# 15 IMPROVEMENTS TO
## YOUR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY DIGITAL STRATEGY THAT BOOST STUDENT RECRUITMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

Recruitment efforts for colleges and universities have for a long time focused on mailers and college fairs. But with the ongoing generational tendency toward digital and web usage, there's more incentive than ever to up your game in this medium with your own student-recruitment efforts.

**The following e-book outlines 15 of the many ways in which you can take advantage of digital media and advertising to amp up your efforts and meet your consumer base (the elusive high schooler) where it's at – online.**

# SEO

## 1. KEYWORD RESEARCH

Doing some basic keyword research can really inform your strategy, from what you write on your blogs or news pages, as well as your general page copy across your website. Discover what's most popular — that way you'll know you're writing content appealing and useful to your target audience of high school students. This will also make you more likely to appear in relevant search results — colleges and universities are unique in that they can locate their users at their most attainable stages of the college-search process. **Target specific keywords such as "best nursing program" or "coolest college campuses" to find students ready to take actions such as applying or scheduling a visit.**

## 2. INBOUND LINKING

When third parties link to your site, it can have a great effect on your authority with Google and other search engines. Inbound links show a level of respect and authenticity offered by fellow sites and can move you up in search rankings. This is a benefit for your student recruits, as well, as it'll make it easier for them to find you if you're linked to by reputable news outlets and blogs that teens frequent. **Find your way onto third-party sites that really resonate.**

## 3. DESIGN OPTIMIZATION

Getting recruits to your website is just half the battle (depending on how you slice it). Next you need to make sure your visitor takes the right steps to a desired action. A well-designed webpage can ensure you're not throwing money at boosting traffic to a page that loses its audience. **Optimize your high-traffic pages for clear navigation and obvious and smartly placed calls to action buttons.**

# 8.5x
higher close rate on organic leads than print/direct mail leads

SOURCE: SEARCH ENGINE JOURNAL

# #1 FACTOR
in Google search ranking is
## INBOUND LINKS

SOURCE: BACKLINKO

# 38%
of people immediately stop engaging with a site if the content/layout is unattractive

SOURCE: ADOBE

## 4. FLOW AND CALLS TO ACTION

The journey your website visitor takes once he or she arrives is critical to reaching your end goal of setting up a visit, requesting more information or out-and-out applying. That's why the flow of your pages and where you place your calls to action (CTAs) is important. **Test it out – utilize A/B testing to determine where best to place your most crucial buttons and what messaging and wording resonates most with site users.**

## 5. HEAT TRACKING

One of the best ways to improve your design optimization and your page flow is to use a tool called heat tracking, which depicts the areas of your pages that receive the most attention and clicks. Analytics can only tell you so much – heat tracking gives you insight into why that high schooler left the admissions page so quickly and why that potential transfer student didn't notice the CTA button at the bottom of the page. **This information can help you optimize your page design so users can get to the end destination in a timely manner.**

### 232% INCREASE
in conversions when clutter is reduced around CTAs

SOURCE: VWO

### 80%
of users' time is spent in the immediate area of a loaded page before having to scroll

SOURCE: NIELSEN NORMAN GROUP

## SOCIAL MEDIA

### 6. PROFILE CONSOLIDATION

Being spread too thin is a detriment in many aspects of life — the same goes for your college or university's presence on social media. Don't make your users search too hard in order to find you by having countless social profiles under the umbrella of your institution — make yourself available all in one place. People aren't looking for subpages, so your valuable content is being missed outside of your primary, main profile. **Embrace one social hub per platform — rein it in.**

### 7. PLATFORM SELECTION

You can't market digitally to today's high schoolers without diversifying your social platform usage and occasionally taking some risks. Embrace some offbeat choices — keep tabs on what's up and coming. Consider Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as required reading, while new platforms that incorporate video and chat functionality are (highly) recommended reading. **Have a bigger impact than your competitors through some trial and error on social — be ahead of the curve.**

### 8. POST RELEVANCY AND FREQUENCY

One of the toughest calls a university or college marketer can make is how often to post on social accounts. There's a fine line between posting enough to be seen by the right eyes, while not becoming a newsfeed annoyance. There's no one answer, as region, target student and public awareness all factor into your ideal posting frequency, but the most surefire way is to track the times in which your followers are habitually engaged and avoid times high schoolers would typically be sleeping or otherwise occupied. **Most importantly — always moderate and respond to posts and comments in a timely manner to maintain relevancy and reliability!**

**60,000,000+**
business pages are on Facebook — consolidate so you don't compete with yourself

SOURCE: FACEBOOK

**60%**
of the 2015 graduating high school class uses Snapchat daily

SOURCE: NICHE

**52-92 MINUTES**
average time spent by teens on social media daily

SOURCE: COMMON SENSE MEDIA

## 9. TARGETED ADVERTISING

When it comes to social media marketing, you don't have to simply blanket the market. You can employ targeted advertising to winnow down your focus to the key users you're after. To start, take a look at your last incoming class – what were the predominant demographics? Target common home states and cities, relate your content to these demos and perhaps even target interests (i.e., serve ads for upcoming major sporting events to students who have shown interest in your athletic teams). **Make better use of your social budget with well-defined targeting parameters.**

## 10. NATIVE VIDEO CONTENT

More so than plain-text or image-based advertising, video performs the best of any type of content on the web. This is primarily driven by the teenage generation. Embrace video in your social content with short-and-sweet, 30-seconds-or-less clips that are (a) understandable without sound for frequent scrollers and (b) engaging to a young audience. **Cast a big net – attract recruits to your site with video, and double-back with targeted remarketing video after they leave.**

**8¢** average cost per Facebook ad click of teens, lowest among all age demos

SOURCE: HUBSPOT

Top 3 social platforms among teens have

**INTEGRATED VIDEO**

**(Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram)**

SOURCE: STATISTA

# CONTENT AND COMMUNICATION

### 11. ENGAGING BLOGS

It's one thing to maintain a blog or news section on your college or university website. It's quite another to develop engaging content with which potential student recruits actually want to interact. Most importantly, speak their language — solve and address problems they're facing openly and honestly (and with good humor). And limit the straight news, PR-sounding content you include in this student-focused space. **They'll see through any disjointed or disingenuous messaging.**

### 12. AUTOMATED EMAILS

If you have student recruit leads who engage with your site and then linger on your to-do list for weeks, you're missing a lot of opportunity. College marketers juggle a lot, so one of the most useful words you'll hear in this guide is automation. When users take actions on your site, you should have an established series of communications queued up to send at every stage of the college-search process. Just remember to always provide value, rather than the hard sell. **Nurture your leads with valuable, worthwhile content from initial contact to the day they move into the dorms.**

### 13. VALUABLE DOWNLOADABLES

A generation brought up in the era of content, from social media to BuzzFeed, expects information that they value in order to buy in. That's why one of the best ways to gain new student recruitment information, such as names, email addresses or even interests, is to offer something truly valuable for download, such as checklists, guides or infographics, behind a form wall. (And it doesn't have to be downloadable — if something is attractive enough, such as a video, it can impel a form submission just for access.) **Collect contact info by offering something of use — it's the best way to set the standard for your ongoing lead relationship.**

## 75%
**of blog-readers are younger than 35**

SOURCE: SYSOMOS

## 79%
**of top-performing companies have used automation 2+ years**

SOURCE: GLEANSTER

## 7 TIMES MORE
**leads generated at companies with 30+ content-based landing pages than those with less than 10**

SOURCE: HUBSPOT

# CONTENT AND COMMUNICATION

## 14. PAID SEARCH

Communicating with potential recruits when they're likeliest to take an action is a no-brainer. That's why paid search, such as Google AdWords, is such a smart idea. With the right keyword choices (don't be afraid to get specific with longtail keywords) you can reach a student when he or she has a specific question (i.e., "best midwest colleges for biochemistry") and serve up a sponsored search result with value (i.e., "#1 Biochemistry Faculty — Schedule a Visit"). **Get in front of them when they're in the frame of mind to enroll.**

## 15. PAID VIDEO

With consistently the highest levels of engagement of any type of content on the web, video is a valuable avenue for taking your paid efforts. From YouTube pre-roll ads to Facebook, Snapchat or Instagram sponsored video content, you can foray your video into multi-use advertising tools. **Your target audience will be more engaged with your video message more than a banner ad.**

**33 CONVERTED LEADS**
per average $1,000 spent
by college or university on paid search

SOURCE: MARKETING SHERPA

**16 MINUTES**
average time users spend watching
(not skipping) paid video per month

SOURCE: COMSCORE

# BOOST AWAY.

Ready to get started with your university or college digital marketing efforts? We have a team for that. Contact Epicosity at **info@epicosity.com** or **605-275-3742**.

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