



EAB

Differentiating Your Graduate and Adult-Serving Programs In a Competitive Market

Adult Learner Recruitment

Today's Presenter

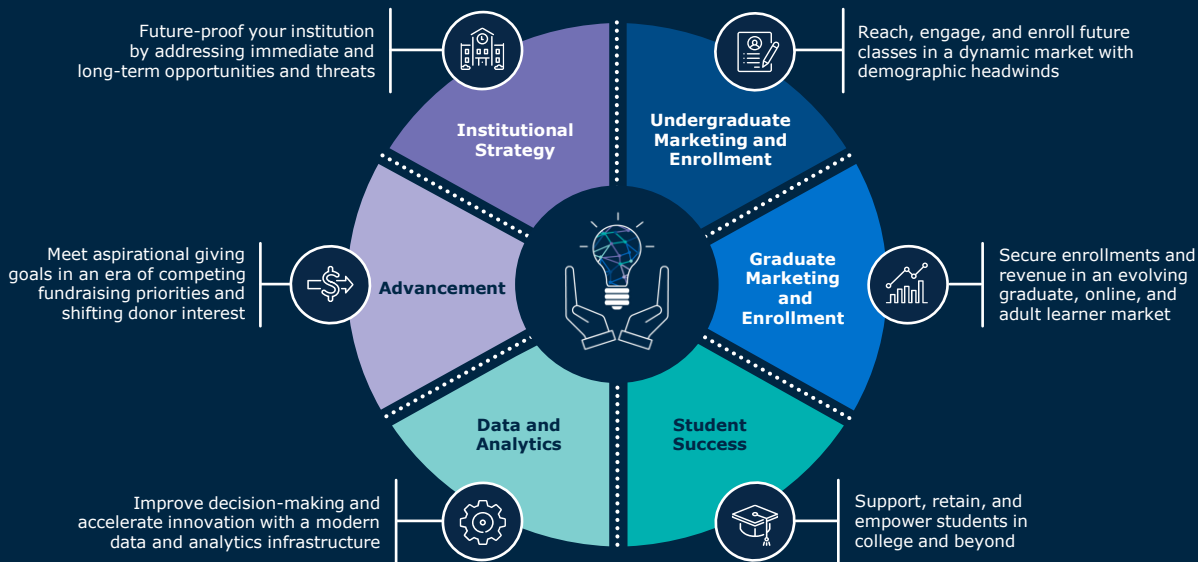


Val Fox

Consultant and Principal
EAB Adult Learner Recruitment

Thank You for Joining!

Insight-Powered Solutions for Your Top Priorities and Toughest Challenges



We partner with **2,800+** institutions to accelerate progress, deliver results, and enable lasting change.

95%+ of our partners return to us year after year because of results we achieve, together.

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

ROADMAP

1

The Case for Competitive
Differentiation

2

A Framework for
Differentiation

3

Bringing Your
Differentiators to Life



The Case for Competitive Differentiation

SECTION

1

Success Requires Standing Out



1

Growing Competition

- Program growth has outpaced conferrals in the past decade
- New non-academic providers have entered the market

3

Maxed Out Mindshare

- Average adult is exposed to 4-10K brands per day
- Prospects spend only 90 seconds on a .edu webpage, on average

2

App Lists Are Short

- Students apply to few schools:
 - 3.5 avg applications for graduate students
 - 3.6 avg applications for degree completers

4

Independent Research

80% of applicants are stealth and rely on program information found across digital channels to learn more before ever engaging with your institution directly



Quick Polls

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1. Our *university* has a value proposition that is truly differentiated

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. Our *graduate programs* are truly differentiated in the market

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree





Who Does This Describe?



A Variety of Graduate Degree Programs

At the University of X, we have dozens of graduate programs across a variety of disciplines so you can design a course of study that aligns with your interests and career objectives.



Flexible, Customizable Options

At UX, our degrees are offered online or in a hybrid format to meet your busy schedule. Many of our degrees offer a variety of concentrations so you can customize your degree for a specialization or industry.



Career Advancement

Gain a competitive edge in your career by pursuing your master's degree at UX. You'll leave with in-demand skills preparing you for leadership positions in a wide array of agencies, organizations and corporations.



Academic Excellence

Unlock your potential in our top-ranked programs helmed by distinguished and dedicated faculty who will help you grow your expertise, access unique research opportunities, and gain real-world experience.



Affordability

Your future is within reach at UX. We are committed to helping you achieve your educational goals with our affordable tuition and merit-based scholarships.



Does this sound like your institution?



Many Claims Are Commonplace or Unrelatable



Twin Pillars of Traditional Branding Don't Help You Stand Out

Appealing, but Assumed

Online **Specializations**
Flexible **In-demand skills**
Global
50+ Degrees
ROI **Innovative**
Career Impact **Affordable**
Academic Excellence
Alumni Network

Distinctive, but Unconnected to Audience

Traditions and Accolades

- "Largest research university in a metropolitan setting"
- "Oldest liberal arts college in the Plains States"
- "First accounting program in New England"

Signature Initiatives

- *Experiential Learning*
- *Interdisciplinary Research Center*
- *Holistic Wellness Curriculum*
- *State-of-the-Art Innovation Labs*

"Sounds like everyone else"

"How does this help me?"

Traditional Competitors

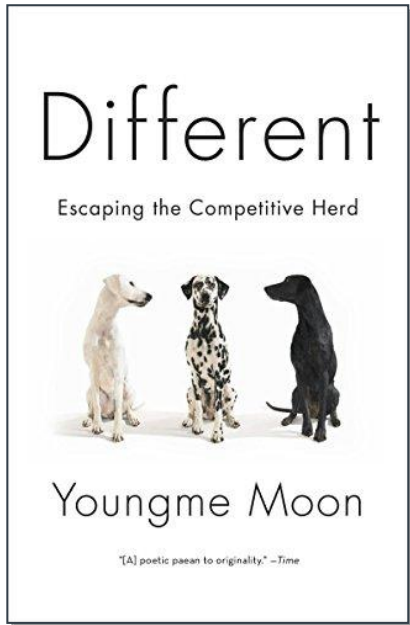
Online Mega-Institutions

Employer Pathways

Non-Consumption



Lessons from the World of Consumer Marketing



- 1 **Augmentation-by-addition** ("New and Improved!") and **augmentation-by-multiplication** ("32 Flavors!") are making consumers numb to choices
- 2 In many mature markets, **the differences between products become imperceptible to all but true connoisseurs**, reducing most choices to a simple formula (cheapest, most popular, etc.)
- 3 **When asked what they want, consumers mostly point to our weaknesses**—driving businesses to become more like their competitors instead of focusing on strengths
- 4 **What results is "Herd Mentality" within product categories**—businesses racing to keep up with each other and arriving at the same place despite no actual coordination

"Differentiation is not a competitive strategy.
It is a means of avoiding competition altogether."

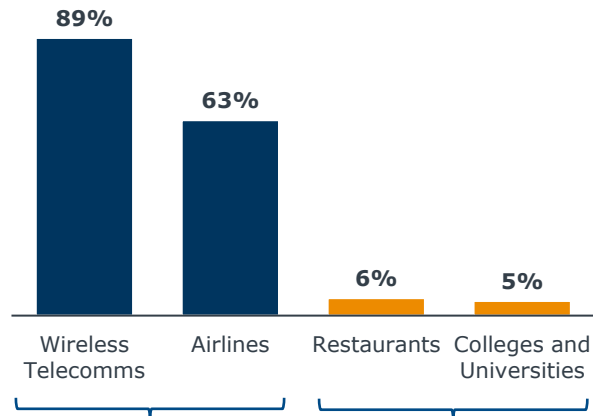
What Is Your Special Sauce?

13

Insights from the Restaurant Industry Apply to Higher Ed

Higher Ed is a Competitive Market

Market Share of Top 4 Competitors by Industry (Revenue)



Oligopolies

- National competition
- Large competitors dominate market
- Little room for new entrants

Competitive Markets

- Regional and national competition
- Room for new entrants
- Still competition from market leaders

Regional Players Can Carve out Share

Regional Player

Market Leader



Regional Players

- Strong regional brand affinity
- Large online and on-ground presence
- Low cost or elite brand

Market Leaders

- National marketing reach
- Massive online scale
- Low cost



A Framework for Differentiation

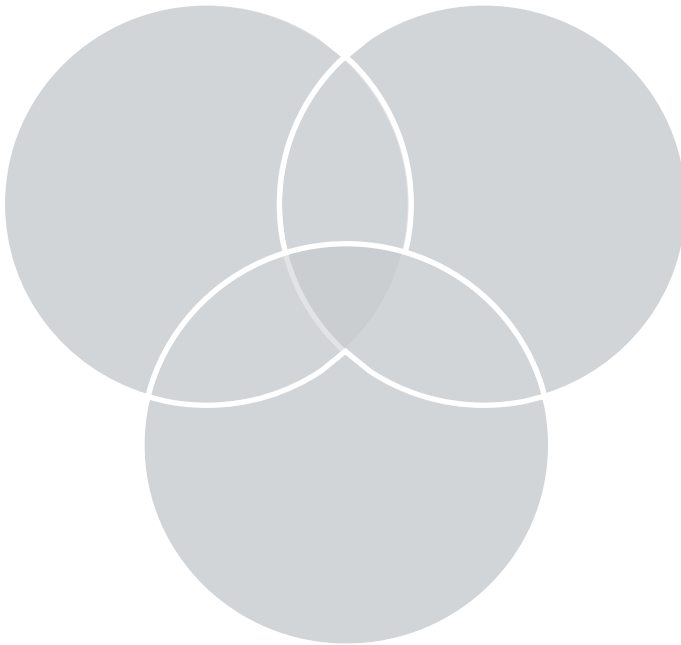
SECTION

2

Focusing on Your Differentiation Sweet Spot



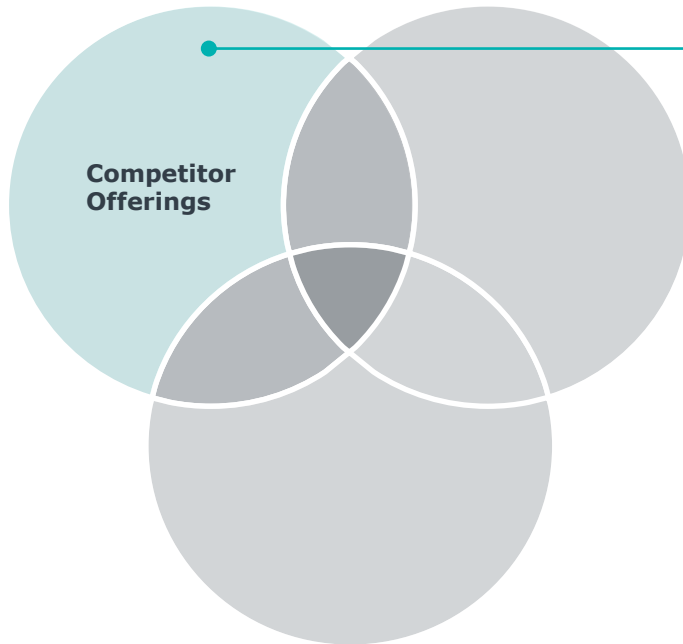
Industry Context: *Demographics, technology, regulation*



Focusing on Your Differentiation Sweet Spot



Industry Context: *Demographics, technology, regulation*



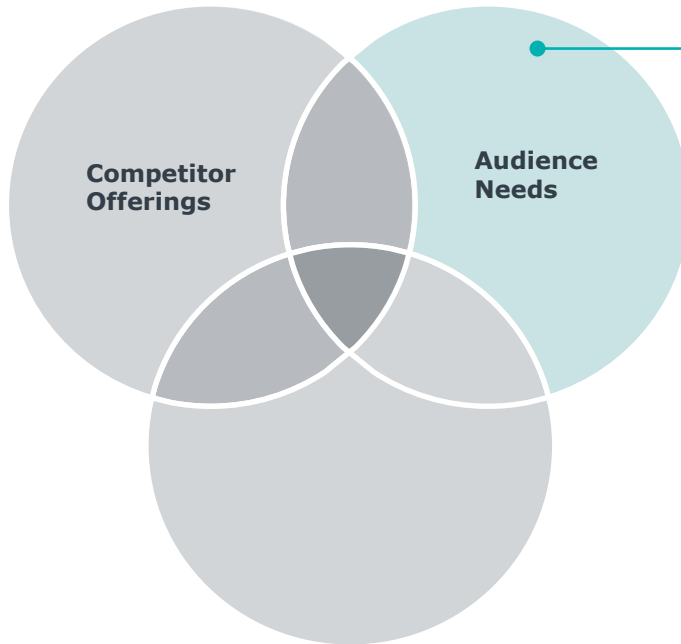
Competitors (by Program)

- Who are we competing with?
- When they 'win,' why?
- When you 'win,' why?
- What does this say about your reputation and value proposition(s) in your regional competitive set?

Focusing on Your Differentiation Sweet Spot



Industry Context: *Demographics, technology, regulation*



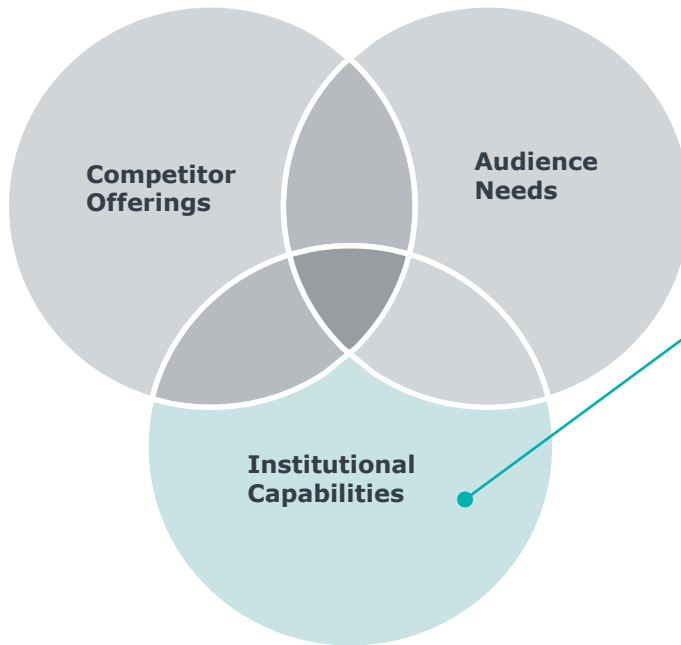
Target Audience (by Program)

- Who are our “right fit” students? How has the answer to that changed, and how will it continue to change?
- For whom are we NOT the best fit? Why?
- What’s changing about what prospective students value?

Focusing on Your Differentiation Sweet Spot



Industry Context: *Demographics, technology, regulation*



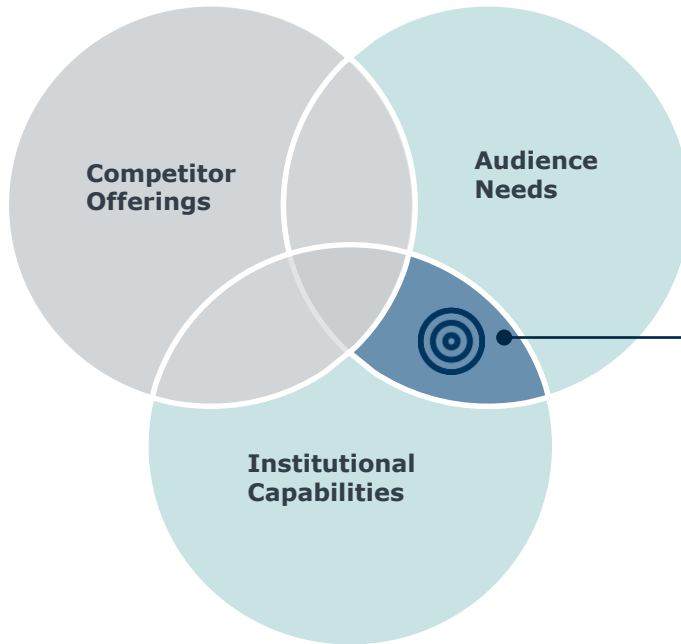
Your Capabilities (by Program)

- Academics
- Values
- Location
- Pricing
- Partner Networks

Focusing on Your Differentiation Sweet Spot



Industry Context: *Demographics, technology, regulation*



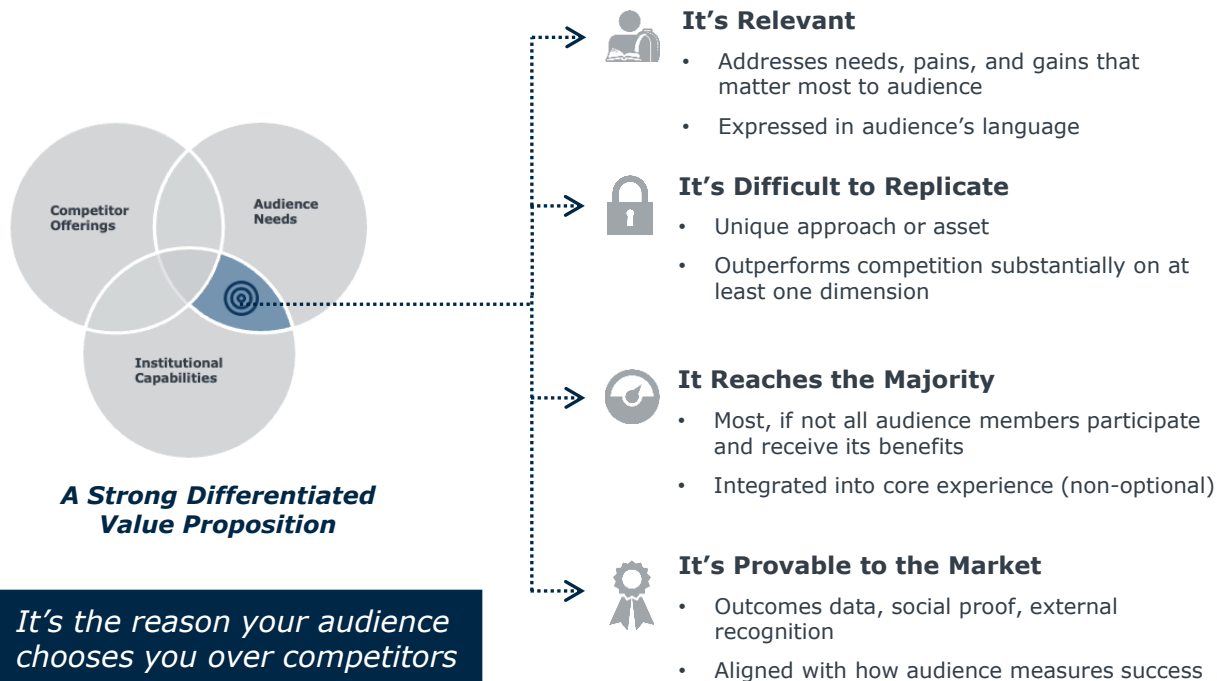
Differentiation Sweet Spot

Where your institution meets audience needs in ways competitors can't

Evolving Common Claims to Distinct Value Drivers

20

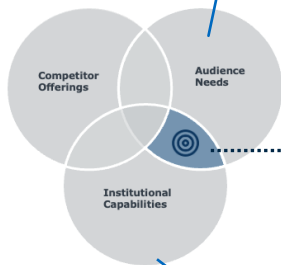
Stress-Test Claims Against These Four Criteria



Distinct Value Drivers in Action

- ✖ **Common Claim:** *Our Masters in Global Policy prepares students to impact the global community through an academically rigorous interdisciplinary program.*

Early career students worried about breaking into field without a network.



Our Global Policy program centers on global network development from day 1:

- Orientation co-led with NGO partners
- Six campuses and dozens of partner organizations worldwide



It's Relevant

- Program centered on global networking using language relevant to students.



It's Difficult to Replicate

- Dozens of partner organizations and six global campuses.



It Reaches the Majority

- Orientation and fieldwork and integrated into core experience with 100% of students participating.



It's Provable to the Market

- Alumni and student profiles on website
- 50% of students get offers after fieldwork

Differentiation “Starter Kit”

70+ Potential Value Drivers

"Our MBAs Develop Real-World Skills Valued by Industry"

Distinctive Academics

Program Variety
Program Quality
Unique Programs
Stackable Credentials
Flexible Delivery
Short Time to Completion
Flexible Scheduling
Pedagogical Method
Class Size

Student Outcomes

Employment
Earnings
In-demand Skills
Industries
Portfolio

Partner Networks

Alumni
Community
Employers
Industries
Global
Research

Staff Characteristics

Credentials
Background
Teaching Experience
Industry Experience
Technical Expertise
Availability

Special Services for Target Students

Working Adults
Adults New to Online Learning
Adult Degree Completers
International
Special Needs
Military

Service Quality Levels

Personalized Service
One-Stop Service
Concierge Service
Peer-to-Peer Service

Student Experience

Global Experience
Small Cohort
Student Organizations
Real-world Projects
Research/Lab Facilities

Shared Values

Sustainability
Faith-based
Social Justice
Community Service
Wellness
Outdoor Life
Innovation

Distinctive Location

Proximity
Beauty and Climate
Cultural Attractions
Recreation Options
Regional Economy

Distinctive Student Services

Advising
Mental Health
Career Services
Financial Aid Support
Technology

Pricing

Low Net Price
Low Price Relative to Competitors
Payment Options
Need-Based Aid
Merit Aid

Brand Character

Exclusivity
Quality
Higher Purpose
Value for Money
Lifestyle
Disruptive



Compounding Amplifies Distinction

Real-world Projects

Students build an online portfolio in each class



Industry Experience

Industry expert liaison assigned to each course



Alumni Network

Our graduates lead dozens of Inc. 5000 companies

Distinctive Academics

Program Variety
Program Quality
Unique Programs
Stackable Credentials
Flexible Delivery
Short Time to Completion
Flexible Scheduling
Pedagogical Method
Class Size

Student Outcomes

Employment
Earnings
In-demand Skills
Industries
Portfolio

Partner Networks

Alumni
Community
Employers
Industries
Global
Research

Staff Characteristics

Credentials
Background
Teaching Experience
Industry Experience
Technical Expertise
Availability

Special Services for Target Students

Working Adults
Adults New to Online Learning
Adult Degree Completers
International
Special Needs
Military

Service Quality Levels

Personalized Service
One-Stop Service
Concierge Service
Peer-to-Peer Service

Student Experience

Global Experience
Small Cohort
Student Organizations
Real-world Projects
Research/Lab Facilities

Shared Values

Sustainability
Faith-based
Social Justice
Community Service
Wellness
Outdoor Life
Innovation

Distinctive Location

Proximity
Beauty and Climate
Cultural Attractions
Recreation Options
Regional Economy

Distinctive Student Services

Advising
Mental Health
Career Services
Financial Aid Support
Technology

Pricing

Low Net Price
Low Price Relative to Competitors
Payment Options
Need-Based Aid
Merit Aid

Brand Character

Exclusivity
Quality
Higher Purpose
Value for Money
Lifestyle
Disruptive



Compounding Amplifies Distinction

Community Service

All students in community leadership training



Global

International field placement with NGO



Mental Health

Daily mindfulness and meditation programming

Distinctive Academics

Program Variety
Program Quality
Unique Programs
Stackable Credentials
Flexible Delivery
Short Time to Completion
Flexible Scheduling
Pedagogical Method
Class Size

Student Outcomes

Employment
Earnings
In-demand Skills
Industries
Portfolio

Partner Networks

Alumni
Community
Employers
Industries
Global
Research

Staff Characteristics

Credentials
Background
Teaching Experience
Industry Experience
Technical Expertise
Availability

Special Services for Target Students

Working Adults
Adults New to Online Learning
Adult Degree Completers
International
Special Needs
Military

Service Quality Levels

Personalized Service
One-Stop Service
Concierge Service
Peer-to-Peer Service

Student Experience

Global Experience
Small Cohort
Student Organizations
Real-world Projects
Research/Lab Facilities

Shared Values

Sustainability
Faith-based
Social Justice
Community Service
Wellness
Outdoor Life
Innovation

Distinctive Location

Proximity
Beauty and Climate
Cultural Attractions
Recreation Options
Regional Economy

Distinctive Student Services

Advising
Mental Health
Career Services
Financial Aid Support
Technology

Pricing

Low Net Price
Low Price Relative to Competitors
Payment Options
Need-Based Aid
Merit Aid

Brand Character

Exclusivity
Quality
Higher Purpose
Value for Money
Lifestyle
Disruptive

Interested in More?



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

1

Differentiating your graduate, online, or adult programs from competitors

2

Identifying and updating graduate, online, or adult **programs for growth**

3

Generating quality leads for graduate, online, and adult-serving programs

4

Developing **marketing campaigns** to reach and recruit graduate and online students



Bringing Your Differentiators to Life

Slides available in follow-up to help bring this content back to your team

SECTION

3

Bringing This Work to Life



Identify one graduate program



Identify Competitors' Claims

Use our ChatGPT-ready prompt to accelerate this process

ChatGPT ▾

Compare the 3 largest xxxxx programs within a 60-mile radius of xxxxx based on IPEDS conferral volume, identifying each program's stated target audience, unique value proposition or claims and tuition.

Cancel

Send

Use this prompt now:



Identify Competitors' Claims

Use College Navigator to Identify Your Key Competitors:
nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator



National Center for
Education Statistics

What we do ▾

Use our work ▾

Explore funding ▾

Learn with us ▾

About us

COLLEGE Navigator

English [Español](#) [About](#)

Name of School
Type name of school here

States (use map for more than 1 state)
No Preference
Alabama
Alaska
[Use Map](#)

ZIP Code Miles from

Programs/Majors
0 Items Selected
[Browse for Programs](#)

Level of Award [?](#)
☐ Certificate ☐ Associate's
☐ Bachelor's ☐ Advanced

Institution Type [?](#)
☐ Public ☐ 4-year
☐ Private non-profit ☐ 2-year
☐ Private for-profit ☐ < 2-year

[MORE SEARCH OPTIONS](#)

[Show Results](#)

[Guide Me](#) [Clear Search](#)



- » [Refine your search](#) with [More Search Options](#) to select additional search criteria.
- » [Build a list of schools](#) using [My Favorites](#) for [side-by-side comparisons](#).
- » [Pinpoint school locations](#) with an [interactive map](#).
- » [Export search results](#) into a [spreadsheet](#).
- » [Save your session](#) including search options and favorites.
- » [Add College Navigator](#) to your browser search bar.

[College Affordability and Transparency Center](#)

Browse lists of institutions with the highest and lowest tuition & fees and net price, and lists of institutions not meeting the 90/10 revenue requirement. [» GO](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Preparing for your Education

Find out what you need to do to prepare for education beyond high school. [» GO](#)

Financial Aid

Apply for Federal Student Aid on FAFSA. [» GO](#)

Postsecondary Education Outcome Measures: ED, DOD, and VA
ED, DOD, and VA have identified a set of potential education outcome measures for Veterans and service members. [» GO](#)

Careers

Deciding on a career? Consult the [BLS](#) Occupational Outlook Handbook. [» GO](#)

Speak to an EAB expert about finding your competitors →

Using the Differentiation “Starter Kit”

70+ Potential Value Drivers

Distinctive Academics

Program Variety
Program Quality
Unique Programs
Stackable Credentials
Flexible Delivery
Short Time to Completion
Flexible Scheduling
Pedagogical Method
Class Size

Student Outcomes

Employment
Earnings
In-demand Skills
Industries
Portfolio

Partner Networks

Alumni
Community
Employers
Industries
Global
Research

Staff Characteristics

Credentials
Background
Teaching Experience
Industry Experience
Technical Expertise
Availability

Special Services for Target Students

Working Adults
Adults New to Online Learning
Adult Degree Completers
International
Special Needs
Military

Service Quality Levels

Personalized Service
One-Stop Service
Concierge Service
Peer-to-Peer Service

Student Experience

Global Experience
Small Cohort
Student Organizations
Real-world Projects
Research/Lab Facilities

Shared Values

Sustainability
Faith-based
Social Justice
Community Service
Wellness
Outdoor Life
Innovation

Distinctive Location

Proximity
Beauty and Climate
Cultural Attractions
Recreation Options
Regional Economy

Distinctive Student Services

Advising
Mental Health
Career Services
Financial Aid Support
Technology

Pricing

Low Net Price
Low Price Relative to Competitors
Payment Options
Need-Based Aid
Merit Aid

Brand Character

Exclusivity
Quality
Higher Purpose
Value for Money
Lifestyle
Disruptive

Using the Differentiation “Starter Kit”

70+ Potential Value Drivers

Distinctive Academics

Program Variety
Program Quality
Unique Programs
Stackable Credentials
Flexible Delivery
Short Time to Completion
Flexible Scheduling
Pedagogical Method
Class Size



Student Outcomes

Employment
Earnings
In-demand Skills
Industry Connections
Portfolio

Partner Networks

Alumni
Community
Employers
Global
Partners

Staff Characteristics

Credentials
Background
Teaching Experience
Industry Experience
Technical Expertise
Availability

**What are your top competitors claiming?
Cross those off the list.**

Special Services for Target Students

Working Adults
Adults New to Online Learning
Adult Degree Completion
International
Special Needs
Military



Service Quality Levels

Personalized Service
One-Stop Service
Concierge Service
Peer Support

Student Experience

Global Experience
Small Cohort
Student Organizations
Research/Lab Facilities

Shared Values

Sustainability
Faith-based
Social Justice
Community Service
Wellness
Outdoor Life
Innovation

Highlight 1-2 remaining items that you can claim

Distinctive Location

Proximity
Beauty and Climate
Cultural Attractions
Recreation Options
Regional Economy

Distinctive Student Services

Advising
Mental Health
Career Services
Financial Aid Support
Technology

Pricing

Low Net Price
Low Price Relative to Competitors
Payment Options
Need-Based Aid
Merit Aid

Brand Character

Exclusivity
Quality
Higher Purpose
Value for Money
Lifestyle
Disruptive



Using the Differentiation “Starter Kit”

70+ Potential Value Drivers

Distinctive Academics

Program Variety
Program Quality
Unique Programs
Stackable Credentials
~~Flexible Delivery~~
Short Time to Completion
Flexible Scheduling
Pedagogical Method
Class Size

Student Outcomes

Employment
~~Earnings~~
In-demand Skills
Industries
Portfolio

Partner Networks

Alumni
Community
Employers
Industries
Global
Research

Staff Characteristics

Credentials
Background
Teaching Experience
Industry Experience
Technical Expertise
Availability

Special Services for Target Students

Working Adults
Adults New to Online Learning
Adult Degree Completers
International
Special Needs
Military

Service Quality Levels

Personalized Service
One-Stop Service
Concierge Service
Peer-to-Peer Service

Student Experience

Global Experience
Small Cohort
Student Organizations
Real-world Projects
Research/Lab Facilities

Shared Values

Sustainability
Faith-based
Social Justice
Community Service
Wellness
Outdoor Life
~~Innovation~~

Distinctive Location

Proximity
Beauty and Climate
Cultural Attractions
Recreation Options
Regional Economy

Distinctive Student Services

Advising
Mental Health
Career Services
Financial Aid Support
Technology

Pricing

~~Low Net Price~~
Low Price Relative to Competitors
Payment Options
Need-Based Aid
Merit Aid

Brand Character

Exclusivity
~~Quality~~
Higher Purpose
Value for Money
Lifestyle
Disruptive

Ensure Each Claim Meets Value Driver Imperatives



Relevance to Audience



Difficulty for Competitors to Copy



Share of Audience Enjoying Benefits



Provability to the Market

Sharing This Work Back With Your Team



Common Questions and Challenges When Differentiating Your Program



How do I make this a priority at my campus when leaders think our programs are already differentiated?



Who typically leads this work?



How can we learn what matters most to our students?

LET'S DISCUSS

How would you address these questions on your campus?

Interested in More?



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

1

Identifying and updating graduate, online, or adult **programs for growth**

2

Generating quality leads for graduate, online, and adult-serving programs

3

Developing **marketing campaigns** to reach and recruit graduate and online students

4

Differentiating your graduate, online, or adult programs from competitors

Next Steps

Today's Slides

1

Receive a copy of today's **presentation slides** to share with your team



Survey Findings

2

Request a copy the **findings from our survey** of 8,000+ graduate students



Self-Assessment

3

Use **our self-assessment** to build, stress test, and improve your value proposition



4

Get the latest insights from EAB

Subscribe to our Professional and Adult Education Blog to receive our latest and most relevant content

Thank You!



Val Fox

Consultant and Principal

VFox@eab.com

EAB Adult Learner Recruitment

Consider Our Team a Resource

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.



202-747-1000 | eab.com



@eab



@eab-



@WeAreEAB

