2024 GEM Summit

Meet Your New Graduate Students

Insights from EAB’s Survey of 3,800+ Students – and What the Findings Mean for Your GEM Plan
Todd Heilman

Consultant and Principal
EAB Adult Learner Recruitment
Agenda

• State of the Graduate Market
• Graduate Enrollment Management (GEM) Planning
• Adult Learner Survey Findings
How Big is the Adult and Grad Ed Market?

Adult Learners Make Up 42% of Total Higher Ed Tuition Revenue

Higher Ed Gross Annual Revenue, 2021

- Adult and Grad Ed: $84B
- Traditional Undergraduate: $118B
- Total Tuition Revenue: $203B

25+ Undergrad Students Account for Half of All Adult Ed Revenue

Total Gross Annual U.S. Revenue Generated from Adult (25+) Bachelor’s, Post-Bac Certificates, and Graduate Enrollment, 20-21

- Adult Degree Completer: 23%
- Professional Doctorate: 26%
- All Grad Certificates (Post-Bacc and Post-Master’s): 38%
- Other Adult Bachelor’s: 9%
- Other Adult Bachelor’s: 4%


1. Tuition discounts not included in analysis
2. Includes first-time adult students, second bachelor’s students, and non-degree seekers
Graduate & Adult Enrollment Falls Across the U.S.

Falling Enrollment Across US, Institutions with Large Online Enrollment Driving Positive Percent Change in Handful of States

Percent Change in Estimated Enrollment by State of Institution, 2019-2021

- Southern New Hampshire University (NH): +26%
- Liberty University (VA): +1.5%
- Western Governors University (UT): +4%
- Grand Canyon University (AZ): +2%
- Arizona State University (AZ): +2%

MS, OH, WA: Large declines between 2019 and 2020 are due to a single institution with relatively large enrollments that has not submitted data as of 11/19/2020

The Graduate Pandemic Boom Didn’t Last Long

Pandemic-Fueled Growth Weak Compared Previous Recession Growth

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Recession</th>
<th>COVID-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>+2.8%</td>
<td>+2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>+3.6%</td>
<td>+2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>+4.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>+0.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>+1.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>+1.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>+1.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>+1.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>+2.4%</td>
<td>-1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Slow Return to ‘Normal’

Pandemic Accelerates Existing Trend Towards Virtual and Hybrid learning

Graduate\(^1\) Enrollments and Projections 2012-2025: Exclusively, Some, and No Online\(^2\) Courses

- Exclusively Face-to-Face: Avg. Annual Decline 2012-2019 -2%
- Exclusively Online: Avg. Annual Increase 2012-2019 +7%
- Mixed Modality: Avg. Annual Increase 2012-2019 +4%

Graduate students include both master’s and doctoral students. Recorded as ‘Distance Education’ in IPEDS data.

Source: EAB analysis of distance enrollment data from IPEDS Fall Enrollment Surveys 2012-21; EAB interviews and analysis.
Capturing Share in Competitive Markets

Institutions with Highest Conferrals Control Most of the Market

Percentage of total degrees\(^1\) conferred by top 20% of institutions, 2021

And for Graduate Degrees, the Biggest Have Only Gotten Bigger

Net change in number of graduate degrees conferred, 2013-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 20%</th>
<th>Bottom 80%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative market share</td>
<td>Cumulative market share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net change:

- Top 20%: +330,784 (+100K from 2019)
- Bottom 80%: -79,502 (-15K from 2019)

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\(^1\)Graduate students include both master's and doctoral students. Recorded as 'Distance Education' in IPEDS data.

Source: EAB analysis of distance enrollment data from IPEDS Fall Enrollment Surveys 2012-21; EAB interviews and analysis.
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Graduate Enrollment Management Planning
Creating a GEM Plan to Meet Your Goals

- Tuition and Financial Aid
- Program Development
- Marketing and Recruitment
- Student Success and Retention
- Environmental Scan
- Faculty and Resources
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Adult Learner Survey Findings
EAB’s Biennial Survey of Graduate and Adult Learners

Survey Methodology

- Data collected from **May to June 2023**
- **3,853** participants, including current and prospective graduate, online, and adult learners
- Survey conducted every other year to **track trends over time**

Participant Profile

- **Age:** 25.7% under 26, 35.4% age 26-35, 38.9% age 36 and over
- **Employment Status:** 52.5% employed full-time, 20.6% employed part-time, 26.9% unemployed
- **Location:** 21.2% international students
- **Caregiver Status:** 32.3% identify as caregivers
- **Intended Area of Study:** 18.8% business, 11.1% law, 15.3% medical/health services, 70.9% other (e.g., MS, MA, MFA)
Roadmap for Survey Findings

• Student Search Behavior and Preferences Are Shifting
• Students Are Increasingly Making Enrollment Decisions Based on Cost
• Students Seek a Variety of Modality and Schedule Options
EAB’s Biennial Survey of Graduate and Adult Learners

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Student Search Behavior and Preferences Are Shifting
Prioritize Understanding Student Intent

“What Are Your Primary Reasons For Furthering Your Education?”
As asked of students who are currently enrolled or planning to enroll in the next two years; top five answers

- To advance my career: 37.7%
- To pursue my passions: 29.9%
- To make a difference in the world: 26.7%
- To pursue my interests in more depth: 26.0%
- To increase my earning potential: 23.9%

Students under age 36 and international students disproportionately seek career advancement.

Among students who seek to complete their bachelor’s degree, “increasing my earning potential” was the top motivator.
Use Student Intent to Personalize Marketing

Sample Micro-Survey to Uncover Student Intent

 Tell us a little more about your plans.

We'd love to hear about your plans for graduate school. Please take the brief survey below, which will help us help you during this process.

First Name (Required)  Last Name (Required)
Preferred Email Address (required)

Tell us about why you are considering a degree:
- Advance my career
- Change my career
- Change the world
- Enhance my current skill set

What is your biggest obstacle to earning a degree?
- Balancing school and family
- Balancing school and work
- Finances
- Program prerequisites

Submit

Sample Digital Ads Based on Student Intent

5. Be the best you possible.

40 FLEXIBLE DEGREE PROGRAMS TO FIT YOUR LIFE AND PASSION

$94k
Average Starting Salary for MBA graduates

What Will Your Impact Be? Earn Your Graduate Degree

go.data-stat.grad.edu

Sign Up
Students Rely on Web Search and Your Website

“Which sources of information [did you use/have you used] in your search?”

Top five answers

- Web searches: 53.5%
- Specific college websites: 34.1%
- Social media: 23.3%
- Email from a school: 19.8%
- Friends and classmates: 19.6%

Students under age 26 disproportionately rely on specific college websites and email during their search.
### A Well-Designed Website Is Table Stakes

But Many Program Pages Have Room for Improvement

#### Is Your Website Helping or Hurting Your Recruitment Efforts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93.4%</td>
<td>Visit websites of all schools they are considering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td>Said a well-designed website improves their opinion of a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84.9%</td>
<td>Said a poorly-designed website will negatively affect their opinion of a school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which of the following can students find on your website in two minutes or less?

- General information about your institution
- Tuition and fees
- Financial aid and scholarships
- Admissions requirements
- List of programs offered
- Specific classes offered
- Outcomes (e.g., job placement rates) for graduates
- Faculty research interests
Can Students Easily Find the Info They Need?

“What information were you most often trying to find when searching school websites?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs offered</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions requirements/process</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College costs</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General information about the school</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for alumni in my program of interest</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific classes</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job placement for graduates</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty research interests</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students Are Open to Receiving Ads on Social Media

Students Most Open to Receiving Ads from Universities on Facebook and LinkedIn
Platforms which >30% of surveyed students use are included below

- Which social media do you use?
- On which channels are you open to receiving ads from colleges and universities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Use (%)</th>
<th>Open to Ads (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook Messenger</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter, now known as X</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Email Remains a Tried-and-True Channel

Prospects Are Increasingly Relying on Recruitment Emails...
Percentage of Graduate and Adult Learners Who Consulted Recruitment Emails, EAB Surveys

- 12.9% in 2021
- 19.8% in 2023

...Especially Younger Students

- 26% of respondents under age 26 rely on recruitment emails to learn more about graduate and adult education programs
- 75% of surveyed high school students want to hear from colleges via email, suggesting future adult learners will rely on emails*
Adult Learners Linger in the “Search” Phase
Don’t Overlook Prospects Who Haven’t Engaged With Your Marketing Recently

“How long have you been actively searching/did you search for information about furthering your education?”

I don’t remember

- 18.7%
- 7.3%
- 12-18 mos. 15.0%
- 3-6 mos. 23.2%
- < 3 mos. 23.6%
- > 18 mos. 23.6%

38.6% of respondents searched for information about going back to school for at least 12 months

80% reported stealth shopping rate among interviewed Professional, Online, and Continuing Education units
Marketing and Recruitment

- Rather than traditional marketing campaigns that use the same message and timing for all prospects, use student intent to inform your marketing and recruitment messaging, cadence, and channel.

- Since career advancement was the top reason survey respondents wanted to further their education, prioritize highlighting job placement rates, top employers, etc. in marketing materials.

- Web searches and specific college websites are the most used sources of information in college searches. Since this will inadvertently serve as a recruitment channel, make sure your website is up to snuff.

- Take note of which channels adult learners are most willing to receive marketing on, and be willing to engage with prospects who haven’t responded to marketing recently.
Students Are Increasingly Making Enrollment Decisions Based on Cost
Implications for GEM

Tuition and Financial Aid

- Our respondents highlighted the importance of having a very **sound and effective financial aid strategy**. Ensure that this is a priority for your team when creating and reviewing your GEM plan.

- Evaluate your tuition rates on an annual basis through a thorough review of competitive programs as part of the external environmental scan.

Student Success and Retention

- The primary reason that adult learners discontinued their studies was the high cost. If you’re at a school that’s now offering more scholarship or financial aid options, ensure you **allocate some of this to current students** as well as using aid to attract new students.

- Changes in personal circumstances was also a top reason for stop-outs. **Student success at the graduate level** is often overlooked, but it is even more important with adult learners that often have more on their plates than traditional undergraduate students.
Students Seek a Variety of Modality and Schedule Options
Implications for GEM

Program Development

- Three key questions to ask about program development include market viability, program modality and competitive advantages of your program.

- Use the survey findings on modality and flexibility to inform your program development.

Environmental Scan

- Conduct regular internal environmental scans of your academic programs. Use surveys like this one and surveys created in-house as part of your review.

- Remember to consider external scans to save institutional resources and time, while still assessing the favorable and unfavorable effects of events, trends, or scenarios on the institution and its programs.
Next Steps

1. Receive a copy of today’s presentation slides

2. Stop by booth #712 to connect with us live and collect printed or virtual research

3. Sign up to be the first to receive a copy of a research study based on a joint EAB + NAGAP survey
Thank You!

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Consider our team a resource