



The Vendor Transition Playbook

Maintaining Enrollment Growth While Changing Marketing Partners

Adult Learner Recruitment

Today's Presenter



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Adult Learner Recruitment

Outperform the Market at Every Stage of the Funnel



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*



Strategize

*Identify and build market-
ready programs for
competitive advantage*

What Makes Us Different

Unrivaled Mix of
Proprietary and Known
Lead Sources

**Turnkey,
Full-Funnel**
Conversion Engine

24/7, Transparent
Access to Campaign
Data and Full Attribution

Rigorous Testing to
Stay Ahead in a
Dynamic Market

Proven Impact in a Dynamic Landscape

200+

Partner institutions

40+

Years of higher
education expertise

6:1

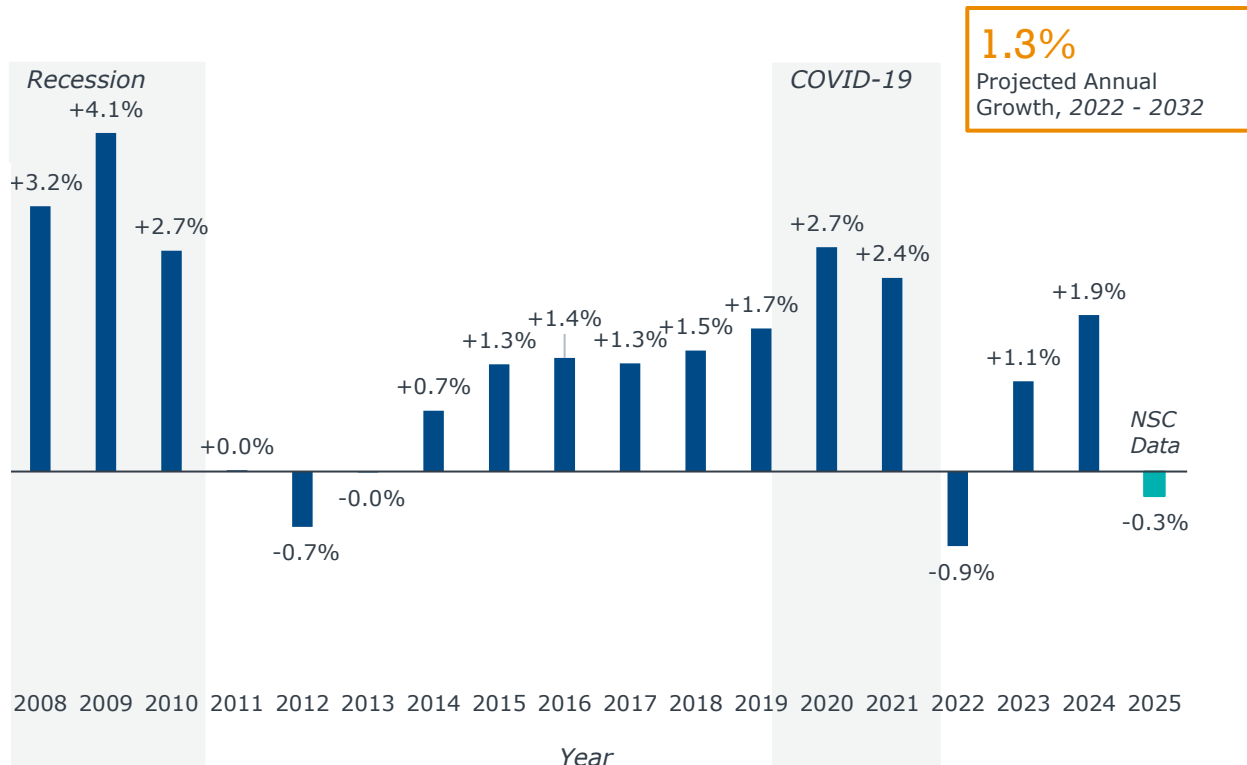
Average ROI across
multiyear partnership

18%

Average graduate
enrollment growth

Graduate Enrollment's New Normal Is Slower Growth

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



But Goals Are Often Unmoored From Market Realities

Survey Findings

EAB and NAGAP
Surveys, 2025

~62%

of leaders cited
graduate enrollment
growth goals of 3%
or higher

40%

of leaders did not
meet their
graduate
enrollment goals

"I think the goal from our provost was just a nice, beautiful, round number."



"5 years ago, our president asked me to grow. I said, 'How much?' and he said, 'How much do you think?'"



"We were told that we need to grow online, but we were just given Paul LeBlanc's book and told to read it."



"We need to basically grow for growth's sake but are not provided with resources to support that growth."



Quick Poll

How would you describe your institution's enrollment growth goals?

- Below market average (<1.3% annual growth)
- On par with market average (~1.3% annual growth)
- Above market average (>1.3% annual growth)
- I'm not aware of our enrollment growth goals



Marketing Is Complex, Chaotic, and Evolving Fast



Rising Marketing Costs

- Average cost-per-click for Google Ads in the education industry grew 42%—the **fastest increase among major industries**—from 2024-25
- On average, professional and online education units spend **\$801K on digital ads** annually¹



The Proliferation of AI

- In our 2025 survey, nearly 20% of prospective graduate and online students **used AI in their search process**
- By 2028, McKinsey experts predict **75% of Google searches will have AI overviews**



Intensifying Digital Pressures

- 58% of graduate and online students used search engines to research programs—but the **SEO and GEO best practices are constantly changing**

1) Includes paid search, social advertising campaigns, and connected TV streaming ads.

Source: EAB Adult Learner Survey, 2025; WordStream, "Google Ads Benchmarks 2025: Competitive Data & Insights for Every Industry," 2025; McKinsey & Co, "New front door to the internet: Winning in the age of AI search," 2025; UPCEA, "Marketing Metrics Research Study," 2024.

Your Vendor May No Longer Be Working For You If...

You aren't generating a positive **return on investment**.

The vendor's capabilities no longer align with or augment **your internal resources**.

You don't have **visibility** into your vendor's strategies or performance.

The vendor's capabilities no longer align with **how students search today**.

You aren't meeting your **goals**.





Select all that apply

I'd like to schedule time to learn about EAB solutions to ...

1

Identifying and optimizing graduate and online **programs for enrollment growth**

2

Generating quality leads for graduate and online programs

3

Developing marketing campaigns to reach and recruit more graduate and online students in the AI era

4

Transitioning away from an OPM or another online provider

A Smarter Path to Enrollment Growth with a Vendor Transition

1

Establish the Truth: Understand what is working, what is not and where growth is most viable.

2

Design the Operating Model: Determine what to own internally, what to outsource and what capabilities the next partner must bring.

3

Sustain Momentum: Prepare for new partner onboarding and secure assets, data, campaigns and funnel continuity before the handoff.

4

Transition with Accountability: Launch with clear goals, transparent reporting and visibility across traditional and AI-powered search.

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Start with Evidence: Performance, ROI, Opportunity

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How is our current recruitment marketing strategy working?

How are we doing relative to our peers?

Should we be growing more than we are?

Surfacing the Evidence



Market Assessment

Identify your **programs' market share** and **competitor score** based on analysis of your historical enrollment changes, competitors' historical enrollments, and market conditions for future growth



Marketing Analysis

Understand the local (category), regional public (value), and national (convenience) **competitors by program**, what they're spending to compete, and how visible you are by comparison in AI search engines



ROI Analysis

Assess **partnership efficacy** at regular intervals throughout contract

Where Is There Room to Grow?

Sample Market Analysis to Identify Growth Opportunities

Regional			National			
Program	% Demand Change	Comp. Difficulty	Your Market Share	% Demand Change	Comp. Difficulty	Your Market Share
Data Science	7000.0%	Hard	100.0%	2728.8%	Easy	1.6%
Data Analytics	2500.0%	Hard	100.0%	2339.0%	Easy	0.3%
Higher Ed Leadership	100.0%	Hard	42.9%	46.6%	Easy	0.3%
Artificial Intelligence	65.9%	Hard	72.1%	218.1%	Easy	4.2%
Software Development	17.1%	Hard	100.0%	74.5%	Medium	10.0%
Cybersecurity	12.3%	Hard	14.4%	42.2%	Medium	0.6%
Health Admin.	-22.6%	Medium	24.9%	12.0%	Easy	0.4%
Business Admin.	-40.1%	Medium	1.1%	-7.0%	Easy	0.1%
Management	-51.0%	Medium	5.0%	-16.8%	Easy	0.1%
Strategic Comm. and Leadership	-56.3%	Hard	42.9%	21.2%	Easy	0.3%
Accounting	-57.3%	Medium	30.1%	-29.4%	Easy	0.03%

Inputs

Source: IPEDS

- Change in student demand
- Percent market share
- Competitive difficulty



Takeaways

- Regional market is constrained
- National market affords growth opportunities in STEM, health, and business

Identify Competitors' Audience, Claims & Tuition



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



Identify Competitors' Media Spend

Online MS Data Analytics Estimated Annual Paid Digital Spend

Sample Program

Competitor	Paid Search Spend Estimate	Paid Social Spend Estimate	Overall Digital Spend Estimate
University A (Local Private)	\$300K - \$550K	\$125K - \$250K	\$425K - \$800K
University B (Regional Public)	\$150K - \$300K	\$75K - \$150K	\$225K - \$450K
University C (National Player)	\$1.5M - \$2.8M	\$600k - \$1.2M	\$2.1M - \$4.0M
Your Institution	\$125K - \$200K	\$50K - \$100K	\$175K - \$300K

1) Ranges reflect online-adjusted conferrals, completion normalization, and CPA benchmarking.

Measure Your AI Visibility Against Your Peers'



Brand vs Competitors in AI

See how your brand stacks up against competitors in AI-generated responses.

Export CSV

BRANDS TRACKED



Including your institution

YOUR VISIBILITY

15%

Average AI visibility score

SHARE OF VOICE

19%

Of AI responses mention you

VISIBILITY GAP

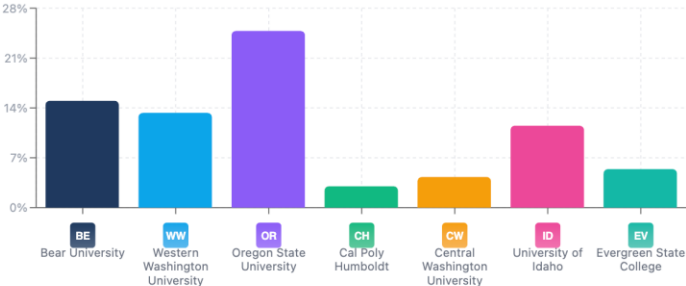
+5pts

Ahead of competitor average (10%)

Brand Visibility

AI visibility scores across tracked brands.

All (70) Branded (14) Non-branded (56)



Top Brands

644 mentions

Bear University (You)	15%	125→
Western Washington University	13.3%	111→
Oregon State University	24.8%	206→
Cal Poly Humboldt	3%	25→
Central Washington University	4.3%	36→
University of Idaho	11.5%	96→
Evergreen State College	5.4%	45→

Evaluate Portfolio and Program-Level ROI Regularly

Return

Total Net Tuition
Revenue (NTR)
generated through
partnership



Investment

Total agency fees,
media costs, etc.

6:1

Average return on investment for EAB
Adult Learner Recruitment partners

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Consider Where You Might Need External Support

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A Marketing Gap Analysis Clarifies Where to Build v. Buy

 Marketing and Recruitment Capabilities	Gap Analysis								
	Minor Gaps			Moderate Gaps			Major Gaps		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Lead generation								✓	
Multi-channel lead nurturing								✓	
Applicant engagement		✓							
CRM and data management			✓						
Analytics and reporting transparency							✓		
Content strategy and creative							✓		
SEO/GEO and organic visibility					✓				
Talent capacity and skill depth			✓						
Strategic alignment				✓					

Quick Poll

If you were evaluating external support options today, where would you need the most support?

- Lead generation
- Campaign execution
- CRM and data management
- Content strategy and creative
- SEO and GEO
- Other – *feel free to share in the Chat*



Consider Insourcing v. Outsourcing Best Practices



The Benefits of a Robust Insourcing v. Outsourcing Discussion

- **Create buy-in with in-house teams** supporting enrollment marketing and recruitment as you seek their input on this collaborative process
- **Streamline the partner selection process** with a shared understanding of high-priority needs that must be outsourced to a new partner



Insourcing

Insource core capabilities aligned with strategic assets, such as:

- Brand management
- Website ownership
- Social media accounts



Outsourcing

- Outsource for scale, specialization, and staffing support
- Seek partnerships that will expose in-house teams to best practices and grow their skills



93%

of surveyed higher ed marketing leaders work with an external partner

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5 Lessons from a Peer Expert

1 See if you can access the leads.

If so, work on bringing those leads into your system. Make sure first source, lead creation date, and program are identified.

2 Request that the vendor transition Google Ads ownership to your institution.

All you need is the Account ID, and Google reps can complete the transfer

3 Ask for access to the Comm Plan at every stage of the funnel.

4 Plan the transition at least 4–6 months prior to terminating the contract.

You want to have a marketing plan in place before the contract ends.

5 Identify who owns Paid Search landing pages.

Be prepared to temporarily stand up replacement landing pages when between vendors.



Rob Towner

Chief Business Officer
College of Professional
Education

Stevens Institute of
Technology



Be Prepared to Share...

Program Information

For each program that will require support, provide:

- Links to relevant program pages, brochures, landing pages, etc.
- Key value propositions or selling points
- Enrollment goals (current enrollment, future enrollment, capacity limits, class-shaping goals)
- Number of qualified inquiries/leads

Admissions Information

- Application deadlines
- Admissions requirements
- Scholarship availability and requirements
- Student demographics and characteristics (e.g., age, gender, industry background, years of experience, feeder schools, employers)

Marketing Operations

- Account access for existing GA4, and other marketing platforms. Consider whether your institution or the vendor owns the account
- Are there campaigns or tactics that your team has always managed in-house?
- Marketing, creative, and brand assets you have already developed.

Be Prepared to Share...

Marketing Performance: Top-of-Funnel

- Overview of recruitment, with breakdown of paid, organic, owned, and other efforts
 - Share current funnel stage performance rates from lead to yield
 - How leads are qualified, and who qualifies them
 - What hand-off points exist between the marketing team and admissions
- Top-of-funnel marketing channels, tactics, and any recent pilot efforts
 - Primary geo markets and contributors of enrollment success
 - Any key takeaways from language, imagery, platform, or other testing?

Monthly Top-of-Funnel Results

By channel if available

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| • Spend by channel | • Lead to application conversion rates |
| • Leads | • Lead engagement levels |
| • CTR, CPC, CPL | • Lead demographics |

Be Prepared to Share...



Marketing Performance: Lower Funnel

- Middle- to bottom-of-funnel tactics and results
 - On average, how long until a lead becomes an applicant?
 - On average, how long until a lead enrolls?
 - What signals in the data do you use to stop reaching out to a lead?
- Information on factors that influence media spend, lead volume, etc.
- Average speed to applicant and applicant to enrolled student timeframes
- Attribution model for enrollments by lead source

Monthly Lower Funnel Results

By channel if available

- Applications
- Application completion rates
- App-to-enrollment conversion rates
- Cost-per-enrollment

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Introducing EAB's Vendor Migration Support Module



Expert Guidance for a Clear Path Forward

Our team provides a comprehensive evaluation of your institution's current marketing and operations, along with **actionable roadmaps** and **targeted planning sessions** to align strategies and strengthen outcomes.

Diagnostic and Planning Support



Operational Assessment

Evaluate capability gaps in marketing, student success, and academic programs



Migration Roadmap

Sequenced short- and long-term activities, with recommended timing, owners, and dependencies



Marketing & Competitor Analyses

Identify growth opportunities against local, regional, and national competitors

Activation



Migration Planning Sprint

Planning workshop with key stakeholders to align goals, set timelines, and resolve constraints



Marketing & Student Success Workshops

Session with your team to define marketing and student success best practices and next steps

Institution A

Large Private University in the Northeast

Pre-EAB, FY2022



With EAB, FY2024



■ Indexed Digital Spend ■ Total Enrollments

Institution B

Mid-Sized Public University in the West

Pre-EAB, 2024-25



With EAB, 2025-26



■ Indexed Vendor Expense ■ New Admits



Select all that apply

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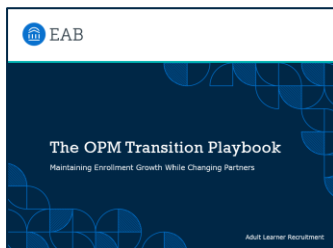
Resources Available In Our Post-Webinar Poll

32

Today's Slides

1

Receive a copy of today's **presentation slides**



New Survey Findings

2

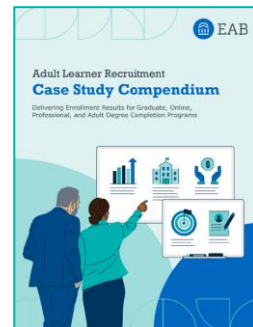
Read findings from our **new surveys** of graduate enrollment management leaders



Case Studies

3

Hear how our **partners** are growing graduate, online, and adult enrollment



4

Get the Latest Insights from EAB

Subscribe to the Adult Education blog to receive EAB's latest research and insights on graduate, online, and adult programs

Thank You!



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Tell us what you thought of today's session in our **post-webinar survey**



Consider our team a resource as you navigate these challenges



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