



Making Your Program More Competitive in Challenging Times

March 2021



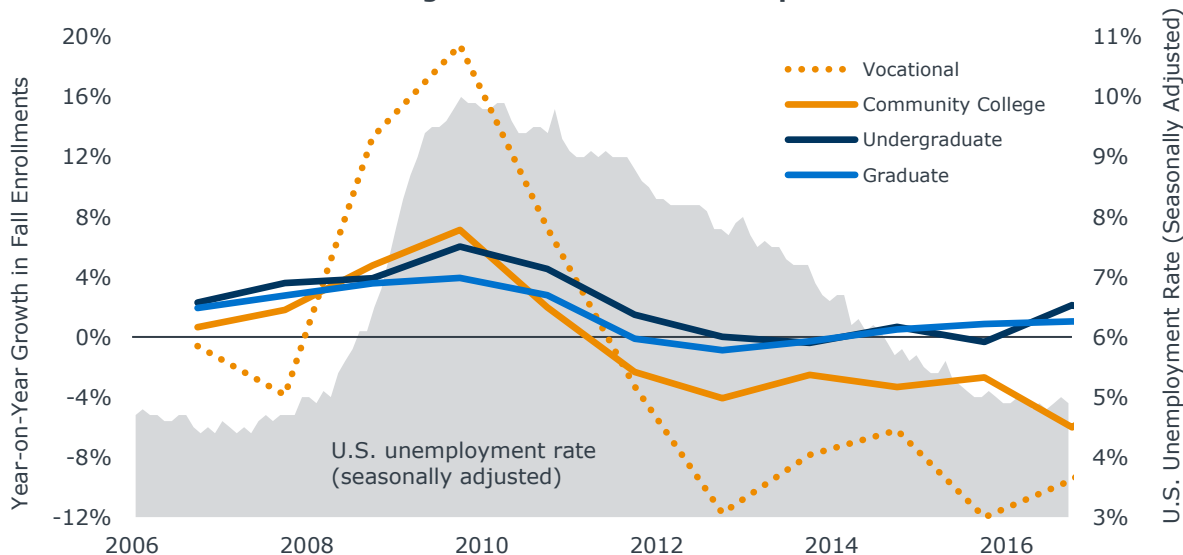
The National Landscape for Graduate Education

A Brief Overview



How Countercyclical are Grad Enrollments?

Grad Enrollment Increase During Last Recession Low Compared to Sub-Baccalaureate



Percentage point growth in enrollment during high unemployment:

Graduate

+2.3%

Undergraduate

+3.6%

Community College¹

+6.9%

Vocational²

+20.2%

1) Includes all public 2-year institutions.

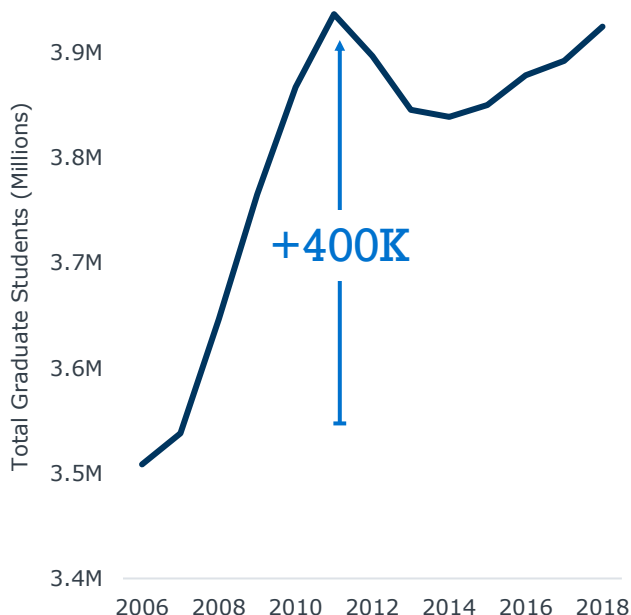
2) Includes all less-than-2-year institutions and all private nonprofit and for-profit 2-year institutions.

A 'Great' Recession for For-Profit Grad Schools



The Great Recession Increased Total Graduate Enrollments by Nearly 400K

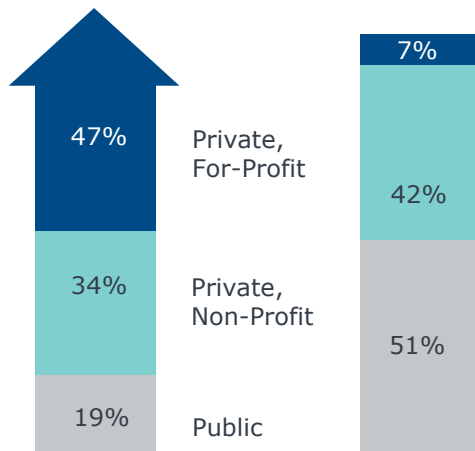
Total Graduate Students (12-Month Count)
4.0M



For-Profits Account For An Outsized Share of the Increase

Share of enrollment increase (2007-11)

Share of total enrollment in 2007



Almost Every Big Field Growing Seven Years Ago



Change in Master's and Prof. Doctorate Conferrals: Eight Largest Fields 2007-2013

Graduate Field	Size in 2007	Avg. Annual Growth (2007-13)	Change in Conferrals
Health Professions	96,062	+8%	+56,247
MBA	99,522	+4%	+24,861
Other Business	55,908	+3%	+14,140
Public Admin	31,350	+5%	+12,510
Engineering	29,884	+4%	+11,733
Computer Science	16,360	+4%	+6,745
Law	48,613	+2%	+6,313
Education	179,056	-1%	-10,369

3.7%

Overall Annual Growth Rate

Total Graduate Degree Conferrals 2007-2013

+171K

Net Increase in Conferrals

2007-2013

+182K

Increase from Growing Fields
2007-2013

-11K

Decrease from Declining Fields
2007-2013

Now Growth Limited to High-Cost Fields

Change in Master's and Prof. Doctorate Conferrals: Eight Largest Fields 2013-2019

Graduate Field	Size in 2013	Avg. Annual Growth (2013-19)	Change in Conferrals
Health Professions	152,309	+5%	+56,243
Computer Science	23,105	+12%	+22,962
Oth. Business	70,048	+2%	+10,662
Engineering	41,617	+3%	+8,761
Public Admin	43,860	+2%	+5,291
MBA	124,383	-1%	-3,890
Law	54,926	-3%	-10,514
Education	168,687	-2%	-17,905

1.5%

Overall Annual Growth Rate

Total Graduate Degree Conferrals 2013-19

+83K

Net Increase in Conferrals

2013-19

+125K

Increase from Growing Fields
2013-19

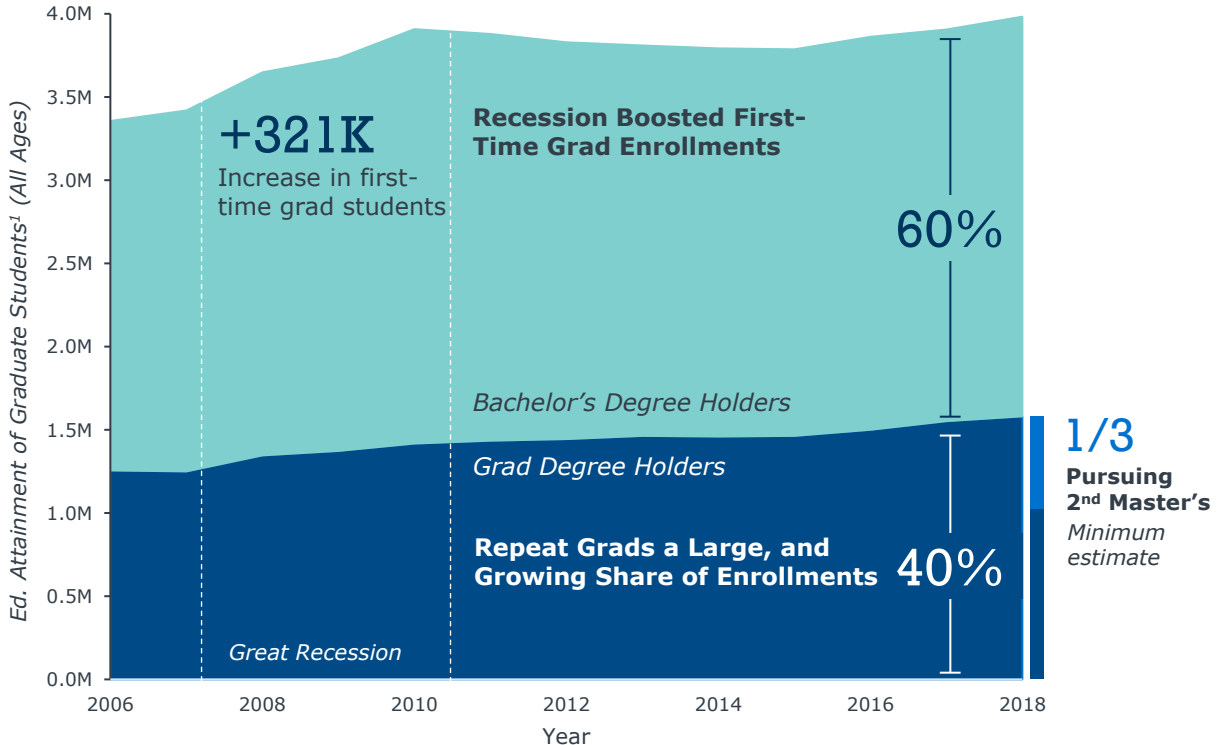
-42K

Decrease from Declining Fields
2013-19



Repeat Master's Students Surprisingly Common

Students Enrolled in Graduate Education by Prior Educational Attainment



1) Includes both academic and professional graduate programs
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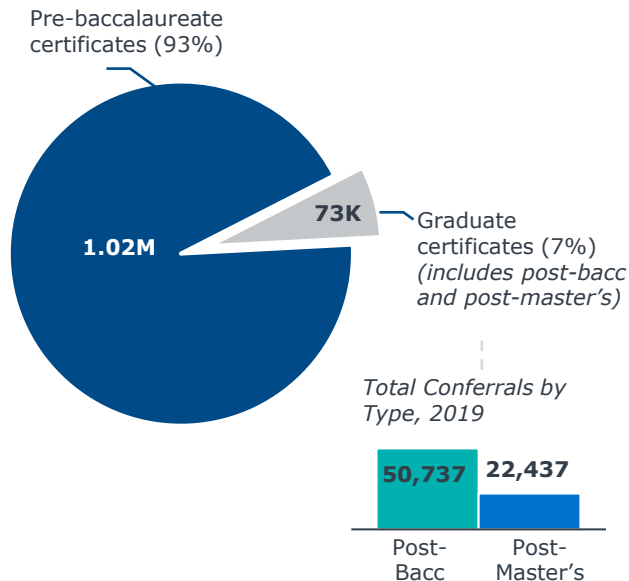
Source: 2006-18 ACS Survey Data, IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota; Hironao Okahana and Enyu Zhou, 'Graduate Enrollment and Degrees 2008 to 2018' Council of Graduate Schools; EAB interviews and analysis.

Fast Growth, But Small Market at Graduate Level



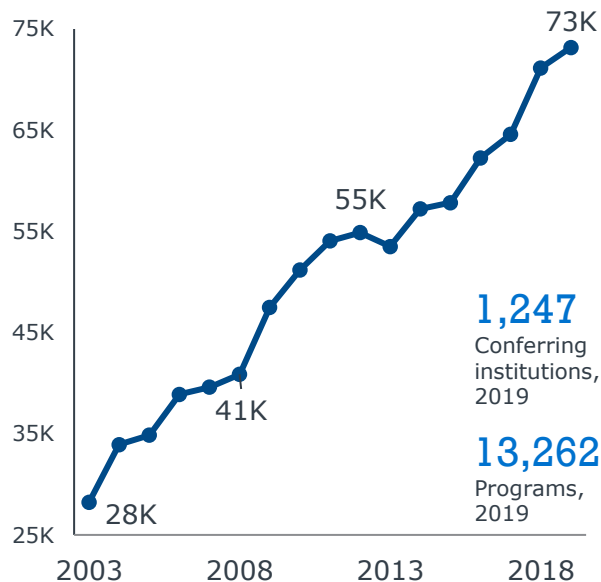
Graduate Certificates a Tiny Slice of Overall For-Credit Market

n= 1, 095,850 certificate conferrals in NCES IPEDS dataset, 2019



Hype Over Fast, Sustained Growth Masks Small Market Size

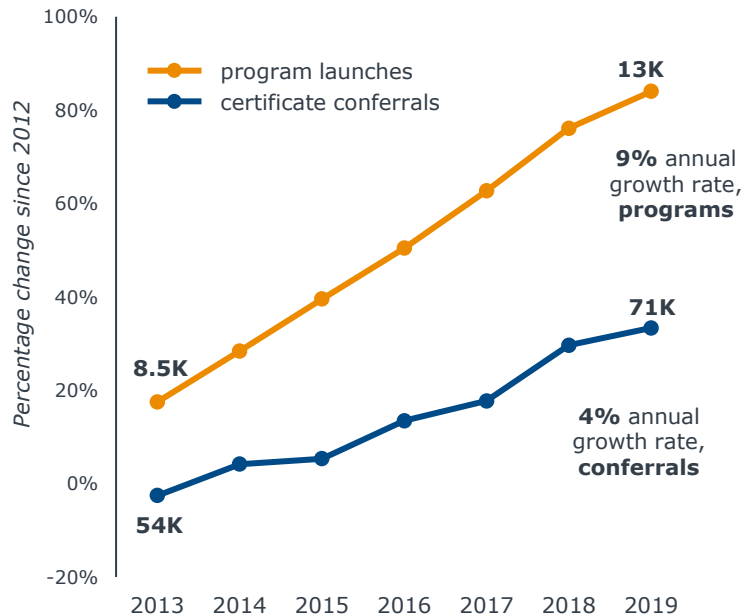
Annual Graduate Certificate Conferrals, 2003-2019



Unfettered Certificate Program Proliferation



Launches of New For-Credit Graduate Certificate Programs Far Outpace Conferrals



Many Programs Fail to Take Off (but Also Fail to Close)

46%

For-credit graduate certificate programs reporting zero completions in 2019

4

Median number of annual for-credit graduate certificate conferrals per program, excluding those with zero conferrals, in 2019



Prospective Student Mindset In A Time of Pandemic



How We Defined "Adult Learners"

Current and prospective students of graduate, bachelor's degree completion, online, and certificate programs¹

Research Methodology

COVID-19 Pulse Survey



Late May 2020
1036 Students and Prospects



Adult Learner Mindset Survey



Winter 2020
1077 Students and Prospects¹

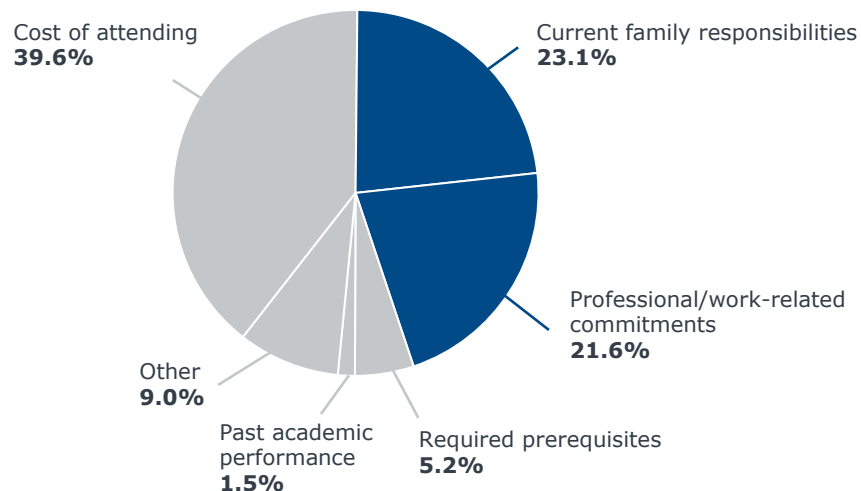
Flexible Options are Critical for Adult Learners



Family and Work Commitments Prevent Interested Prospects from Enrolling

What Prevents Interested Prospects from Pursuing Their Education Further?

Participants Who Indicated an Interest in Enrolling, but Not Within the Next Two Years



45%

say **family** and **work-related commitments** are the top reason they're not pursuing education

■ Family or work-related commitments ■ Other factors

Key Findings

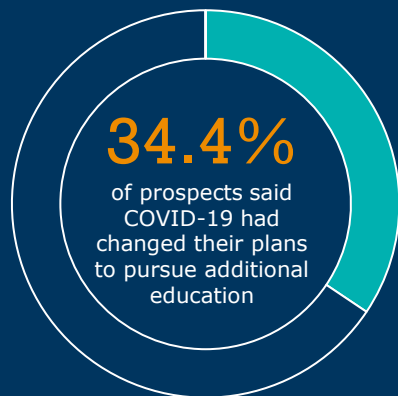
Four Predictions to Inform Graduate Enrollment Strategy During COVID-19

- 1 The pandemic will increase the **volatility** of your prospect pool.
- 2 **Online research** will become even more central to the adult learner journey to enrollment.
- 3 **Generational differences** will persist in attitudes toward online education.
- 4 Adult learners will approach the application process even **more pragmatically** than before.

Prospects' Plans in Flux Amid Economic Uncertainty

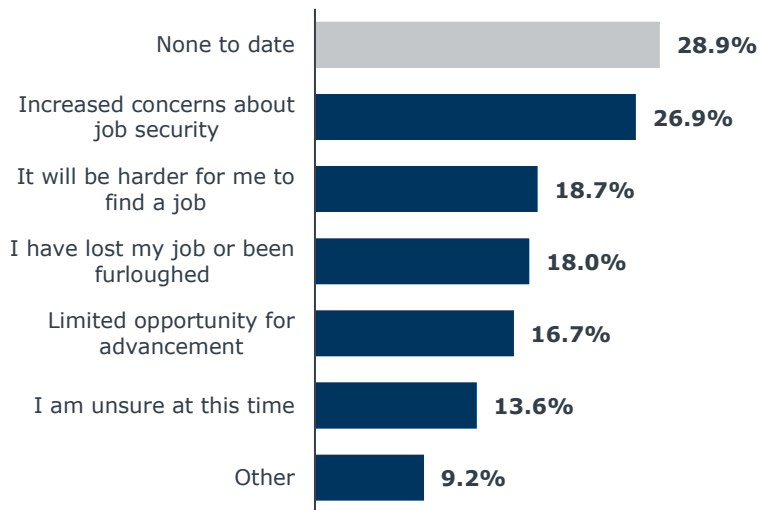
COVID-19 Has Impacted Many Prospects' Enrollment Plans

As of May 2020



"What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on your current job and/or future employment prospects?"

Prospective Students, as of May 2020¹



1) Participants could select multiple responses

Differentiating 'Hesitators' from 'Accelerators'

Hesitators



Accelerators

Mindset and Behaviors

- Will choose to delay enrollment plans
- Some are facing sudden lack of resources to support education due to job loss or pay cut
- Others are now motivated to continue working due to new concerns about future financial security

“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?”

- Survey Participant

Mindset and Behaviors

- Will choose to expedite enrollment plans
- Often seeking to enroll sooner to gain new skills because of newly difficult job market
- May be interested in non-degree or certificate options

“The job market has shrunk, and **education seems like a smart investment** in my future.”

- Survey Participant

The Key Role of Online Research Before COVID-19

“Indicate how important the following contacts and communications have been in your search for information about furthering your education.”

Adult Learners Aged 26 and Older, Winter 2020 Survey

Top 5 Most Important Contacts and Communications	Mean
School's responsiveness to my inquiries	4.15
Resources available on the school's website	4.08
Email communications from the school	3.80
Online resources (e.g., search engines, banners, and directories)	3.71
Individual communication with faculty in my program of interest	3.68

Mean scores are based on a 5-point scale, where 5 = extremely important and 1 = not at all important.

**Online Research
Pivotal Within
Multichannel Journey**

71%

of adult learners used the school's website when they began searching for more information

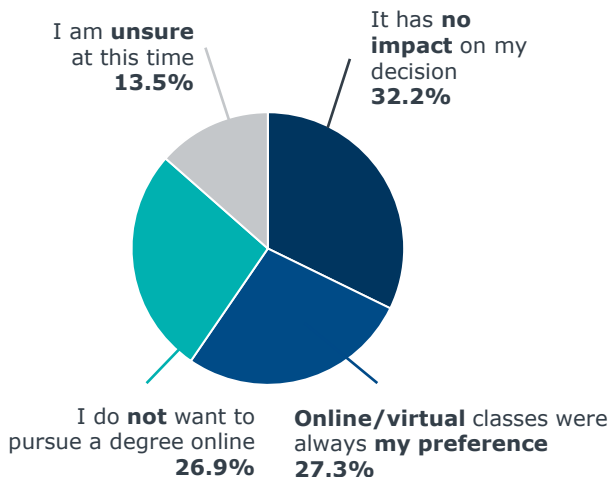
How Remote Delivery Might Impact Enrollment



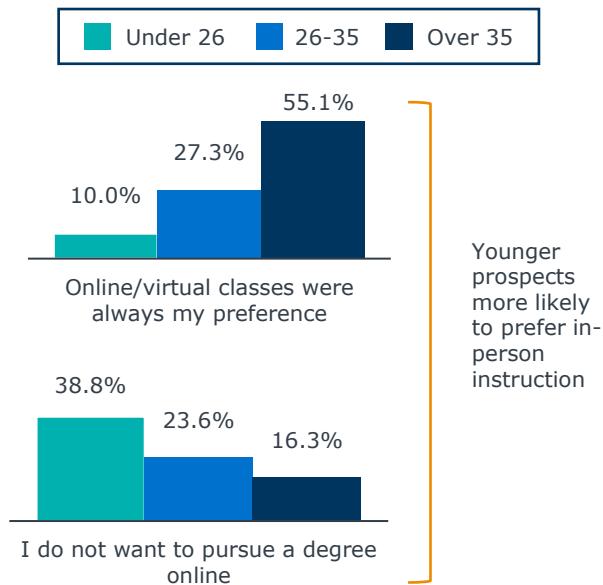
How Will Online-Only Contingency Plans Impact Prospects' Decision to Enroll?

"Which of the following statements best reflects your preference?"

All Responses



Responses by Age





Designing Programs that Prospective Students Want

Making Your Programs Stand Out



Starting from the Inside



Lead with Your Institution's Strengths and Values

Where do you have:



- Strengths among the faculty
- Strengths in other resources
- Strengths in your history and core brand
- Associations with your core mission



What will differentiate you?



- *Which of your resources and capabilities are truly special?*
- *Where does word of mouth help you most?*

Key Factors to Assess in Market Research



Labor market
demand trends

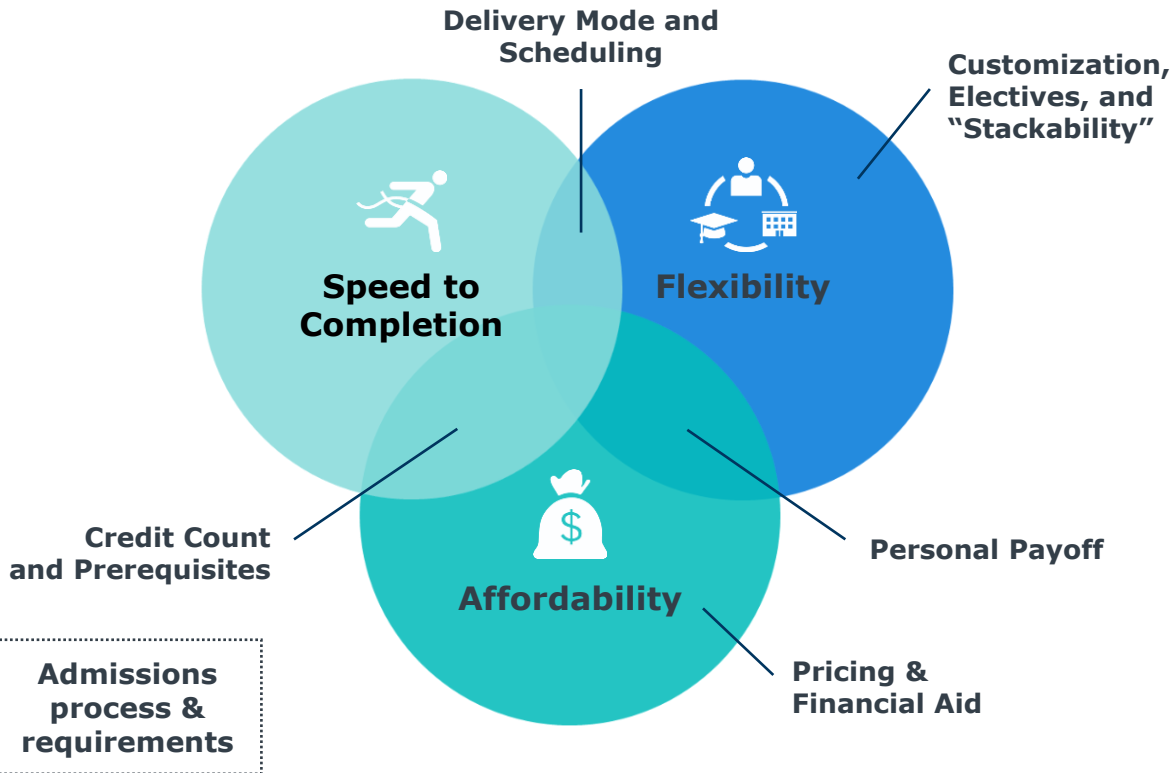


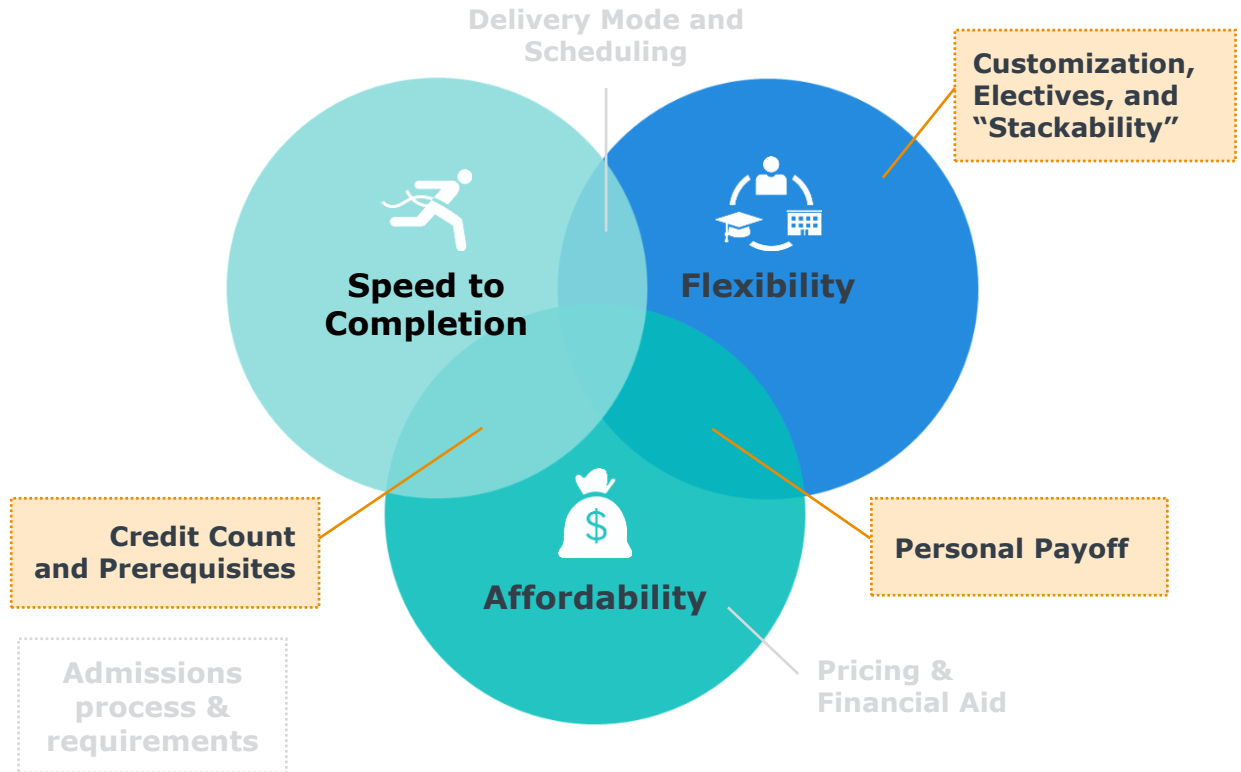
Intensity of
competition

Additional Considerations

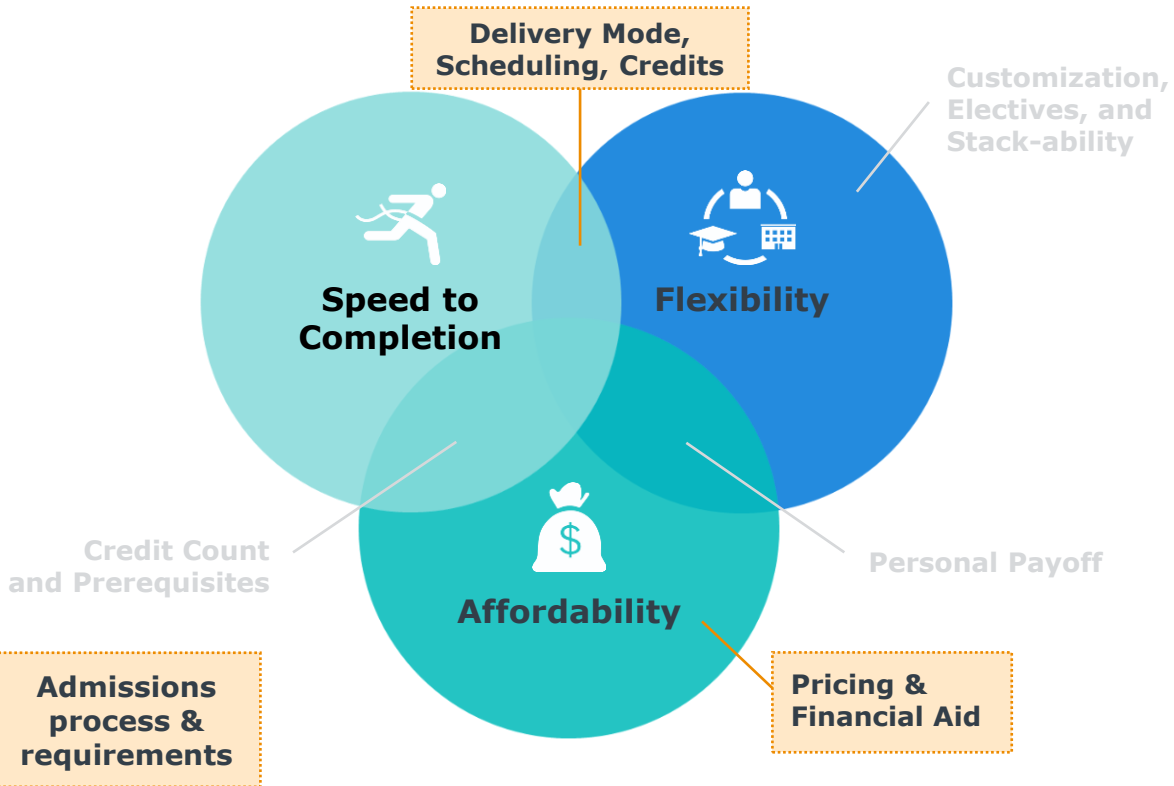
- Look for structural barriers—they can help
- Seek market segments where “local matters”
- Avoid market segments swamped by large players

The “Golden Triangle” of Attractive Program Design





Administrative Levers



Evaluating Admissions Requirements



4 key principles:



ACCURACY

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

CLARITY

- ▶ Can you communicate your admissions criteria easily?

SPEED

- ▶ Can you respond very quickly to most candidates?

ACCESS

- ▶ Have you eliminated unnecessary hurdles?



Program Name

- What terms are prospective students searching that could surface this program?
- What language will resonate with their employers as valuable knowledge?



Unique Selling Principle

Resist the temptation to emphasize CONTENT.

Consider Emphasizing Things like:

- ▶ **Student Outcomes:** Use testimonials and data to demonstrate potential payoffs.
- ▶ **Student Experience:** Help prospects understand what their time in the program will be like: features, people, experiences.
- ▶ **Institutional Mission:** Emphasize the special character of your institution. It's higher purpose. The difference it makes.



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