

Crafting Smart Graduate Enrollment Goals by Harnessing Data

Today's Presenter



Todd Heilman

Senior Consultant and Principal

EAB Adult Learner Recruitment

THeilman@eab.com



- 1 A Look at the Enrollment Landscape
- 2 Setting Graduate Enrollment Goals
- 3 Putting it All Together



A Look at the Enrollment Landscape

A Dynamic Market Makes Goal-Setting Even More Important

SECTION

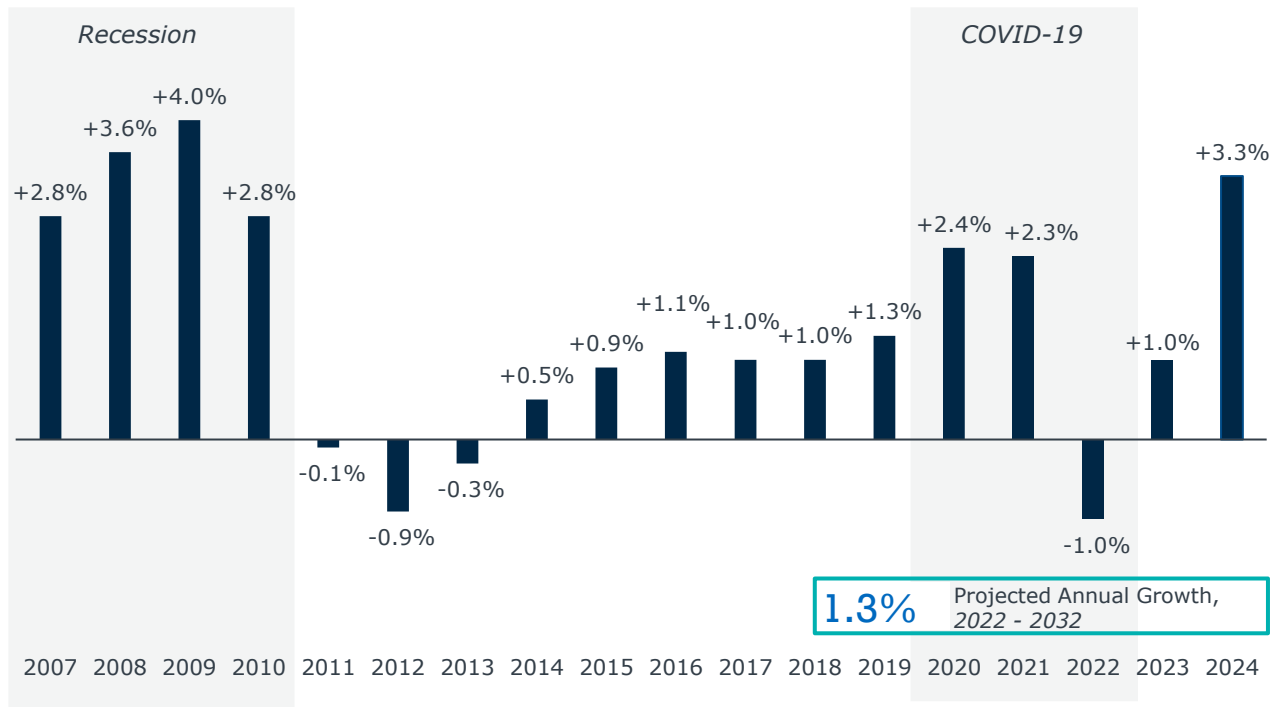
1

Grad Enrollment Growth Returning to Normal



Pandemic-Fueled Growth & Hangover Shorter, Weaker Than Great Recession

Year on Year Growth of Total Graduate Enrollments – All 4-Year Institutions

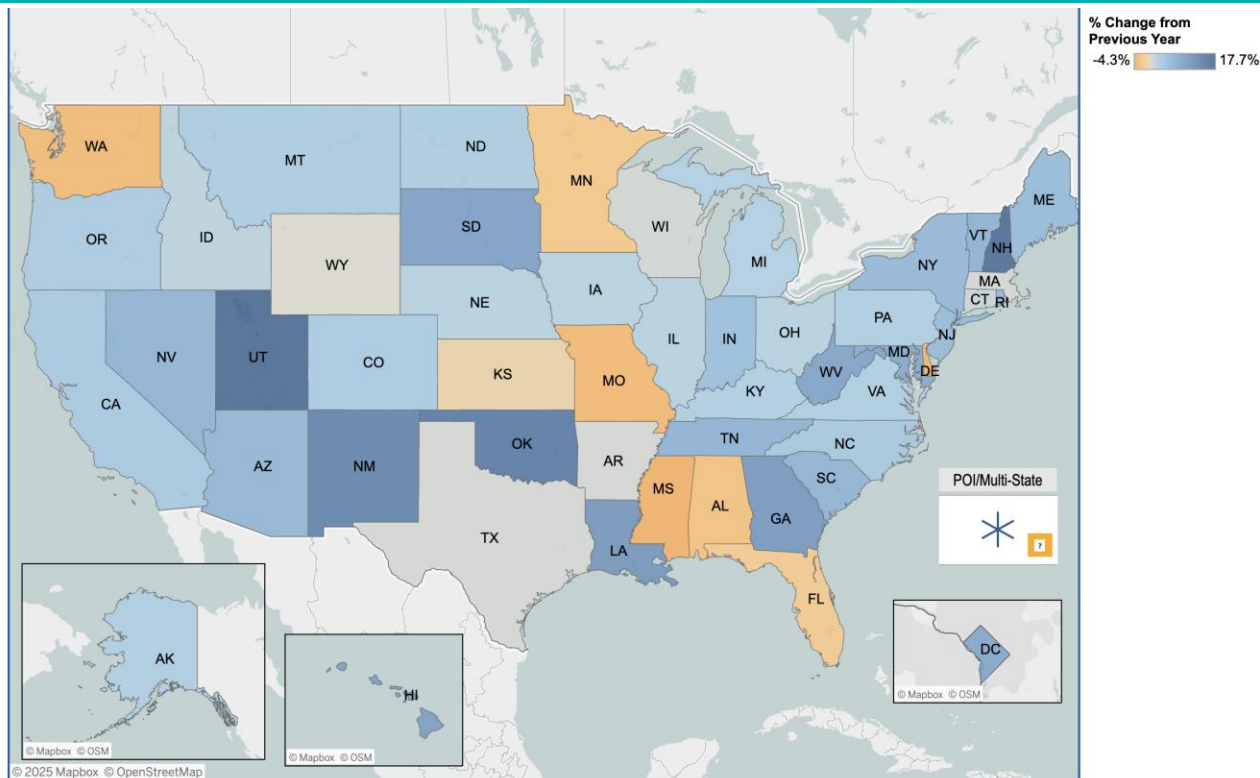


1) National Student Clearinghouse..

Fall 2024 Graduate Enrollment Changes by State



6



Fall 2024 National Total Graduate Enrollment



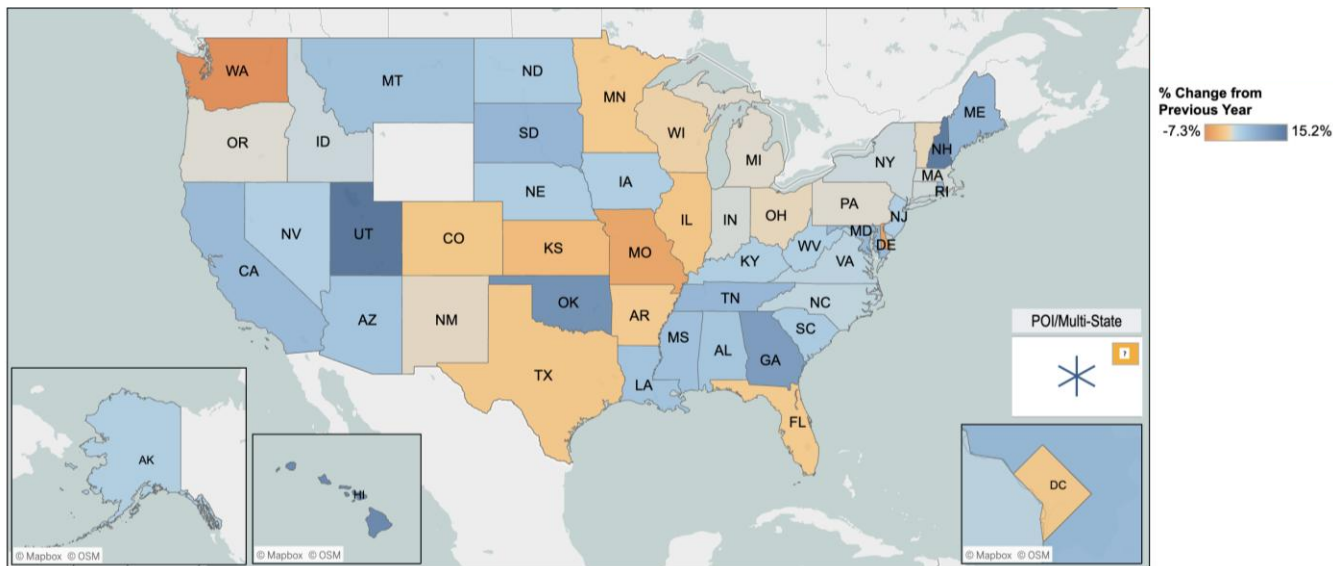
Top 20 Major Field Families

	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Enrollment	% Change from Previous Y.	Enrollment	% Change from Previous Y.	Enrollment	% Change from Previous Y.	Enrollment	% Change from Previous Y.	Enrollment	% Change from Previous Y.	Enrollment	% Change from Previous Y.
Health Professions a...	681,347		710,715	4.3%	719,337	1.2%	709,193	-1.4%	708,899	0.0%	745,998	5.2%
Business, Manageme...	460,350		481,528	4.6%	480,452	-0.2%	455,827	-5.1%	446,803	-2.0%	456,201	2.1%
Education	445,503		481,454	3.6%	452,536	-1.9%	428,893	-5.2%	420,752	-1.9%	428,075	1.7%
Computer and Inform...	136,285		139,077	2.0%	161,839	16.4%	192,058	18.7%	217,815	13.4%	220,967	1.4%
Engineering	163,237		157,536	-3.5%	166,932	6.0%	175,050	4.9%	175,150	0.1%	180,196	2.9%
Psychology	127,892		139,481	9.1%	147,209	5.5%	147,536	0.2%	146,996	-0.4%	148,712	1.2%
Legal Professions an...	130,720		130,749	0.0%	138,755	6.1%	135,867	-2.1%	138,845	0.7%	137,147	0.2%
Public Administration ...	126,324		129,359	2.4%	132,160	2.2%	126,092	-4.6%	121,906	-3.3%	127,446	4.5%
Biological and Biome...	91,221		94,784	3.9%	99,604	5.1%	102,440	2.8%	105,605	3.1%	110,395	4.5%
Multi/Interdisciplinary ...	38,402		38,139	4.8%	44,856	17.6%	58,790	31.1%	75,094	27.7%	88,783	18.2%
Social Sciences	60,811		60,992	0.3%	61,749	1.2%	60,507	-2.0%	58,676	-3.0%	58,343	-0.6%
Physical Sciences	53,797		53,298	-0.9%	54,456	2.2%	54,341	-0.2%	54,742	0.7%	56,044	2.4%
Visual and Performin...	50,038		48,316	-3.4%	49,016	1.4%	47,949	-2.2%	46,409	-3.2%	46,144	-0.6%
Theology and Religio...	45,656		45,598	-0.1%	44,134	-3.2%	43,953	-0.4%	45,757	4.1%	46,962	2.6%
Mathematics and Stat...	35,847		35,117	-2.0%	36,646	4.4%	36,652	0.0%	36,528	-0.3%	36,714	0.5%
Agriculture, Agricultur...	29,037		28,915	-0.4%	29,694	2.7%	28,584	-3.7%	29,339	2.6%	32,195	9.7%
Communication, Jour...	26,901		28,857	7.3%	30,311	5.0%	28,830	-4.9%	27,485	-4.7%	27,646	0.6%
Security and Protecti...	29,440		31,722	7.8%	31,395	-1.0%	28,589	-8.9%	27,025	-5.5%	28,108	4.0%
English Language an...	29,189		29,048	-0.5%	29,415	1.3%	27,157	-7.7%	25,800	-5.0%	25,444	-1.4%
Engineering Technol...	15,707		16,592	5.6%	17,849	7.6%	20,455	14.6%	21,778	6.5%	21,714	-0.3%

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center,
<https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates/>

Spring 2025 Graduate Enrollment Changes by State

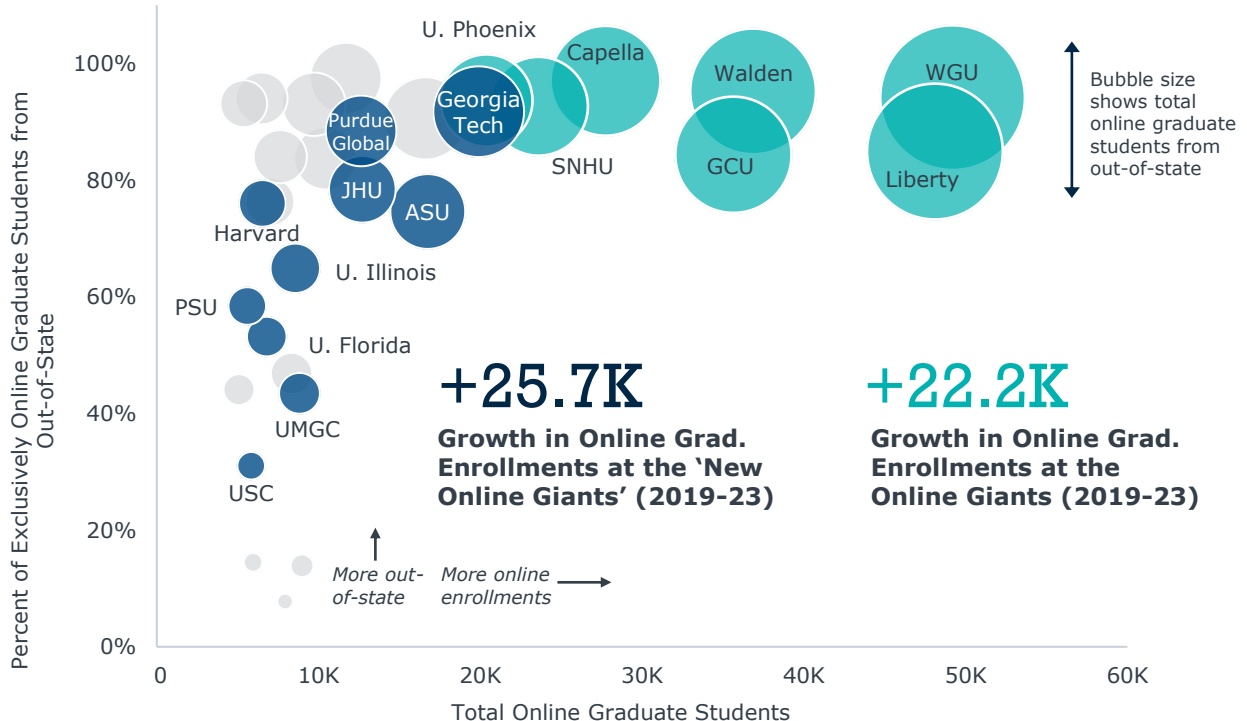
8



Now: The Largest Online Institutions

9

Institutions With More Than 5,000 Exclusively Online¹ Graduate Enrollments, Fall 2023
Total Exclusively Online Graduate Enrollments and Percent From Out-of-State



1) Recorded by IPEDS as exclusively distance enrollments.

Higher Ed Leaders Are Focusing on Graduate Enrollment

EAB survey research, 2022

100%

of presidents and provosts said
**growing graduate
enrollment is a priority**

47%

of graduate leaders said their
institutions increasingly **rely on
graduate enrollment** to offset
undergraduate shortfalls

Big Goals, but with Comparatively Small Budgets



Average Annual Enrollment Management Budgets

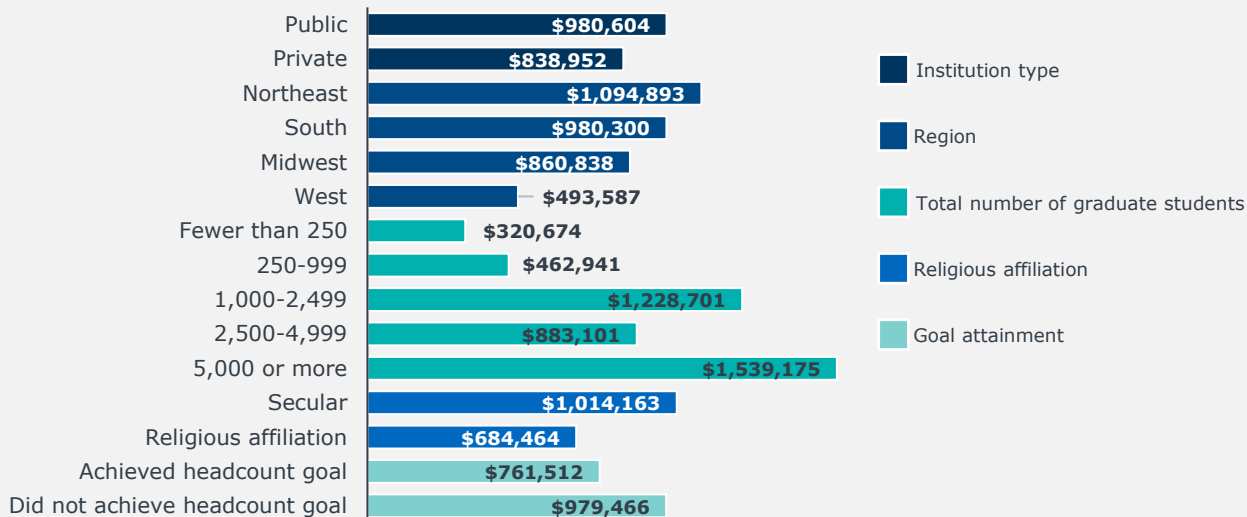
\$4.37M

Undergraduate

\$912K

Graduate and Online

Grad and Online Enrollment Budgets by Institutional Characteristics



It's More Important than Ever to Have Clear Goals

But Setting Realistic Goals is Challenging

EAB's 2022 Survey of Presidents, Provosts, and VP EMs

41%

Identified “**setting realistic enrollment goals**” as the top operational challenge facing their graduate programs

51%

Said **enrollment goals** for their graduate and adult-serving programs have **increased** since the start of the pandemic

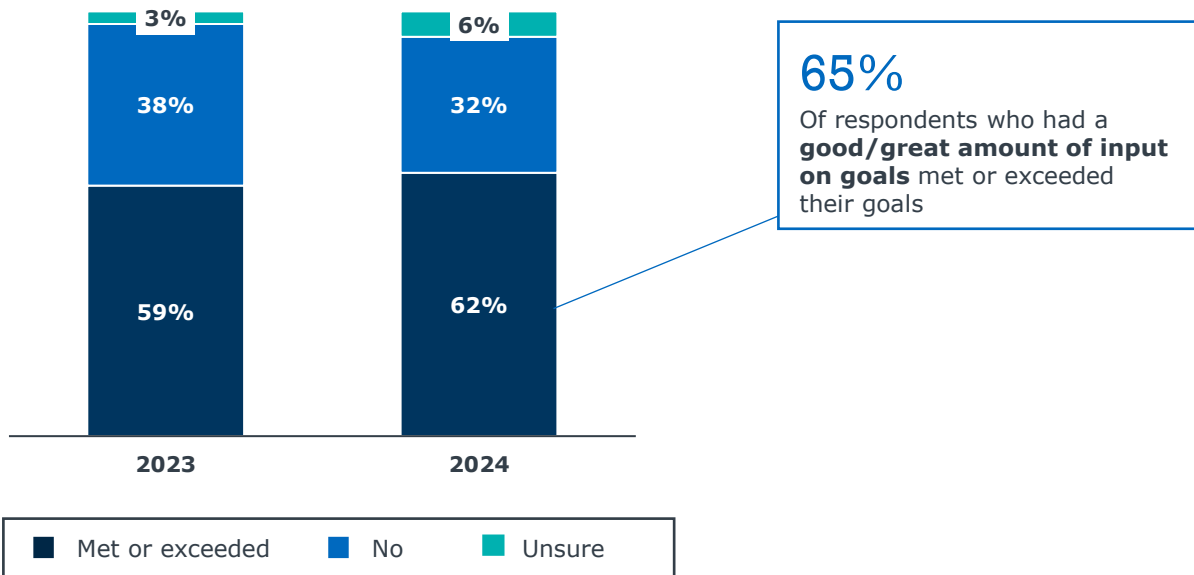
A Third of Grad Programs Miss Enrollment Goals



EAB and NAGAP's 2024 Survey

"Did you meet your enrollment goals?"

Reponses from 300+ graduate enrollment leaders



And Setting Goals Can Be Especially Complex



Lack of Consensus

Decentralization can make it difficult to arrive at clear, widely-accepted graduate enrollment goals



Faculty Influence

Faculty may have concerns about expanding class sizes



Program and Student Variety

Differences in NTR generated from each student and program make it difficult to set revenue goals



Data Limitations

Data on admissions, enrollment, and retention available at the undergraduate level can be hard to come by for graduate programs

How can we help?

I'd like to speak to an EAB expert about...

- 1 Identifying online, graduate, or adult education **programs to launch or refresh**
- 2 **Optimizing** graduate, online, or adult education **programs for growth**
- 3 **Generating leads** for graduate and online programs
- 4 Developing **marketing campaigns** to reach and recruit graduate and online students



Setting Graduate Enrollment Goals

SECTION

2

Key Inputs to Setting Enrollment Goals

To Set Graduate Enrollment Goals, We Must First Identify...



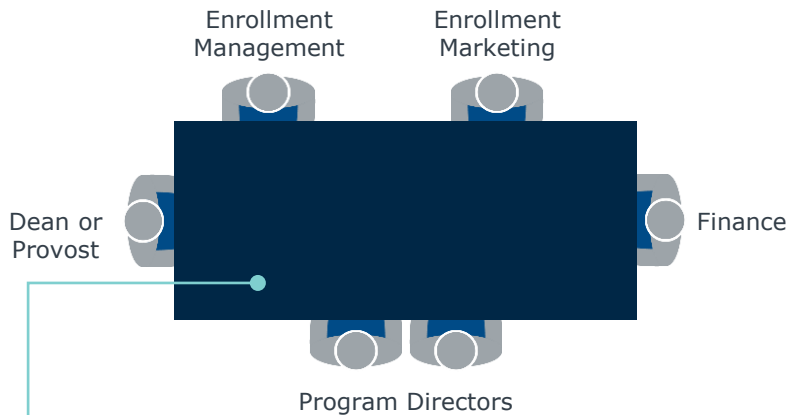
Key decision-makers



The data points that should
inform our goals

Ensure All the Right Stakeholders Are At the Table

Your Enrollment Management “Mission Control” Team



Meeting Objective	Frequency	Attendees
Enrollment goal planning	Align with budget planning	All
Enrollment goal progress updates	Quarterly	All
Enrollment funnel management	Bi-weekly	Enrollment Marketing, Enrollment Management, Program Directors (as needed)

Assess Current and Historical Enrollment



Prioritize NTR, Not Headcount, When Setting Graduate Enrollment Goals

Variety of graduate programs offered and students served necessitates that university leaders set graduate goals in terms of revenue

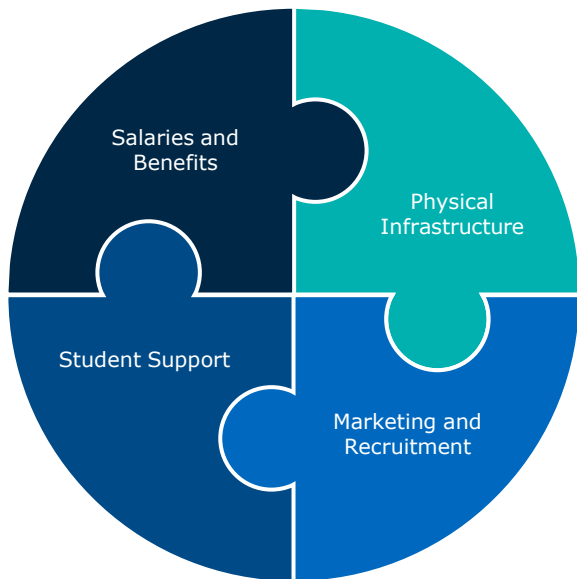
Factors to Consider When Calculating Net Tuition Revenue

Total annual tuition and fees	• Enrollment • Student credit hours • Tuition rate(s) • Fees • Retention rate
Discounts	• Scholarships • Graduate and teaching assistantships • Grants • Corporate partner

88%

of surveyed enrollment leaders offer financial aid awards to graduate students

Determine Resource Requirements



1

Salaries and Benefits

Includes faculty, marketing staff, academic advisors, career coaches, mental health counselors, and more

2

Physical Infrastructure

Classroom and lab space, equipment and technology, clinical placements, students and commuter spaces

3

Marketing and Recruitment

Lead generation (e.g., name buys), digital marketing, market research, partnerships with enrollment solutions providers

4

Student Support

Financial support such as scholarships and academic support services including extensive advising, tutoring, and technology support

EAB Resources to Identify NTR and Costs, Monitoring Performance



Making the Academy Market-Smart Toolkit



Section 1: Grounding program targets in market realities

Institutions must consider market demand when assessing academic program performance—holding programs accountable for serving the academic and career needs of today's prospective students. Align academic program planning to enrollment priorities by providing academic leaders with actionable program-level enrollment and capacity data.

TOOL 1: Market-Smart Self-Assessment is the place to begin. It will help you figure out where your university is already market-smart and where there is room for improvement.

Section 2: Revitalizing Stalled Program Performance

Under- and over-enrolled programs tend to receive a disproportionate share of resources, diverting resources from mid-performing programs, which actually have the largest growth potential. Meet enrollment goals by strategically managing growth across the academic program portfolio and engaging academic leaders in surfacing programs with the greatest market opportunity.

TOOLS 6 and 7: Pipeline Vital Sign Monitoring contains two Excel sheets. The first identifies programs poised for growth, and the second identifies programs at risk of decline.

Section 3: Embedding Demand Validation in Launch

Most new program design and approval processes fail to consider regional enrollment trends and student preferences, resulting in programs that are misaligned with institutional priorities. Harness faculty-led innovation for enrollment gains by integrating enrollment managers' perspectives into new program launch—evaluating the revenue, enrollment, and marketing implications of proposed programs before they are stamped for approval.

TOOL 12: New Program Pre-Proposal Form is a template for faculty to use as part of a pre-proposal process for new academic programs. The second page provides critical questions the proposer needs to answer as part of the pre-proposal process.

TOOL 13: Self-Developed Major Form identifies the critical components of a self-developed major proposal form and provides guidance on how universities should structure the five critical components of the proposal.

[Return to top](#)

Systemizing Market-Smart Practices

What does it do?

This toolkit is designed to assist enrollment managers as they attempt to systematize market-smart practices. Each tool falls into one of three distinct categories:

- Grounding program targets in market realities
- Revitalizing stalled program performance
- Embedding demand validation in launch

Sample of Tools included:

- Sample Program Review Form
- Market-Smart Self-Assessment
- Pipeline Vital Sign Monitoring
- New Program Pre-Proposal Form

EAB Resources to Identify NTR and Costs, Monitoring Performance

Making the Academy Market-Smart Toolkit

NEW GRADUATE PROGRAM BUDGET TEMPLATE																																																
Today's Date:	19-Oct-15		Faculty/Point Person:																																													
Enter name of program:	IMS Space Exploration		Semester	Year	Enter your own student type.																																											
Select semester and year program begins to admit students:	Fall		2017		For semester, please do not include terms; enter either Summer, Fall or Spring ONLY																																											
Select types of Students	Full-time	Part-time	Boot	Certificate	CPS	4+1																																										
Select types of tuition	Comprehensive	per Credit	per Credit	per Credit	per Credit	Comprehensive																																										
Tuition Rates in start year	\$14,518	\$1,114	\$1,114	\$1,114	\$750	\$14,518																																										
If tuition is comprehensive, how many semesters do students attend per year?																																																
Year 1	1					2																																										
Year 2-5....	2					2																																										
Will the program include a 'track-up' or 4+1 format?	yes																																															
Enter projected number of NEW/admitted students:	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2017</th> <th>2018</th> <th>2019</th> <th>2020</th> <th>2021</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Full-time</td> <td>8</td> <td>10</td> <td>12</td> <td>14</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Part-time</td> <td>4</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Boot</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Certificate</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>6</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CPS</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>This row for track-up/4+1 ONLY</td> <td>4+1</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>							2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Full-time	8	10	12	14	16	Part-time	4	8	9	9	9	Boot	0	1	2	4	4	Certificate	4	5	6	6	6	CPS	5	6	7	8	9	This row for track-up/4+1 ONLY	4+1	0	0	0	5
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021																																											
Full-time	8	10	12	14	16																																											
Part-time	4	8	9	9	9																																											
Boot	0	1	2	4	4																																											
Certificate	4	5	6	6	6																																											
CPS	5	6	7	8	9																																											
This row for track-up/4+1 ONLY	4+1	0	0	0	5																																											
Include track-up students ONLY when student is CODED as graduate student (i.e., completed undergraduate program). If you want to charge something other than expected "standard" rates, Enter different tuition in BLUE table in Assumptions tab, Enter different tuition in BLUE table in Assumptions tab. Comprehensive fee is per semester. If you want to change beginning tuition rate of ONE program, change it in this row. Enrollment estimates to be developed in conjunction with admissions, institutional research and the provost's office. The fiscal year begins in summer. Include only the credits enrolled in a fiscal year; for example fiscal 2016-17 = summer 2016; fall 2016 and spring 2017. If the program begins																																																

- New Program Pre-Proposal Form

Analyze Labor Market and Competitor Data

Sizing the Potential Market

- What is the size of the market with **at least a bachelor's degree** in your state and region?
- Is there sufficient **employer demand** to expand or launch a given program?

- Census data
- BLS employment projections
- Local, regional, state, and national job postings

Assessing the Competitive Landscape

- How **saturated** is the market—and how does **your market share** compare?
- How has the **market evolved** in recent years?

- Conferrals data, including changes in:
 - Conferrals over time
 - Institutions reporting conferrals

EAB Resources to Analyze Labor Market and Competitor Data



Portfolio Health Check Report

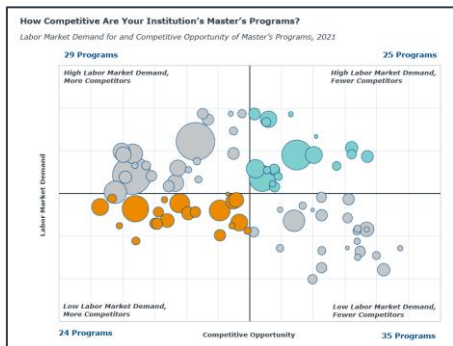
Finding the Growth Drivers in Your Portfolio

What does it do?

Analyzes regional employer demand and competitive landscape data to score programs on their relative labor market and competitive opportunity

Conclusions include:

- Which programs have the best relative labor market and competitive opportunities, and thus the best potential for enrollment growth
- Which programs have the worst relative labor market and competitive opportunities, and thus should have lower expectations for growth



Understand Your Current and Ideal Student Types

Student Characteristics Impact Net Tuition Revenue—and Your Goals



Enrollment Status – E.g., part-time, 4+1 program



Residency – I.e., in-state, out of state, international



Institutional Partnerships / Feeder Schools



Employer Partnerships



Lead Source – E.g., recent alumnus, GRE name buy

Monitor Progress Toward Goals



Identify and Monitor Key Performance Indicators



Revenue

Based on headcount, credit hours produced, and costs



Enrollment Funnel Metrics

Includes inquiries, applications, admits, and enrollments



Program Outcomes

Consider student credit hours produced, retention rate, graduation rate, and job placement rate, etc.



Student Characteristics

Includes academic profile, demographic characteristics, enrollment status, etc.



Putting it All Together

SECTION

3

Creating the Foundations for a GEM Plan

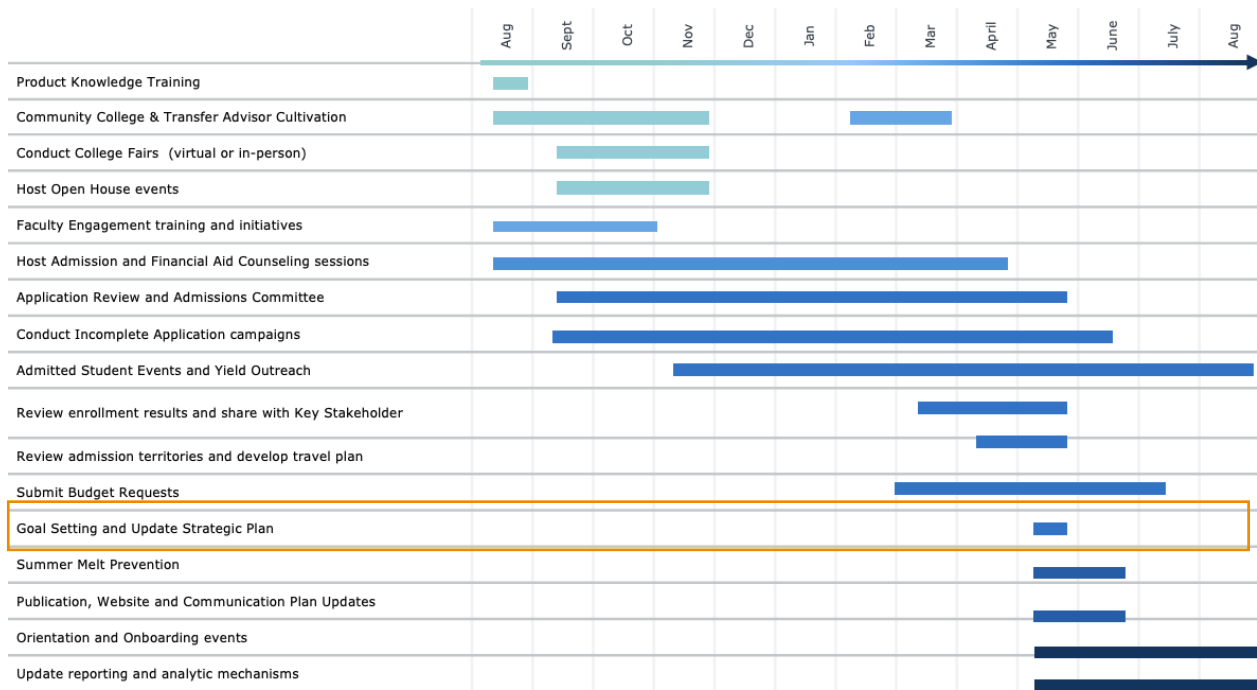
Key Pieces of a Successful Graduate Enrollment Management Plan



Goal-Setting Timeline Lines Up with Other Recruitment Needs Recruitment Timeline Calendar

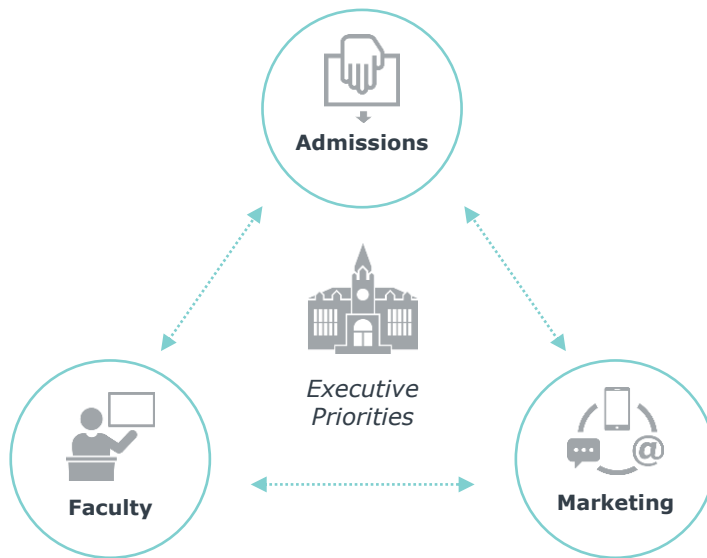


Standard Recruitment Timeline Calendar



Enrollment Growth Is a Cross-Campus Effort

Success Requires Alignment and Coordination



Use Data to Set Realistic Goals



Leverage Labor
Demand Statistics

Establishing Attainable Goals

- Communicate
- Measure
- Plan



Factor In Attrition
and Graduation
Rates



Scan Local And
Regional Program
Conferrals



Review Historical
Funnel Trends
(if available)



Account For
Regional And
National Trends

Identify Key Metrics to Track Success

Factors to Monitor Progress to Goal, by Team Function



Finance Team

- Average credit per student
- Revenue per student per program
- Program breakeven point



Marketing Team

- Cost per lead
- New leads generated
- Application rate
- Cost per enrollment



Admissions Team

- Admit rate
- Yield rate



Student Success Team

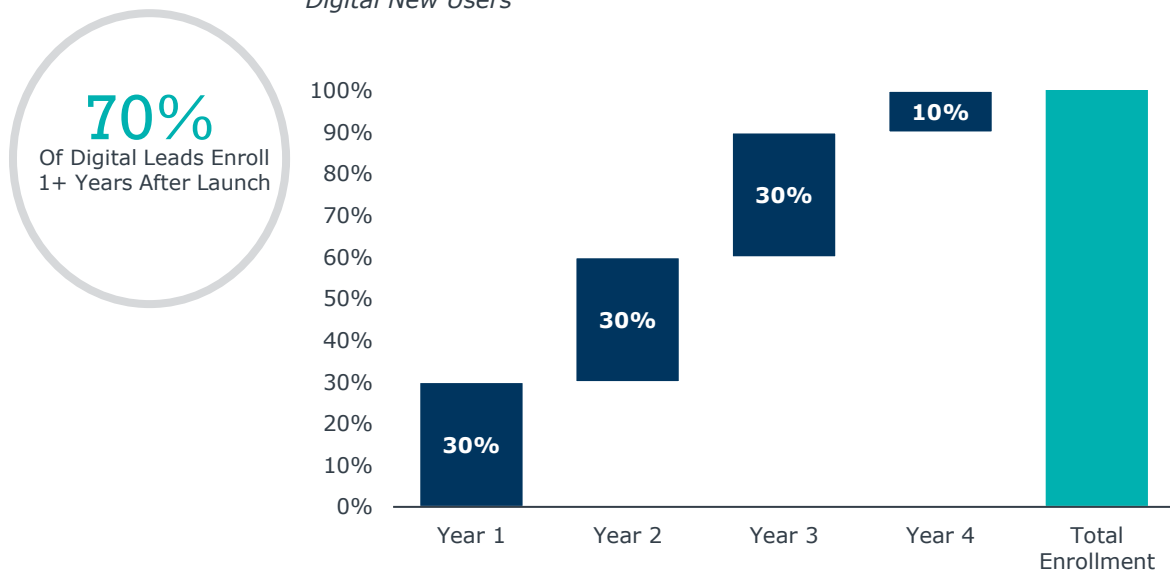
- Retention rate
- Number of graduating students

Account For Timeline To Realize Full ROI



Only 30% of Outcomes Will Come In the First Year After A Change

Percent of Total Enrollment By Year Since Campaign Launch
Digital New Users



EAB Resources to Identify and Assess Key Metrics For Success

34

Marketing Self-Assessment for Enrollment Leaders

2. Identify Key Performance Indicators

For each of the high-priority programs you selected on the previous page, assess campaign performance by listing each of the key performance indicators (KPIs) listed below. **Take note of any metrics your institution does not track.**

Digital KPIs

	Sample Annual KPIs	First Program or Set of Programs	Second Program or Set of Programs	Third Program or Set of Programs	Fourth Program or Set of Programs
Impressions	1,000,000				
Digital Clicks	57,800				
Digital Ad Click-through Rate	5.52%				
Full Search					

Email KPIs

It's not enough to simply track the right KPIs. To respond to recruitment KPIs efficiently and effectively, campus leaders must be able to access, monitor, and share campaign performance data easily. For each of the three types of KPIs identified on the previous page, **check the box that most closely aligns with your ability to access, monitor, and report key performance data across campaigns and programs.**

Pipeline

Program	Access	Monitor	Report
Project to Inquiry	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure
Inquiry to Application	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure
Application to Admission	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐ Unsure

4. Respond to Key Performance Indicators

Finally, institutions must refine their marketing and recruitment tactics in response to KPIs. The example below includes potential ways to course-correct based on sample performance indicators. **Use the chart below to identify ways you have improved your recruitment strategies based on KPIs in response to five key performance indicators listed on page 4.**

Response to Key Performance Indicators

KPI to Improve	Response
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Recommended Responses to KPIs

Sample improvements based on recommendations to EAB Adult Learner Recruitment partners

KPI to Improve	Sample Response
1. Impressions	Reevaluate budget to ensure sufficient allocation of funds to paid search.
2. Digital Ad Click-through Rate	A/B test ad copy and imagery to identify the highest-performing ad.
3. Email Click-through Rate	Review the copy, imagery, and calls to action (CTAs) in marketing emails. Ensure email cadence is sufficient but does not overwhelm prospects.
4. Prospect to Inquiry Conversion Rate	Review the copy and location of request for information forms, contact information, and CTAs to ensure students can easily identify how to engage with your institution.
5. Inquiry to Application Conversion Rate	Assess prompts to student inquiries, length of application, and admissions requirements to remove unnecessary barriers to application.

Monitoring Key Recruitment Metrics

What does it do?

Self-assessment tool to identify how well your institution is monitoring key performance indicators and where your institution has the greatest gaps.

Resource includes:

- Self-assessments for KPIs and monitoring
- Best practices for monitoring KPIs
- Marketing/Recruitment Goal tracking guide

Best Practices in Goal-Setting Meetings



- 1** **Develop a Task-force including key stakeholders**, including faculty and deans, enrollment team, marketing and recruitment team, and finance team.
- 2** **Collect data and share with your task-force** at least 2-3 weeks in advance of goal-setting discussion.
- 3** Always **set three goals**: a budgeted goal, a target goal, and a reach goal.
- 4** Collectively identify and **agree on which tactics and strategies** will be employed to reach those goals.
- 5** **Have a mediator** to push your teams on goals, ask questions, and be an impartial participant in goal setting meetings.

EAB Adult Learner Recruitment

Secure Your Future in a Changing Graduate, Online, and Adult Learner Market

Outperform the Market at Every Stage of the Funnel



Strategize

Identify and build market-ready programs for competitive advantage



Curate

Expand and diversify your pool of right-fit students



Cultivate

Customized campaigns to drive students to application



Convert

Improve yield and retention to maximize enrollment potential

What Makes Us Different

40+ Years of
**Higher Ed
Expertise**

**Unrivaled
Access** to New
Audiences

Seamless
**Marketing
Orchestration**

Visibility into
Full-Funnel
Performance

Proven Results in a Dynamic Landscape

200+

Partner institutions

6:1

Average ROI across
multiyear partnership

18%

Average graduate
enrollment growth

\$2M

Average NTR influenced
per partner

Interested in More?

I'd like to speak to an EAB expert about...

- 1 Identifying online, graduate, or adult education **programs to launch or refresh**
- 2 **Optimizing** graduate, online, or adult education **programs for growth**
- 3 **Generating leads** for graduate and online programs
- 4 Developing **marketing campaigns** to reach and recruit graduate and online students

Thank You!



Todd Heilman

Senior Consultant and Principal

EAB Adult Learner Recruitment

THeilman@eab.com

Consider Our Team a Resource

Please contact us with any questions.



202-747-1000 | eab.com



@eab



@eab_



@WeAreEAB



@eab.life

