



# Recruiting Graduate Students During COVID-19

Insights from EAB's New Survey of 800+ Enrollment Leaders

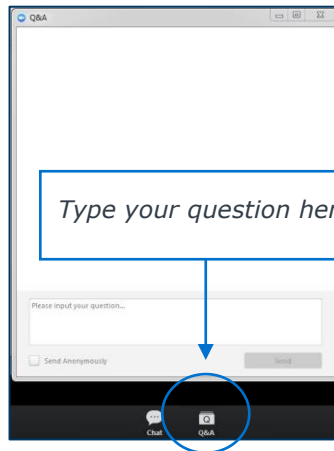
Adult Learner Recruitment

## Connecting to Audio



Refer to the **webinar confirmation email** you received in your inbox.

## Asking a Question



## Brief Exit Survey



We'd appreciate your **feedback** on today's presentation.



**We help schools support students from enrollment to graduation and beyond**

➤ **ROOTED IN RESEARCH**

**8,000+** Peer-tested best practices

**500+** Enrollment innovations tested annually

➤ **ADVANTAGE OF SCALE**

**1,900+** Institutions served

**4.1 M+** Students supported by our SSMS

➤ **WE DELIVER RESULTS**

**95%** Of our partners continue with us year after year, reflecting the goals we **achieve together**

➤ Find and enroll your right-fit students

➤ Support and graduate more students



➤ Prepare your institution for the future

# The Smart Growth Solution for the Adult Learner Market

Our strategic enrollment solution combines consumer analytics, intent marketing, and strategic consulting

Strategic  
Portfolio and  
Market  
Planning



Audience  
Generation  
and Targeting

Intent  
Marketing for  
the Student  
Journey

Yield and  
Enrollment  
Management

Program  
Review and  
Optimization



Data and Consumer Analytics at Scale

1.5B+

Student interactions  
analyzed annually

100+

Data and analytics  
experts on staff

500+

Field marketing tests  
performed annually

7,000+

Custom market demand  
briefs completed

# Today's Speakers



**Will Lamb, Ph.D.**

*Dean, Graduate and Adult  
Learner Recruitment*

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**Amy Luitjens, MPA**

*Consultant and Principal, Adult  
Learner Recruitment*

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# COVID Exacerbates Enrollment Leaders' Concerns



**How can we create a long-term strategy to maximize enrollment growth?**



**How can my institution remain as competitive as possible?**



**How do we optimize our online programs for growth?**

## ...And Students' Concerns



### Affordability Amid Shifting Financial Circumstances

"Will I have enough money to attend school? Should I reconsider in order to pay for more important bills?...For those who can't afford school, it becomes a want over a need. Education is important, but **can I afford it?**"

- EAB Student Survey Participant

### A Remote Learning Environment—and for How Long?

"Online learning deprives me of the faculty engagement I was looking for in a residential graduate program. **I am currently unable to make those connections**...That is an integral part of my graduate education and without it, the sky-high cost is not worth it."

- EAB Student Survey Participant



# Survey Methodology



3 Flash Surveys Conducted From September to December 2020

## A Closer Look at Survey Respondents



**805 unique contributors** across 50 states



Participants from **640 unique institutions**

- **51%** private
- **49%** public



- **71%** of participants' programs were both online and on-campus,
- **25%** offered on-campus programs only
- **4%** offered online programs only

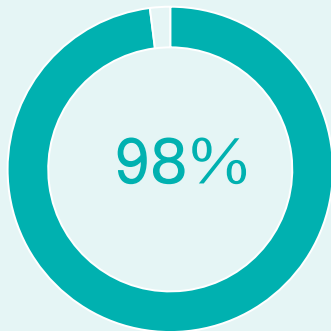


## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 **Prioritize Personalized, Interactive Marketing**
- 2 Remove Unnecessary Barriers to Entry
- 3 Think Critically About Your Growth Drivers—with a Focus on Online
- 4 Keep a Pulse on What Students *Really* Want

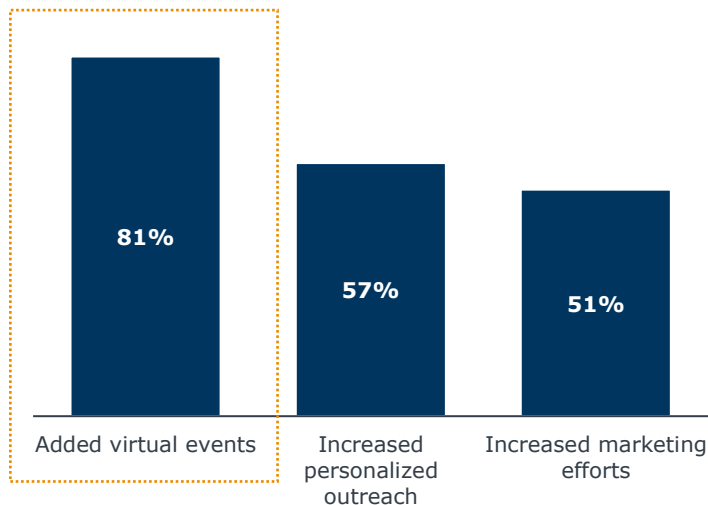
# Enrollment Leaders Are Adapting to New Landscape

## Crisis Spurs Updates to Recruitment Strategy



Of surveyed enrollment leaders made some **adjustments to recruitment strategies** in light of COVID-19

## Top Changes to Recruitment Strategy



# Virtual Recruiting Events



## What Do Audiences Want from Virtual Events?



### **Timely Topic and Actionable Insight**

Content on current best practices or future trends is most attractive



### **Multi-Modal Content**

Different formats appeal to different types of learners and enable on-demand consumption



### **Highly Credible Speakers They Can Engage With**

Attendees want the chance to interact with speakers via Q&A or networking



### **Education and Networking**

Attendees want dedicated time to network with one another

## **Interested in More Best Practices for Virtual Events?**

Let us know in the exit survey and our team will share additional resources about hosting and recruiting for virtual events

# Personalized Marketing at Scale

## Key Elements of **Intent Marketing for the Student Journey**

Integrated Digital  
Awareness Marketing

Responsive Campaign  
Design

Data-Driven  
Creative

Omnichannel  
Engagement

**Design custom campaigns at scale according to student intent.**



- Micro-surveys
- Responsive landing pages
- Behavioral-based campaign flows unique to individual journey signals
- Interactive virtual tour to drive early engagement

## **Student Journey Marketing Outperforms the Average**

**30%** Average increase in campaign response rate

**3x** Number of leads generated

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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**Remove Unnecessary Barriers to Entry**

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Think Critically About Your Growth Drivers—with a Focus on Online

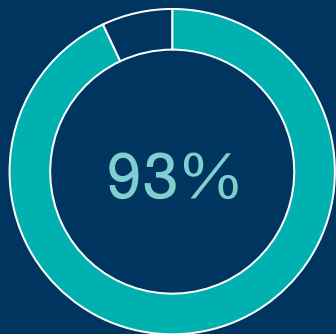
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Keep a Pulse on What Students *Really* Want

# COVID-19 Impacts Admissions Strategy



## Enrollment Leaders Forced to Pivot Quickly



Of surveyed enrollment leaders made some adjustment to their **enrollment strategies**

## COVID-19 Leads to Flexibility in Admissions

**60%** relaxed admissions requirements during COVID-19

- ✓ Waived application fees
- ✓ Eliminated test score requirements
- ✓ Extended payment plans
- ✓ Accepted unofficial documents
- ✓ Offered alumni discount

**52%** Offered more deferred admissions

## 4 Key Principles for Evaluating Admissions Requirements

### ACCURACY

- ▶ Do you have enough information to make a good decision in most cases?

### CLARITY

- ▶ Can you communicate your admissions criteria easily?

### SPEED

- ▶ Can you very reply quickly to most candidates?

### ACCESS

- ▶ Have you eliminated unnecessary hurdles?



#### Unnecessary Hurdles Can Include:

- Extraneous essays
- Multiple letters of recommendation
- Test scores

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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Prioritize Personalized, Interactive Marketing

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Remove Unnecessary Barriers to Entry

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**Think Critically About Your Growth Drivers—with a Focus on Online**

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Keep a Pulse on What Students *Really* Want



# COVID-19 Spurs Program Portfolio Updates



**76%** Of enrollment leaders surveyed made changes to their graduate program(s) in light of COVID-19

60%

Expanded fully  
online programs

18%

Canceled low-  
enrollment programs

13%

Expedited new  
program launches

# Identify Your Growth Drivers



## Evaluate Internal and External Factors to Find Growth Drivers



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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# Understand Students' Program Priorities

## Why Students Further Their Education

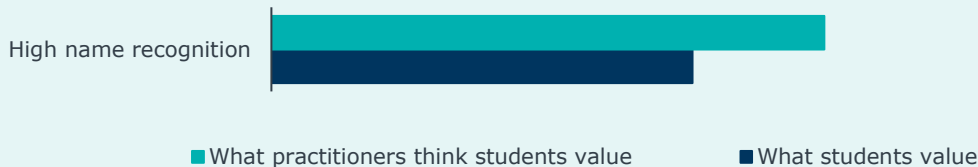


- To pursue their passions (44%)
- To advance their career (44%)
- To increase earning potential (38%)

## What Students Value Most

- Successful job placement (46%)
- Strong relationships with professors and mentors (32%)
- Moderate tuition prices (23%)

## Students Value Name Brand Less Than Surveyed Practitioners Expect



1) Consolidated findings from three surveys of current and prospective graduate students conducted by EAB in 2019 and 2020 (n = 2,411)

# Engage Each Student Based on Interest and Intent

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## Use Your Unique Audience Insights to Inform Marketing

### 1 Develop Data-Driven Student Profiles



### 2 Embed Insights into Campaigns



- Image of family appeals to busy parents, specifically males
- Copy targets career aspirations and acknowledges work-life balance

## Supplement Insight into Your Audience with Macro-Level Findings

### Annual EAB Adult Learner Surveys



- Impact of COVID-19 on the Adult Learner Mindset



- Understanding and Recruiting Adult Degree Completers

# Key Takeaways

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- 1 Prioritize Personalized, Interactive Marketing
- 2 Remove Unnecessary Barriers to Entry
- 3 Think Critically About Your Growth Drivers, with a Focus on Online Programs
- 4 Keep a Pulse on What Students Really Want

# Next Steps and How EAB Can Help

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Receive Today's Slides

Register for Upcoming Webinars

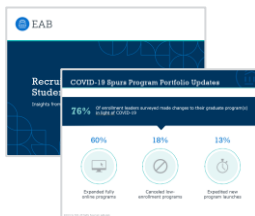
1

Speak to an **EAB expert** about strategies to find and engage adult learners



2

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3

Join our upcoming webinar about **program planning**



4

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# Q+A



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## Thank You!

As you exit the webinar, you will be promoted to complete a survey. We appreciate your feedback!





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