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EAB

Navigating Enrollment Challenges and Crafting Effective Outreach for Domestic Graduate and Adult Students

Apply Advance

Ways to Engage with Today's Webinar



Asking a Question



Brief Exit Survey



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

Meet Your Presenters



Grace Kiernan

*Associate Director,
Apply Advance*

GKiernan@eab.com



Todd Heilman

*Senior Consultant & Principal,
Adult Learner Recruitment*

THeilman@eab.com

Connect with EAB



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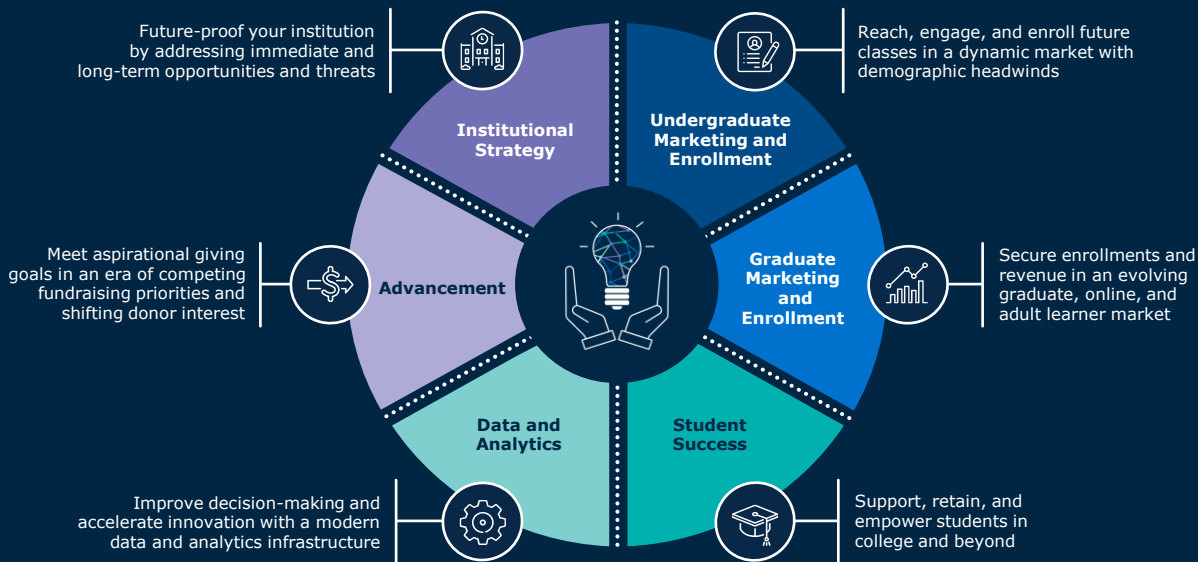


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Insight-Powered Solutions for Your Top Priorities and Toughest Challenges



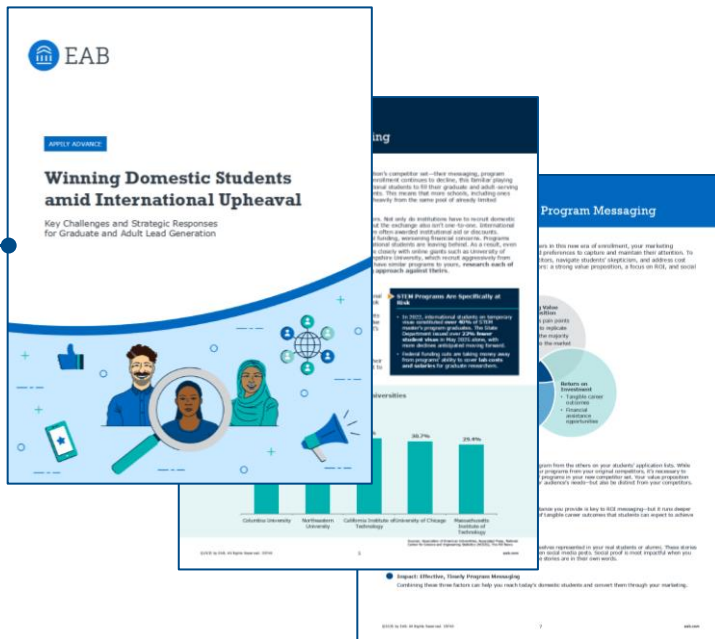
We partner with **2,800+** institutions to accelerate progress, deliver results, and enable lasting change.

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

Today's Featured Content

Winning Domestic Students amid International Upheaval

Read this content piece to gain a deeper understanding of today's market and strategies for how to strengthen your domestic student strategy to navigate it.



Poll: How much do you predict your program will be impacted by decreases in international enrollment?

- 1. Significantly**
- 2. It will be impacted, but other external factors will affect our program more**
- 3. Slightly**
- 4. Not at all**



The Latest on International Enrollment

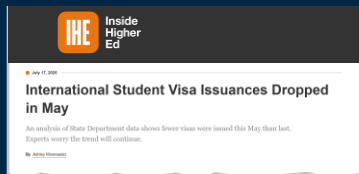
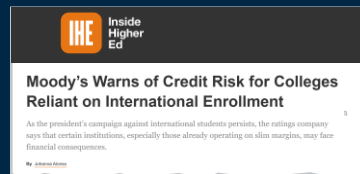
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Immediate—and Dire—Impacts on International Enrollment

-40% **Decline in international student interest** in US programs in 2025

\$3B **Potential revenue loss** from international graduate students for US institutions in just one year¹

...With More Rough Seas Ahead



1) Assuming average tuition and living expenses of around \$30,000 per student.

Source: The Pie, "Postgrad international student interest in US plunges by 40%," March 31 2025. Chris R. Glass, "There are Already 130,000 Fewer International Students in the US. Has Anyone Noticed," April 2025.

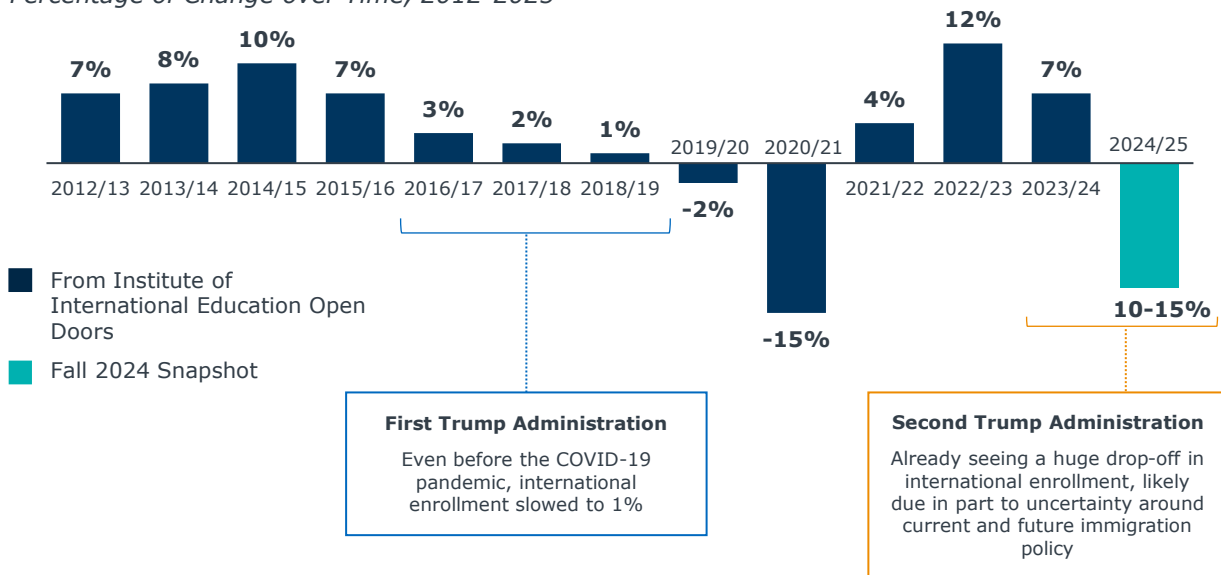
Domestic Recruitment Is More Crucial than Ever



Shifting International Policy Demands New Recruitment Strategies

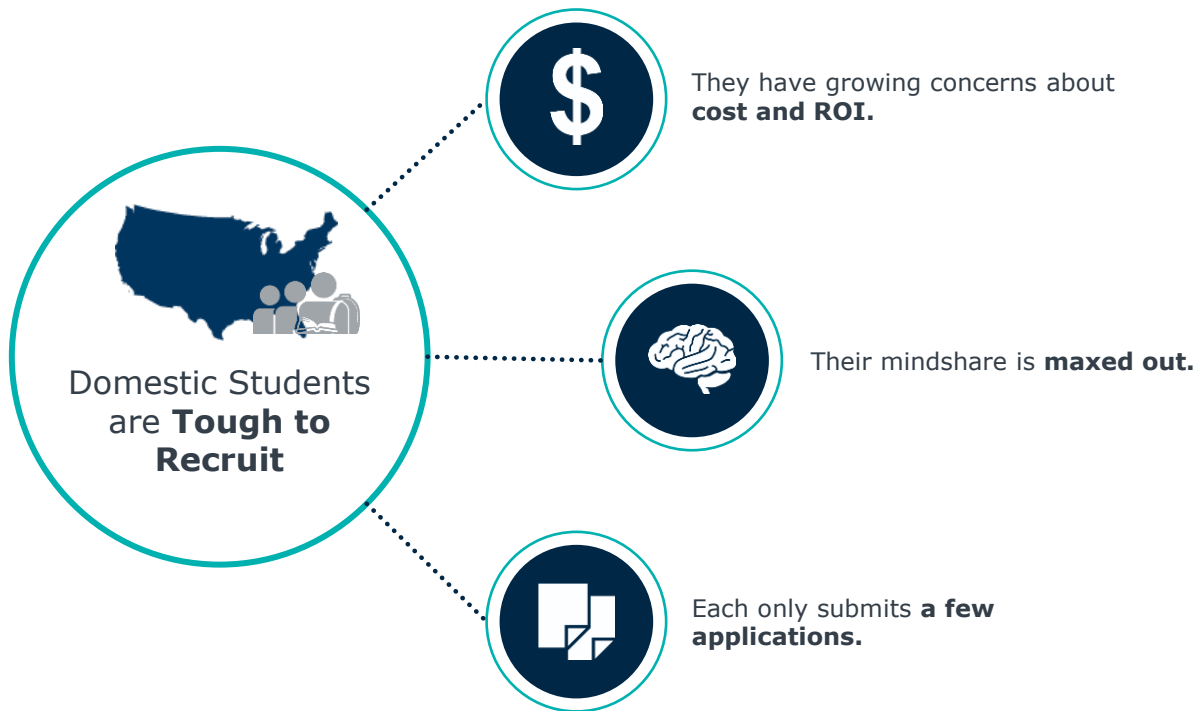
International Enrollment Trends at US Universities

Percentage of Change over Time, 2012-2025



But It's Not as Simple as It Sounds

Domestic Students Are Skeptical, Hard to Reach, and Selective



Poll: How do you plan to adjust your domestic lead gen strategy in response to declines in international enrollment?

Choose all that apply.

- 1. Re-evaluating our overall strategy against current and new competitors**
- 2. Changing our digital messaging to differentiate from competition**
- 3. Diversifying our lead gen strategy**
- 4. We don't plan to adjust our domestic strategy**
- 5. Other (feel free to explain in the chat!)**





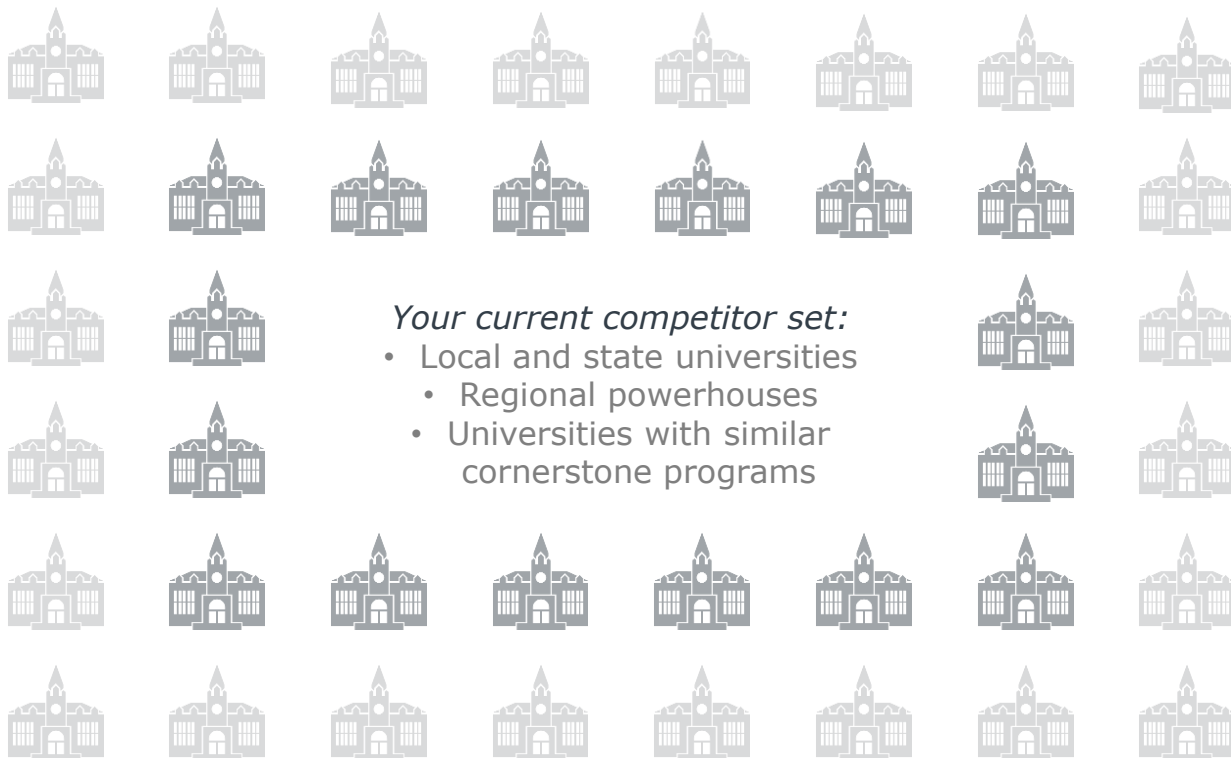
Your Competitor Set Is Changing

SECTION

1

Your Competitor Set Is Changing

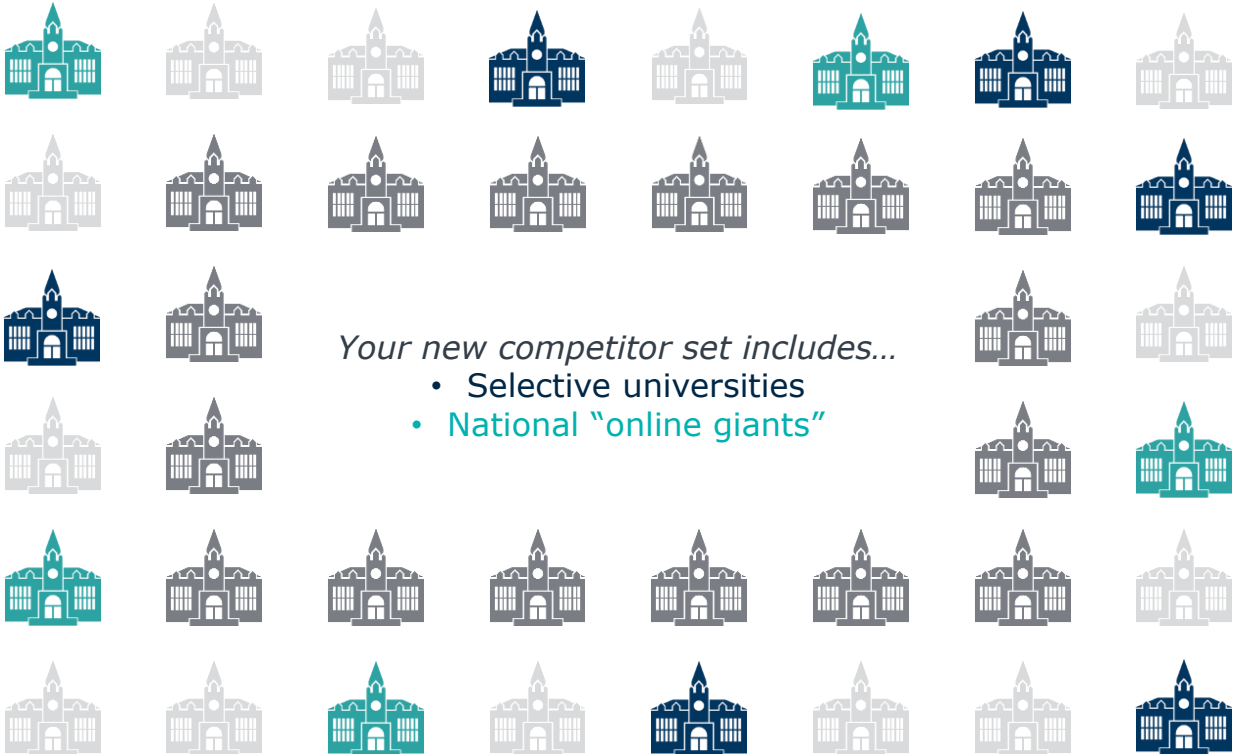
What Once Looked Like This...



Your Competitor Set Is Changing



...Now Looks More Like This

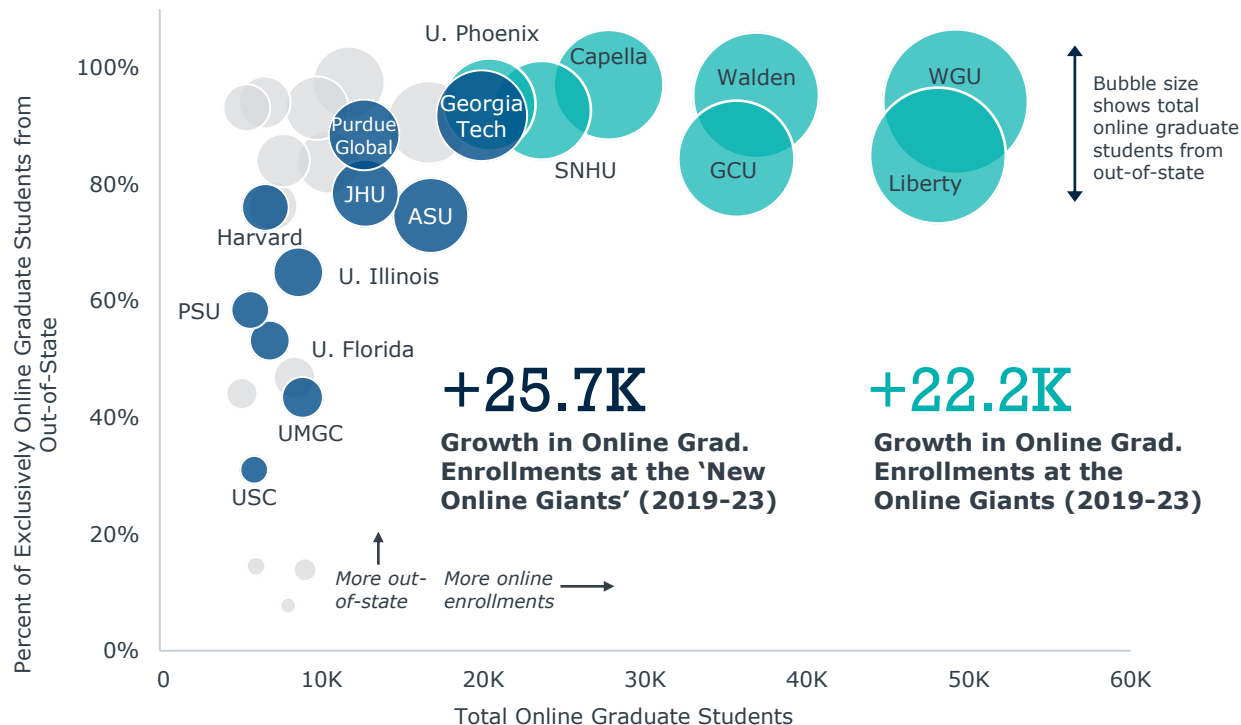


Your new competitor set includes...

- Selective universities
- National “online giants”

The Largest Online Institutions

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.

Reasons for the Shift



16

Financial Concerns Due to Federal Policies Are Driving Competition

Loss of Federal Funding



Decreasing International Enrollment



Schools Are Feeling the Squeeze

- The current administration has targeted **over 4,000 federal grants for termination to over 600 U.S. institutions**
- Public institutions have had a total of **\$2.1 billion** in funding targeted by the administration, while private institutions have had **\$1.2 billion** targeted
- This **increases pressure** on universities to find ways to generate revenue



Institutions Will Scramble To Fill the Gap

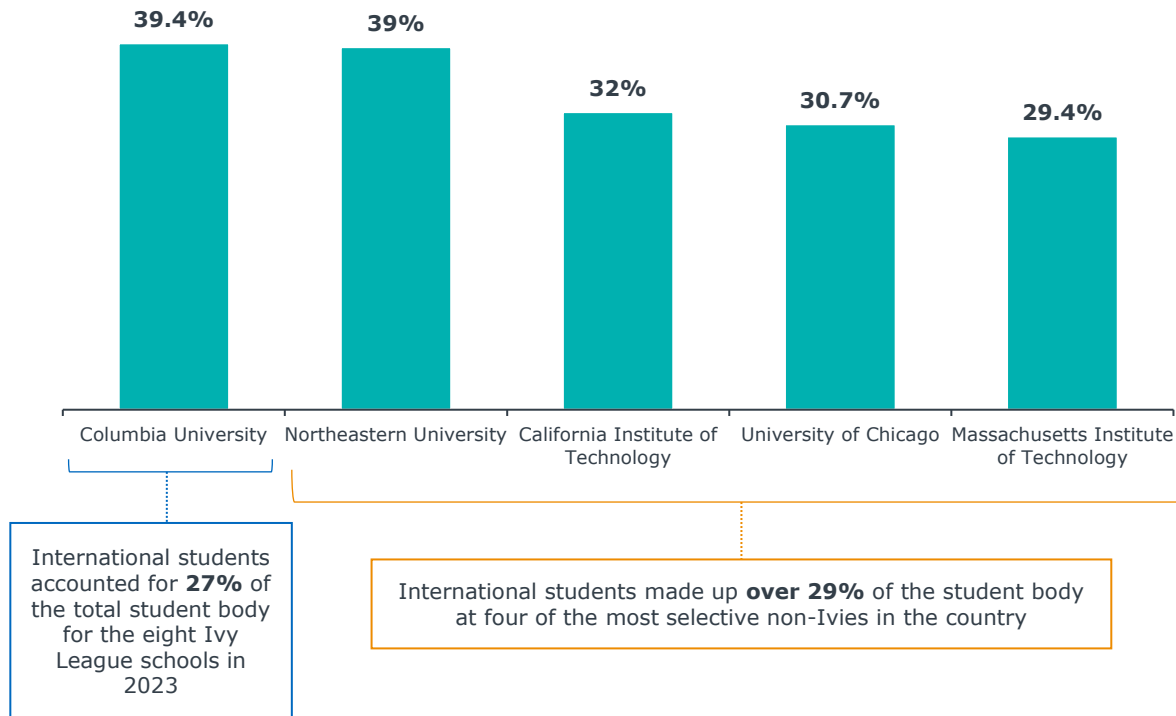
- With fewer international enrollments, more selective schools will seek to **enroll domestic students they may not have** otherwise
- This causes a **ripple effect** that touches all institutions
- International students **typically pay full-price**
- **More domestic students are needed** to fill the financial gap—not a one-to-one exchange

Selective U.S. Universities Must Pivot to Domestic



Percentage of International Students at Top U.S. Universities

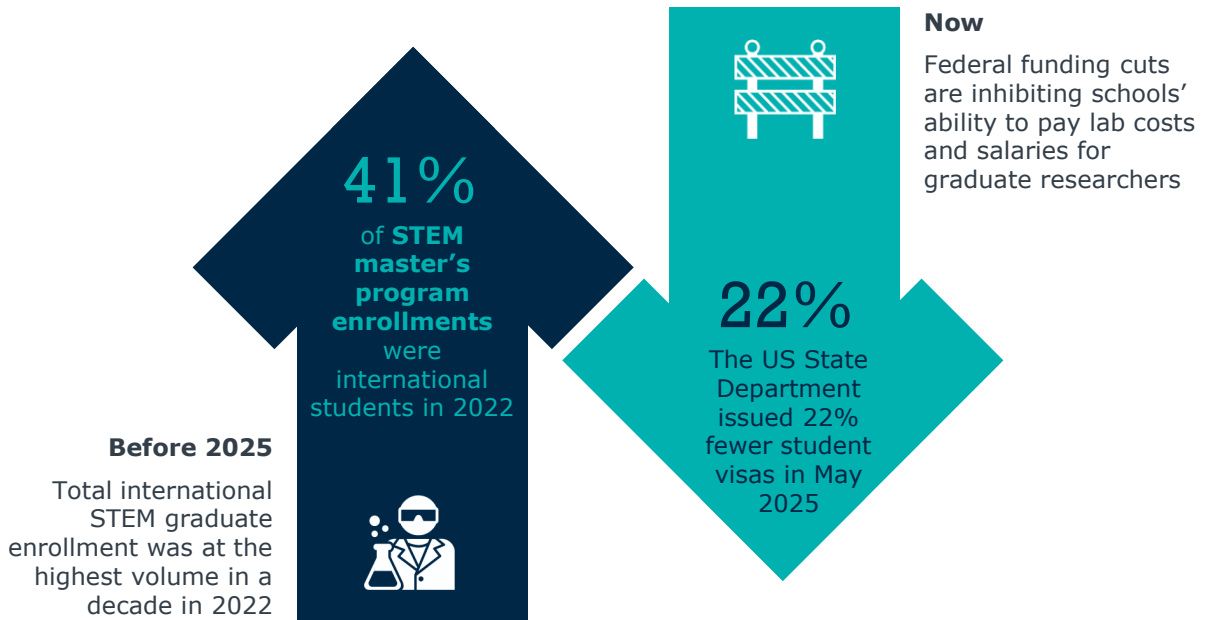
Selection of Most Selective U.S. Universities, 2023–24



STEM Programs Are Specifically at Risk



Zooming In on STEM: By the Numbers



Challenges of Recruiting STEM Graduate Students



Lofty Goals, Little Support

Graduate and adult-serving programs are experiencing increasing enrollment goals, with limited budgets, small teams and a short timeline to deliver



Increased Competition

Pandemic-era hybrid and remote modality courses increased the number of available program options



Influence of AI

Google's AI summaries are making SEO more difficult, and AI is limiting prospects for computer programmers



Stealth Shoppers

Prospects typically research degree and program options online, without 'raising their hand' as a lead for marketing



Unpredictable International Market

The current administration's rapidly evolving travel bans and immigration laws have created an uncertain future for international students

Apply Advance Helps Combat Common Challenges

Engage Your Audience

15%

Higher response rate than test-taker names

Make the Most of Your Budget

5:1

Apply leads provide a 5:1 return on investment

Find High-Intent Prospects

27%

Apply leads respond to marketing 27% faster than leads from a school's inquiry pool

Interested in Connecting with an Expert?

I'd like to speak further about...

1

Generating leads among prospective graduate and adult STEM students

2

Generating leads among prospective education graduate, healthcare, nursing, adult degree completion, or graduate business students





Domestic Students Are Challenging to Find, Engage, and Recruit

Three Major Obstacles to Overcome to Convert U.S. Students

SECTION

2

Concerns Around Cost and ROI

Financial Considerations Drive Domestic Student Decision-Making

36%



of prospective domestic graduate and adult students cited high program costs as their **biggest barrier to returning to school**

Cost outperformed other options by nearly **13%**

40%



of prospective domestic graduate and adult students are **unwilling to pay over \$500 per credit**

Only **29%** of domestic students were unsure of their preferred budget

31%

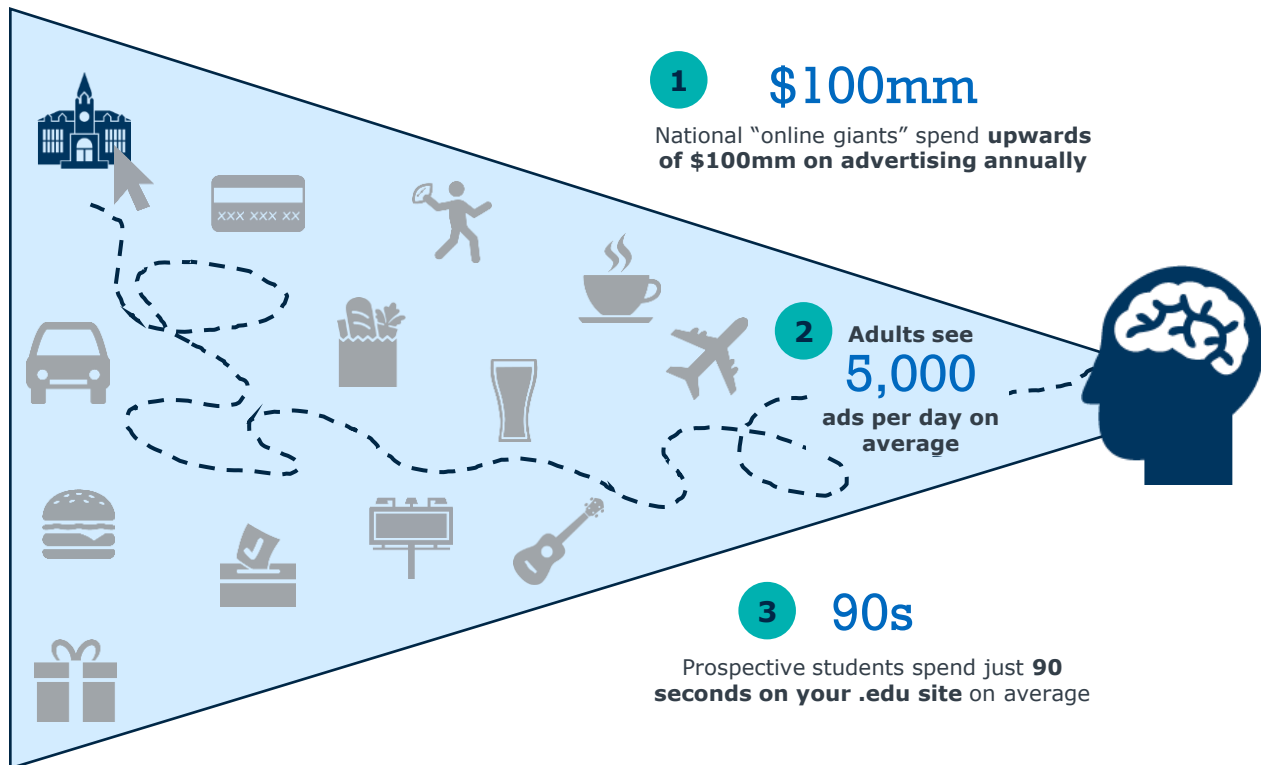


of prospective domestic graduate and adult students consider **increasing earning potential** to be a primary motivator

Only **12.9%** of international students shared this priority

Maxed-Out Mindshare

Three Reasons It's Tough to Break Through the Noise



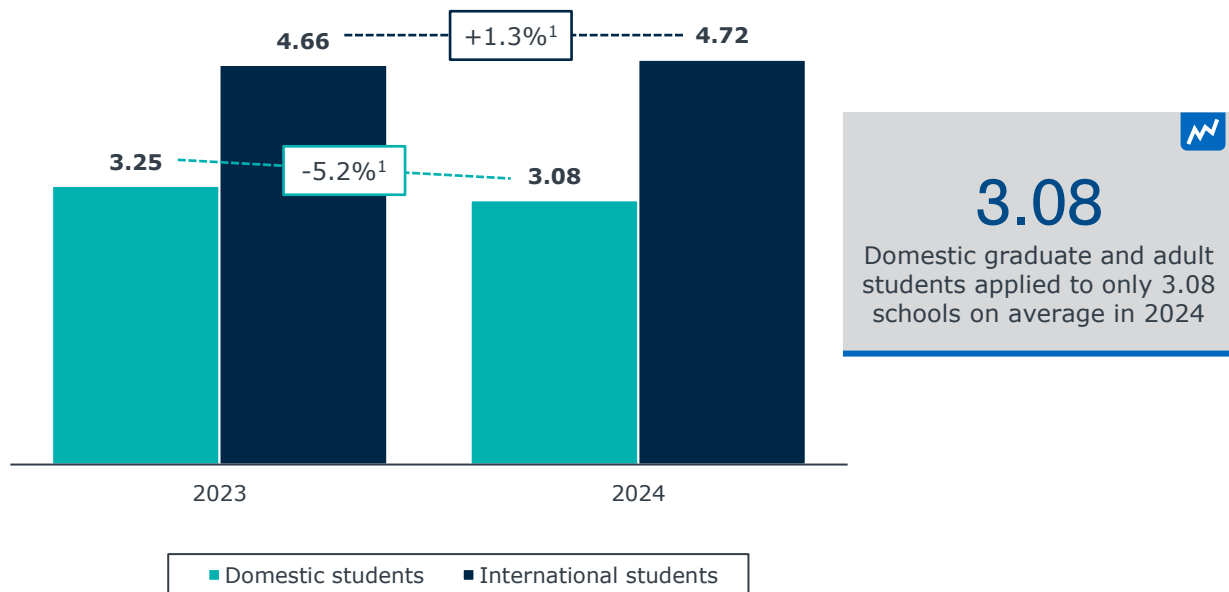
Few Applications per Student



International Students Are Applying More, U.S. Students Are Applying Less

Average Number of College Applications Submitted

Surveyed Prospective Graduate and Adult Students, 2023 and 2024



1) Using percent change formula.



Strategies for Success

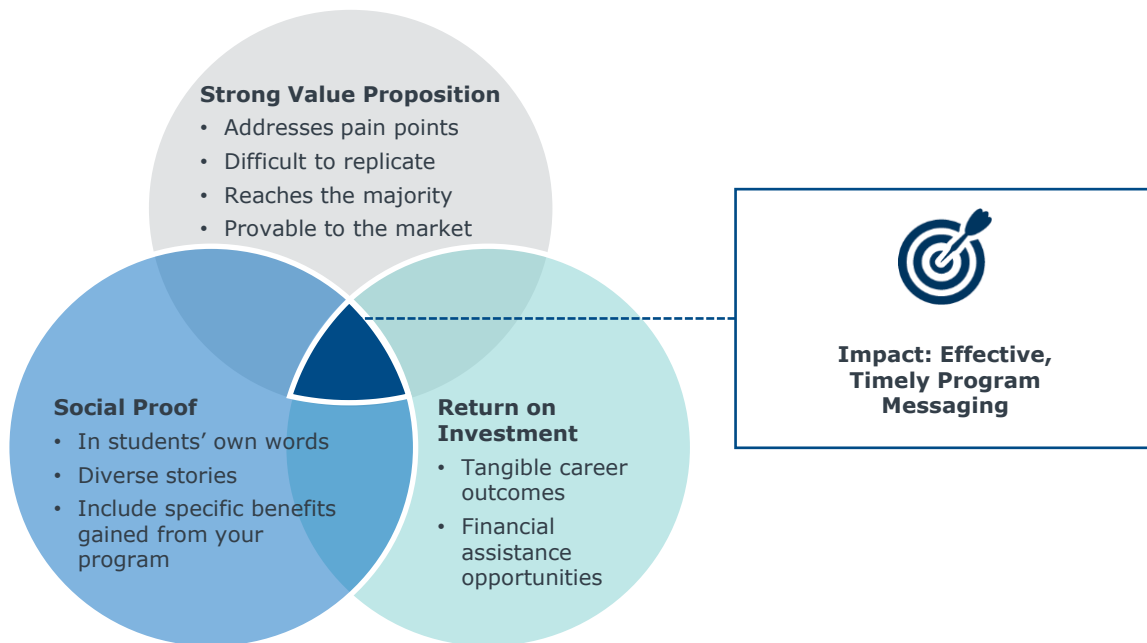
Strengthen Your Messaging and Build Your Top of Funnel

SECTION

3

Strengthen Your Program Messaging

Refined Program Messaging Should Include...



Take Advantage of Known Lead Sources

Engage Alumni and Generate High-Intent Leads



Recent Graduates

Provide alumni networking opportunities and career search resources. Consider giving alumni access to your library or other educational resources that encourage them to continue learning.



Alumni With Undergraduate-Age Children

As these alumni return to campus to help their children with their college search, take the opportunity to inform them about graduate educational opportunities.



Alumni of Specific Programs

Seeing positive student outcomes from alumni of graduate programs in their field may encourage alumni to seek education to further their careers.

The Vast Landscape of Adult & Grad Lead Sources

A Strong Strategy Uses A Combination of These—and More



Paid Search

Benefits: Converts leads quickly, leads are higher-intent

Downsides: Often a costly lead source, particularly in comparison to other lead sources



Organic .edu Leads

Benefits: Can be relatively low-cost, leads are higher-intent

Downsides: Most .edu sites are not fully optimized for lead-conversion efforts



Known Lead Sources

Benefits: Low-cost and high-intent source, no need to develop institutional awareness

Downsides: Maintaining alumni list hygiene can be challenging, lead volume grows slowly



Digital Ads

Benefits: High-intent lead source, social platforms simplify targeted marketing

Downsides: Often costly and hard to do well and know which platforms will lead to best outcomes



Test-Taker Lists

Benefits: Low-cost lead source

Downsides: Fewer students are taking graduate tests and lists aren't readily available for all adult-serving program types. Can only serve as one piece of a robust lead generation strategy



Student Search Platforms

Benefits: Engages leads through gamified/algorithmic content, can provide high-intent leads, creates institutional awareness, platform handles recruiting leads

Downsides: Institutions need to differentiate themselves with unique value offerings

Simplify Your Lead Generation Efforts with Apply Advance



Two Potential Approaches to Managing Lead Sources

The Standard Approach

This team works with many lead sources, including digital ads, test taker lists, and student search platforms.



- X Many sources to manage
- X Insufficient source-specific expertise

The Apply Approach

This team complements their efforts with Apply Advance, who helps streamline the approach and deliver high-intent, right-fit leads



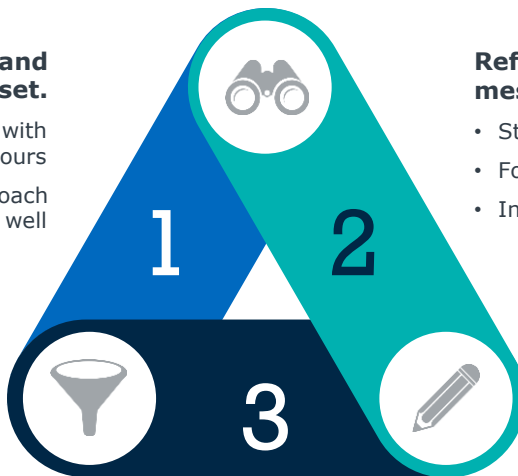
- ✓ Expansive reach without the hassle
- ✓ Increased buying power
- ✓ Results managed and optimized by experts
- ✓ Right-fit leads tailored to your goals

Research and understand your new competitor set.

- Research institutions with programs similar to yours
- Evaluate whether your approach competes well

Refine your program messaging.

- Strengthen your value proposition
- Focus on ROI
- Include social proof points



Build your top of funnel and diversify your sources.

- Leverage “known sources”
- Diversify lead sources across traditional and emerging channels
- Prioritize high-intent leads

Interested in More?

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What's Next?

Let Us Know in the Survey That Will Automatically Load in Your Browser



Request today's slide deck



Register for our webinar to learn more about how Apply Advance can deliver a high volume of domestic STEM leads



Read our toolkit to learn how to effectively harness the power of digital marketing

Q&A



Grace Kiernan
GKiernan@eab.com



Todd Heilman
THeilman@eab.com

Thank You for Joining Us!

Please take our brief webinar exit poll



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