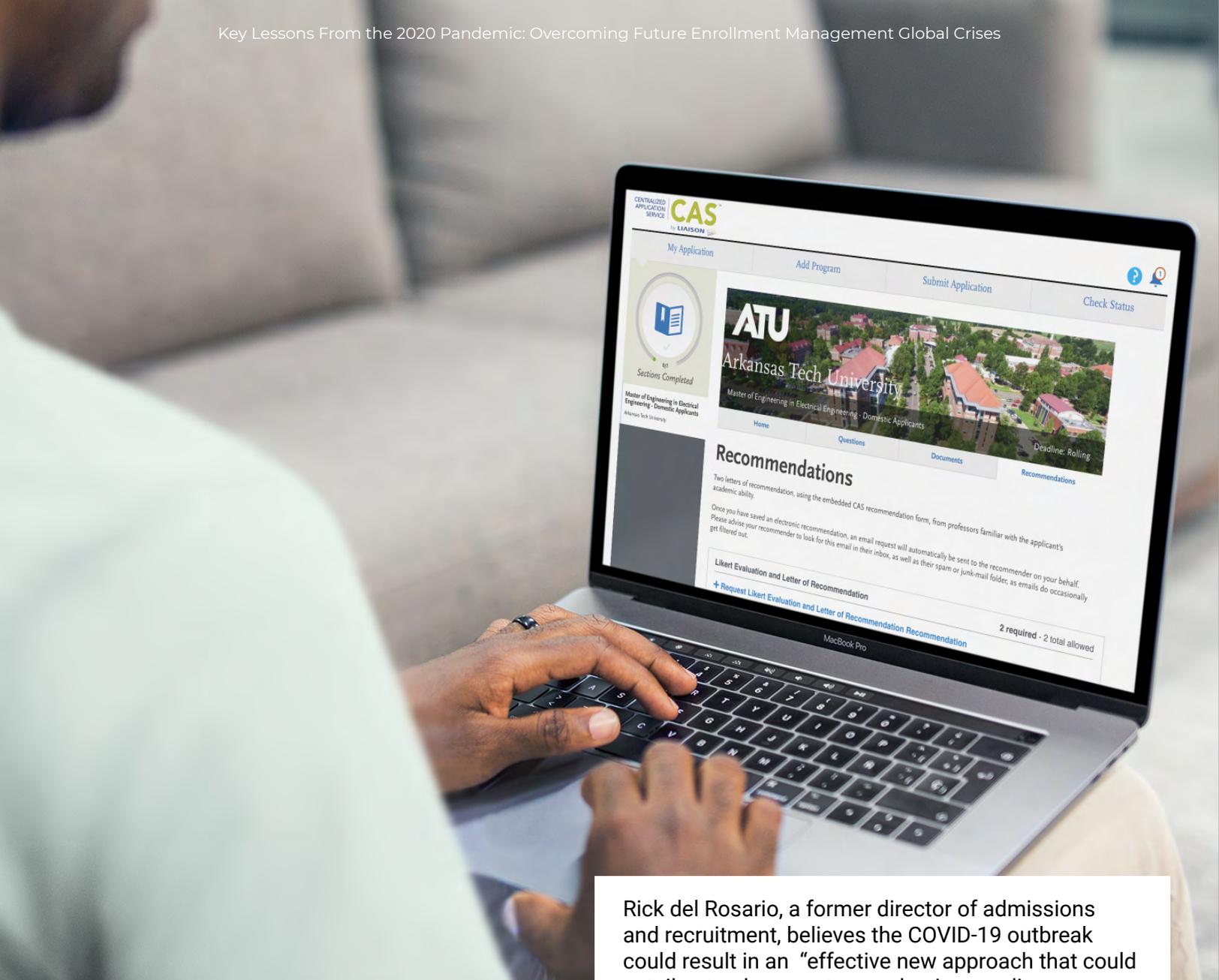




How B-schools will change after the pandemic

Robert Ruiz, a former admissions leader, recently wrote, “In a world constantly in flux, the most important realization business schools can make today is that they should not – and will not – return to a pre-pandemic state of affairs.” His list of “inevitable long-term changes for graduate management education (GME)” begins with a prediction that online learning “will be divided into tiered, variably priced academic portfolios – such as a top tier featuring courses taught by tenured faculty and industry leaders, a middle tier taught by junior faculty and covering a narrower range of subjects and so on.” He also believes: cloud-based admissions and enrollment solutions will continue to become the industry standard even after admissions offices reopen; decreased institutional bureaucracy will lead to quicker, more agile decision-making and; some U.S. programs’ “major markets for international students will substantially decline.” He added: “With large conferences on hold, communities like BusinessCAS will step in with a more intimate, collaborative and robust professional networking experience.”

➤ Read the full Poets & Quants article [here](#).



Rick del Rosario, a former director of admissions and recruitment, believes the COVID-19 outbreak could result in an “effective new approach that could entail not only a greater emphasis on online courses, but also a move toward cloud-based processes in admissions. Admissions and enrollment efforts that prioritize efficiency as well as more sophisticated interaction with applicants can help institutions weather a crisis.”

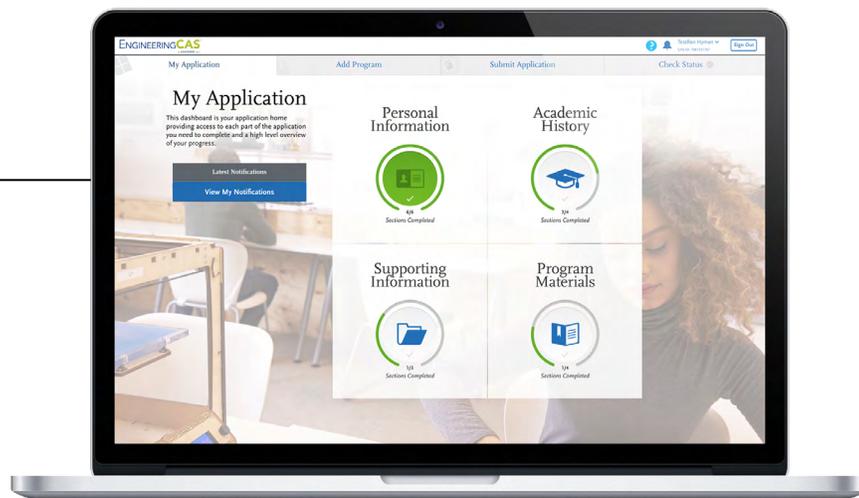
For close to three decades, colleges and universities have used Liaison’s Centralized Application Service (CAS™) to save time and money while growing enrollment and simplifying admissions. With a CAS, which is available to institutions at no cost, Liaison’s clients have experienced up to a 70% reduction in time to decision and roughly a 90% reduction in manual administrative application processing tasks while avoiding the need to add headcount to manage growing application volumes.

2.

Moving online increases efficiencies

NEXT STEP:

Join a CAS community to save time and money while growing enrollment and simplifying admissions – at no cost to your institution.



What's next for higher education?

“Higher education will play an unprecedented role in driving economic growth...”

Former admissions director Michael O'Connor recently wrote that the pandemic will compel institutions to continue selling applicants on the inherent value of a degree while nurturing them through the application process with frequent and thoughtful communication. “The critical thinking skills and well-rounded subject matter knowledge that students acquire on campus will be more essential than ever in a world starved for problem-solving and actionable strategies,” he said. “Higher education will play an unprecedented role in driving economic growth... Another encouraging sign for higher education is that despite the industry’s natural inclination to resist change, the process of getting students in the door has benefited from consistent innovation, and it will continue to advance for as long as the educational technology community commits to supporting the journey. Three (or even two) decades ago, admissions professionals lived in a world ruled by pencil and paper. Today, cloud-based solutions routinely alleviate the steep cost and burden of manual application processing. The surge in remote work will only amplify the appeal and necessity of taking admissions operations fully paperless.”

➤ Read the full *University Business* article [here](#).



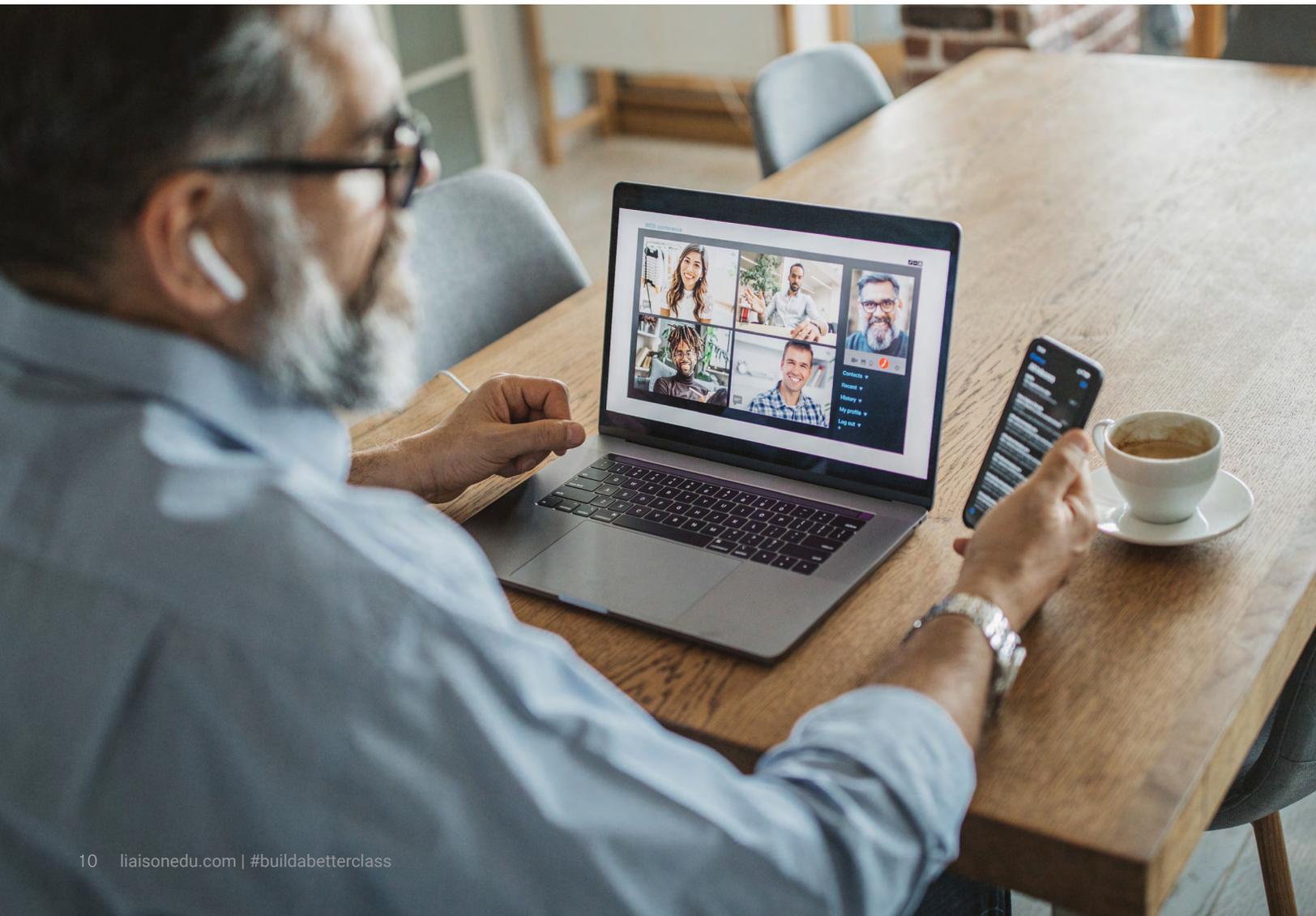
3: Strategic partnerships can ensure business continuity

By processing applications for more hours per day as well as on weekends and holidays (virtually 24/7 during peak volume periods), Liaison helps you overcome staff and time limitations imposed by unforeseen events. This means that when your college joins a CAS, you will see more applications completed sooner in the admissions cycle, allowing for you to make admissions decisions earlier and ultimately to finalize incoming classes in time for your enrollment deadlines.

By allowing Liaison to perform these back-office tasks, your institution will protect itself from

disruptive events and maintain “business as usual” admissions operations even if physical campuses must shut down their operations.

“What happens when staff are unable to receive essential documents (funding or I-20 documents for example) delivered to the admissions office?” del Rosario asked. “Does that prospective student’s application end right there? What does that mean for enrollment numbers and institutional revenue? Institutions can no longer afford delays in an increasingly competitive marketplace where students expect immediate and personalized responses.”





NEXT STEP:

Leverage Liaison's student application processing and support services to maintain "business as usual" admissions operations even if campuses are forced to close.

How enrollment can benefit from the cloud

Rick del Rosario, a former director of admissions and recruitment, believes institutions can no longer afford delays in an increasingly competitive marketplace where students expect immediate and personalized responses. "If the COVID-19 outbreak has taught the higher ed sector anything so far, it is to expect the unexpected for the foreseeable future. While campus operations continue to shut down for the remainder of this semester, institutions need to stay ahead of the curve by assuming that this public health crisis will also threaten next year's enrollment numbers. This is not pessimism; it is realism and practicality."

➤ Read the full *University Business* article [here](#).



4: You're stronger as a member of a community

From its earliest days, the pandemic inspired higher-ed leaders to stop thinking of each other as competitors and instead seek out opportunities to share best practices and learn from those facing similar obstacles. Joining a CAS means you'll be participating in a community of like-minded admissions professionals who are working toward goals that are similar to yours and facing challenges similar to those you face. CAS members regularly convene to share their best practices at in-person and digital networking events, such as Liaison's popular live and on-demand webinars.

Being part of a CAS community also increases your program's visibility to potential applicants.

"Because CAS put us on a platform with other universities, we were initially concerned that we might lose students who could see a list of other universities. But it actually works to our advantage," said Robbie Melton, Ph.D., dean of the graduate school at Tennessee State University. "We found that students we had not tapped into were logging on, seeing our programs at Tennessee State University and then clicking on us. And we picked up new students."

NEXT STEP:

Bookmark Liaison's on-demand [webinar library](#) so you can learn from colleagues who are facing the same obstacles you are and overcoming them with Liaison's solutions and services.





Understanding the “*new normal*” for graduate school admissions

For obvious reasons, everyone in the world of graduate-level higher education is talking about the “new normal” of recruiting and admissions and what it means for the future of their programs and institutions. Yet nothing really seems normal yet.

However, one thing has become clear:

Collaborating with your peers at other institutions is the best way to stay up to date on new ideas and best practices related to recruiting, admitting and retaining the students you want at your school.

See What Comes Next

With that in mind, Liaison is now offering a free on-demand webinar – **Yield, Retention and Budget: The New “Normal” for Graduate Schools** – featuring leaders from public and private institutions answering questions and offering insights into how their graduate schools are making the most of the resources they have while waiting for what comes next.

This session features **Julie Masterson**, Ph.D. (Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate College, Missouri State University), **Alicia Mosley Austin**, Ph.D. (Assistant Dean, Graduate Recruitment and Diversity Initiatives, The University of Rhode Island) and **Olivia Nash** (Assistant Dean, Enrollment and Student Services, University of the Pacific).

The fall semester is fast approaching.

To learn how your peers are preparing for the challenges and opportunities it will bring, watch Liaison’s free on-demand webinar, “Yield, Retention and Budget: The New “Normal” for Graduate Schools”. It’s available now [here](#).

Together, they address some of the most crucial priorities facing graduate schools and their admissions leaders today, including how they’re now:

- ✔ Communicating with current students.
- ✔ Engaging accepted students.
- ✔ Reaching out to prospective students.
- ✔ Looking ahead and anticipating changes.
- ✔ Identifying solutions to budget and revenue concerns.
- ✔ Keeping connected with staff working remotely.
- ✔ Supporting faculty and students.
- ✔ Working with Liaison to maintain business continuity and keep their goals within reach.
- ✔ Keeping students moving through the enrollment funnel.

“We know that in times of recession, a lot of graduate programs do well, because people come back in an effort not to be the one who is furloughed next time, or to be able to advance in their career,” Masterson said. “We also know that, barring some miracle, our international student enrollment will be down significantly... There’s just so much right now that’s unknown.”

“One great thing about going remote is a lot of our tools were actually web-based tools already,” Nash said. “So, by using WebAdMIT™ [the robust administrative backend of Liaison’s Centralized Application Service], it was really easy for us to translate to a remote workspace.”

5:



Constant change requires meaningful communication

There are still far more questions than answers about what a post-pandemic “new normal” might look like for admissions offices. Yet students and their families still want you to address their most important concerns about going to college, even if you don’t have a clear picture of the future yet. You simply can’t afford to keep them in the dark.

“Communicating to the students, faculty and staff is key,” said Toby McChesney, Ph.D., senior assistant dean of graduate business programs at Santa Clara University’s Leavey School of Business and chair of Liaison’s BusinessCAS™ Advisory Board. “Our students are feeling anxiety, just as much as we are.”

“All of our predictive capability has been based on historical performance,” said Erin K. O’Brien, Ph.D., assistant dean and chief enrollment marketing officer at University at Buffalo’s School of Management. “But we don’t have any precedent for what’s happening right now. Since we’re blind to what our yield percentages might be, I think the only thing we can do is to engage in one-on-one relationships with as many students as possible.”

Liaison’s CAS and EMP allow you to do that easily, regardless of the challenges your institution is facing.

“There is nobody else doing what Liaison is doing right now in terms of their partnerships and marketing pieces,” said Dr. Smith. “Working with Liaison is like having a combined enrollment and marketing department.”

NEXT STEP:

Schedule a call with Liaison today to learn how your school can build more meaningful — and more productive — relationships with prospects and applicants during every step of the process. ■



Enrollment in the time of Coronavirus: Managing global crises on your campus



On April 16, Liaison hosted a webinar forum – **“Enrollment in the Time of Coronavirus: Managing Global Crises on Your Campus”** – in which admissions leaders from three top business schools shared ideas and answered questions about how recruitment has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among other topics, they discussed yield predictions, international enrollment, maintaining business continuity and what it’s like to run an admissions office remotely.

JUGGLING PRIORITIES

“The challenge is two-fold,” said Algerian Hart, Ph.D., associate dean of Missouri State University’s Graduate College and professor of kinesiology. “On one hand, you’re dealing with the pandemic. On the other hand, you’re trying to maintain communications and maintain what a collegiate environment and the matriculation experience look like. Ultimately, we’re trying to find some level of balance.”

“Communicating to the students, faculty and staff is key,” said Toby McChesney, Ph.D., senior assistant dean of graduate business programs at Santa Clara University’s Leavey School of Business and chair of Liaison’s BusinessCAS™ Advisory Board. “Our students are feeling anxiety, just as much as we are.”

During the webinar, panelists also talk about how they’re planning for a future clouded by uncertainty.

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➤ To hear the entire conversation, listen to **“Enrollment in the Time of Coronavirus: Managing Global Crises on Your Campus”** [here](#).

Continuity, communication, community



The 3 Cs of post-pandemic engineering admissions

Engineering programs face unprecedented challenges in 2020 as public health, immigration and economic factors converge in a perfect storm for higher education. Where will your next class come from, and how will you reach prospective students?

During Liaison’s free on-demand webinar, “The 3 Cs of Post-Pandemic Engineering Admissions,” presenters identify and explain the “3 Cs” of post-pandemic engineering admissions (Continuity, Communication, Community) to help your program weather the current storm – and thrive in the years to come.

Speakers include Tandilyn Morrel (Director, Graduate Programs, Texas A&M University Engineering) and David T. Poole (Director, Admissions, University of Miami College of Engineering).

➤ You can watch **“The 3 Cs of Post-Pandemic Engineering Admissions”** [here](#).

