

# Converting Inquiries to Applicants

## Faulkner University Increases Its Applicant Pool, Improves Enrollment

case study

Faulkner University, a private Christian university in Montgomery, Alabama, changed its approach to converting inquiries into applicants between the 2013 and 2014 enrollment cycles, experiencing a 28% increase in qualified applicants in the course of one year. In this case study we'll look at how better targeting, more personalized communications, an easy-to-complete electronic application, and personal follow-up helped Faulkner reach its goals.

**28%**  
INCREASE

1,920

2014 applicants

1,529

2013 applicants



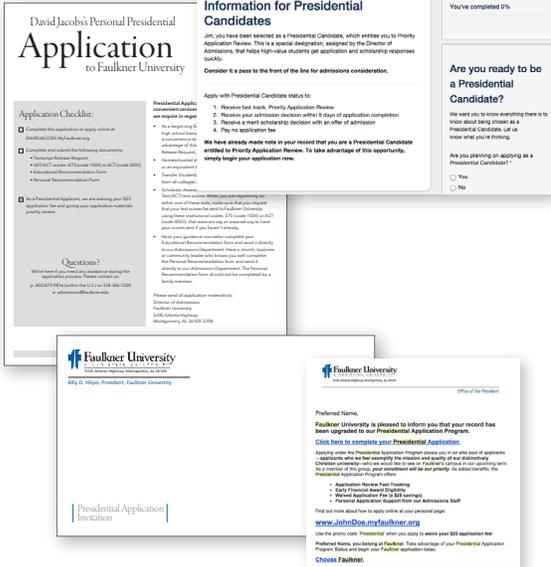
### THE 2013 CAMPAIGN

In the 2013 enrollment cycle, students inquiring about Faulkner through an online form that captured personal data received a single personalized postcard during Faulkner's conversion campaign, which the school launched in the late fall. This postcard's call to action asked students to complete their application materials—and the school offered a fee waiver as an incentive. This campaign produced 1529 qualified applicants for the 2013 enrollment term.

### THE 2014 CAMPAIGN

In 2014, Faulkner introduced a number of improvements to its 2013 approach.

- A Branded Presidential Campaign**  
 In 2014, all campaign materials were rebranded as a "Presidential Application" in order to spark interest and engagement. Rebranded letters, emails, and the application itself targeted preferred application candidates in the fall. This campaign was launched again in the spring to draw late applicants.
- A Personalized Letter from the President**  
 Replacing the postcard with a more formal—and personalized—letter from the Office of the President made more of an impact on students receiving the letter—in part because admissions was able to include more student-specific information than the postcard had allowed.
- A Pre-Populated, Savable Application**  
 The electronic application for 2014 applicants featured pre-populated information drawn from the database record, reducing the amount of time a student needed to complete and submit the application. And since the application could be saved, students could return at any time to complete applications.



- **Regional Incentive Variables**  
Faulkner identified which cohorts to target for incentives and delivered specialized offers to them.
- **Better Followup on Incomplete Applications**  
By looking at which students started, but did not finish, the savable application, admission reps were able to follow up, either by phone or email, to provide guidance for completion.

**KEY FINDINGS:**

- Branding the application process as 2014’s “Presidential Application” allowed for more cohesion between different marketing channels.
- Inclusion of technologies like pre-populated online applications, savable forms, and automated followup made the application process transparent and trackable.
- Better targeting of specific cohorts—including students who had not yet completed applications, students who were eligible for merit- or location-based awards, and students who had interacted with the college before the campaign began—helped Faulkner deliver the right messages at the right time to the right students—spurring greater application activity.
- The campaign ran twice during the year (in the fall and in the spring) with the fall producing the largest volume of applicants and the spring producing the greatest matriculation rate of applied students per month.
- Roughly 20% of students who went on to matriculate applied after May 1. Rates of conversion increased steadily as the enrollment cycle progressed from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014; in the spring and summer of 2014, applicant conversion rates averaged 50%, up from 17% earlier in the cycle. Late-cycle campaigns can yield high matriculation rates, even if they only target a small pool of students.

Careful improvements to every element in the marketing mix helped increase the number of qualified applications to Faulkner. The university’s strategy also demonstrates that end-of-year ‘pinch’ campaigns can be highly effective, particularly when messaging is aligned with ease of application and financial aid availability.

