

THE E-RECRUITING PLAYBOOK

A GUIDE FOR PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES

OVERVIEW

Historically, approximately 20 percent of American college students have attended private universities. However, those numbers are shrinking. According to the Wall Street Journal, enrollment at more than a quarter of private four-year schools declined 10 percent or more in recent years. Private institutions overall are facing unsettling times. Concern about the high cost of tuition has many families rethinking the merits of enrolling in private universities. Despite significant tuition breaks, enrollment numbers are still declining. To address these challenges, universities are focusing on expanding reach, finding the right type of students to fit their academic profile, and discovering new ways to demonstrate their value.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Most private institutions will need to make significant shifts to remain competitive. In the following guide, we'll cover seven challenges that these universities are facing, and some key next steps needed to succeed.



STAT SHEET

One-third of private universities are on an unsustainable financial path, with operating costs increasing faster than endowment returns and other revenues could cover them. ¹

Net revenue is expected to decline by an average of 19 percent at private institutions next year. This led Moody's to downgrade the credit rating of 36 schools. ³

Private colleges now spend an average of \$3,043 to recruit every student who enrolls, according to NACAC. That's 40 percent more than five years ago. ²

Private colleges pay out 37 percent of their tuition revenue as undergraduate financial aid, up from 34 percent in 2001. ⁴

The average student now applies to 10-12 schools—making it even more difficult to predict yield rates. ⁵



CHALLENGE



RUNDOWN

Declining enrollment

Fewer students are choosing private colleges in favor of less expensive public institutions. To thrive, private schools need a more compelling way to enhance their image.

GAME PLAN

Strengthen brand presence

Those schools that can demonstrate their value to increasingly price-conscious students and parents will win out. To do so, they must find more effective ways to highlight the unique attributes of their institution than traditional look books and campus tours. To further strengthen their brand, they should also be reaching prospective students at the very earliest stages of college search. Some argue that this should take place even before students begin high school.

SUPPORT

How eRecruiting can help

According to a recent Noel-Levitz report, many college-bound students are interested in connecting with colleges via chats (69%) and webcasts (75%), making eRecruiting the ideal way to meet and attract prospective students. That's why many universities are now strengthening their brand by forging online relationships with students very early in their college search. Instead of relying exclusively on in-person outreach, universities gain exposure to students who are actively researching colleges online.



HALL OF FAME

Northeastern University

Northeastern University is one institution that embodies the characteristics necessary for a strong brand. They are strategic and market-driven. The university's admission team is strengthening its brand in-person and online in a number of ways. They help build an affinity for the brand by creating a highly welcoming environment, both online and on campus.

This involves:

- Hosting custom online events to engage a database of more than one million college-bound students.
- Inviting prospective graduate students to online information sessions.
- Encouraging admitted graduate students to participate in online consortium events.
- Offering summer programs for underclassmen to reduce summer melt and improve retention.



Northeastern



CHALLENGE

RUNDOWN

Making recruiting more efficient

The Common App has made it easy for students to apply to even more schools. In fact, there were more than 3.45 million applications submitted through the Common App in 2013-2014. But this influx of applications puts immense pressure on admissions departments, who often have little insight into which students truly are interested and are a good fit for the university. They need a way to improve the efficiency of outreach.

GAME PLAN

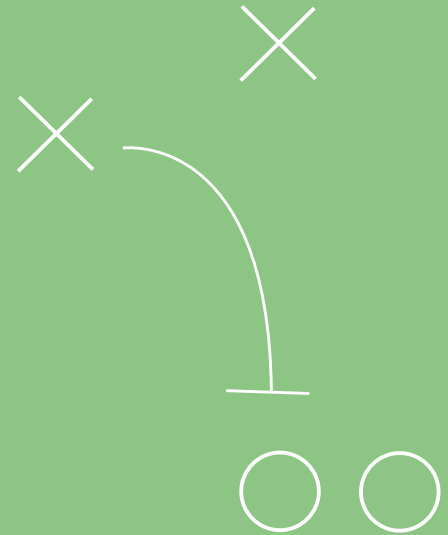
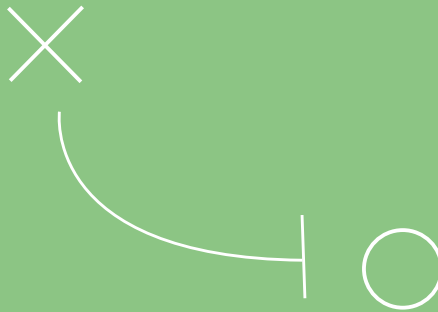
Connect with the right students to shape their class

To minimize transfer outs, admissions counselors need to reach the right kinds of students to ensure that they're the right fit for the school's profile. This starts with gathering detailed student profile data online and using it to identify students who meet a specific demographic criteria that align with the school's recruitment goals. It then involves conducting meaningful conversations with prospective students both online and face-to-face to help them gain a more well-rounded view of what the school has to offer, and whether it's the best environment for them.

SUPPORT

How eRecruiting can help

eRecruiting enables admissions to be more strategic in its outreach. Instead of expending considerable resources traveling far and wide to find students who are the best fit, universities can more easily reach students with the academic quality and demographic and personal characteristics they're seeking. Universities can then engage with the right students in a more meaningful way via more frequent, personal online communications—helping them hone in on which students to focus their attention on.



HALL OF FAME

University of Rochester

The University of Rochester hosts webcasts on topics such as college essay tips and financial aid advice during CollegeWeekLive's themed online events. The webcasts are geared to specific populations such as international students and first-generation students. This helps the university to reach target student segments, while offering those students valuable content that further engages them in conversations. Having multiple, personal conversations with students both online and in-person makes it easier to find those who are the best fit for the institution--and who have the highest demonstrated interest.





CHALLENGE

RUNDOWN

Expand reach

In some geographic areas, there are fewer high school graduates. This is particularly challenging for schools in areas such as Massachusetts with sharply declining enrollment numbers. To overcome these challenges, universities are looking to attract students in both high-growth states as well as overseas. However, shrinking travel budgets are making it tough to expand reach. In addition, the international admissions process is lengthier and more complex, often involving contractors and consulting firms at various stages of the admissions spectrum. Ensuring brand consistency among these disparate parties is often a challenge. In addition, international students have many additional considerations, such as obtaining a student visa, mastering the TOEFL, dealing with cultural adjustment, and more.

GAME PLAN

Augment in-person recruiting with online recruiting

Savvy admissions teams are no longer relying exclusively on in-person visits for recruiting. They're finding alternate ways to connect with students and parents. For example, admissions counselors have found it highly effective to communicate with students via text chat and similar channels where students are most comfortable.

SUPPORT

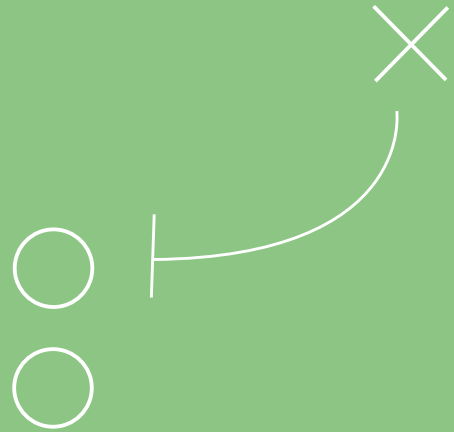
How eRecruiting can help

According to Noel-Levitz, international students rely heavily on technology, and find communications with current students, admissions counselors, and international student services professionals very influential in helping them with their college decisions. To that end, many admissions counselors are participating in special online events and group chat sessions to expand reach around the country - and the world.

These events can also be customized with content specifically designed to attract students who meet specific demographic criteria. Additionally, having online events gives schools the flexibility to bring in additional hosts, such as student ambassadors, to chat online with prospective students. Schools report prospective students respond much better to invitations to chat with current students than they do to talk with admissions staff. Many savvy universities are also building positive relationships

with students and parents by inviting them to online presentations by organizations such as TOEFL, IELTS, and the U.S. State Department, to help them navigate the complexities of attending a university outside of their home country.

eRecruiting also gives schools the freedom to test out new markets online before committing resources to in-person visits.



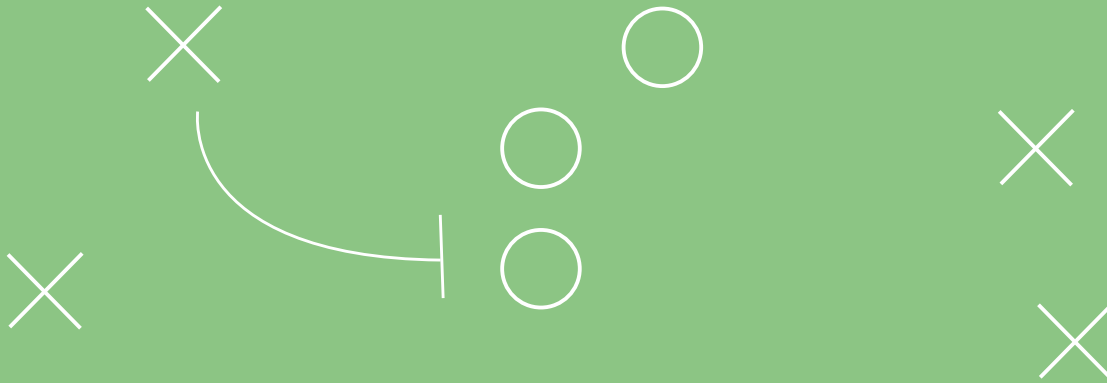
HALL OF FAME

Johnson & Wales University

Schools like Johnson & Wales University use unique online recruiting events to draw in students from afar. As a hands-on school, Johnson & Wales shows students the unique learning opportunities they offer for different degree programs. For example, they frequently broadcast live video presentations for prospective students from their renowned cooking classes. This unique approach gives out-of-state and international students a compelling way to get to know the school.



JOHNSON & WALES
UNIVERSITY



CHALLENGE

RUNDOWN

Improve operating efficiency

The inability to raise tuitions is putting immense pressure on universities to reduce operating costs. This is limiting the number of conversations admissions can have with prospective students and their families.

GAME PLAN

Find more efficient ways to engage

The good news is that there are alternative ways to engage with students beyond face-to-face meetings. In fact, some of these approaches can also improve the results of campus visits and other in-person meetings.

SUPPORT

How eRecruiting can help

Video chat and other online communications allow admissions counselors to connect with students prior to in-person meetings and campus visits. This is also beneficial for helping students who are facing sensitive issues that they may not be comfortable discussing in person. Many schools are also improving efficiency by inviting students they've met in person to reconnect with them during an online chat. This post-event follow-up helps to convert students more quickly from inquiry to applicant.



HALL OF FAME

Pace University

Pace University is one school that has mastered the art of eRecruiting. The university uses CollegeWeekLive to reduce the cost of attracting students from around the world. In addition, they encourage prospective students from their database to chat with their admissions team online at CollegeWeekLive before and after in-person visits. In one year alone, more than 7,500 students—including 620 repeat visitors—connected with the admissions team online. This is giving the school a way to not only drive down the cost of initial outreach but reduce the cost of engaging with students throughout the enrollment process.





CHALLENGE

RUNDOWN

Building relationships with high school counselors

High school counselors are a major influencer of students' college decisions, yet until recently it was difficult for colleges to build relationships with counselors that they couldn't meet in person. The US alone has more than 30,000 public secondary schools and 9,000 private secondary schools. It's virtually impossible for admissions counselors to visit all these schools.

GAME PLAN

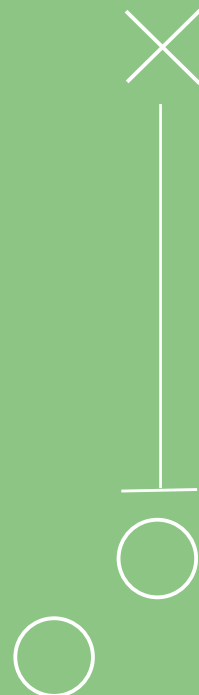
Participate in online meetings with high schools

Universities can build relationships with far more high school counselors by meeting counselors and students through online meetings. These relationships help to uncover the right students for their institution.

SUPPORT

How eRecruiting can help

High school counselors appreciate the added convenience of participating in online meetings between their students and the colleges they're interested in attending. They can essentially create customized college fairs, right in the classroom. This gives students and counselors an opportunity to chat in a group or one-to-one setting with an admissions counselor or a current college student, and get their questions answered about everything from degree programs to financial aid to campus life.



HALL OF FAME

Saint Joseph's College



Schools like Saint Joseph's College are taking full advantage of these eRecruiting capabilities. Instead of relying on high school visits, they invite high school students to text chat with their student ambassadors and faculty members. They've found that students are much more willing to ask questions that are important to them online. The seeming anonymity of an online chat makes it easier to have more meaningful conversations with students from around the world. These personal connections help admissions counselors recruit more students and more easily move them through the enrollment funnel.



CHALLENGE

RUNDOWN

Boosting yield and retention rates

Mailers and traditional outreach only goes so far when it comes to driving better yield and retention rates. Students are bombarded with mail from colleges, and most high school students are not likely to pick up the phone. Building online relationships early on is the best way to improve yield and retention. Students need to know that the university wants them, and is there for them every step of the way.

GAME PLAN

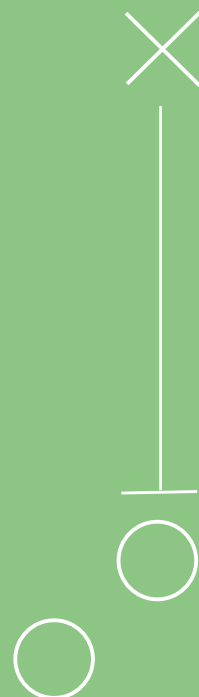
Give students more ways to stay engaged

To drive better yield rates, many private universities are inviting admitted students and their families to in-person and online events focused on their specific needs. During these sessions, they can proactively tackle key enrollment objections and any other issues. Participation in these events also helps schools identify the more seriously interested students.

SUPPORT

How eRecruiting can help

Private institutions are using eRecruiting to convert more students at every stage of the enrollment process. Using online channels, admissions counselors can proactively address students' challenges at key points in their decision making process.



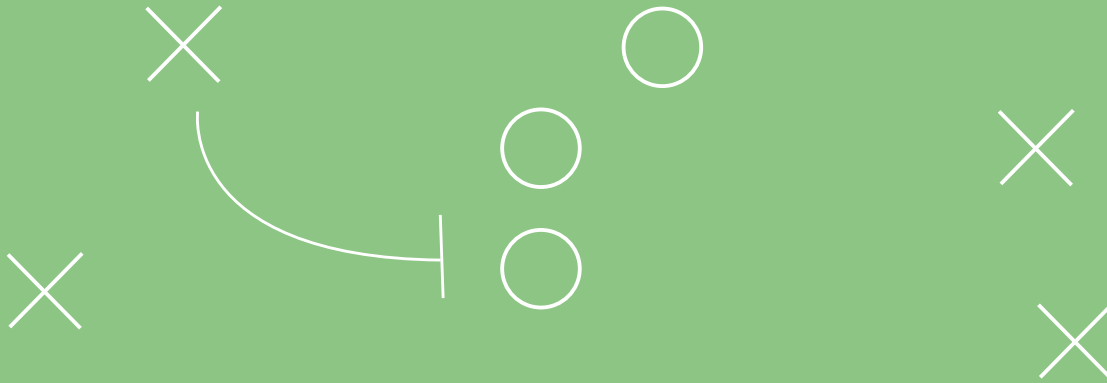
HALL OF FAME

University of Notre Dame

The University of Notre Dame hosts invitation-only events for admitted students. "CollegeWeekLive is a great way to reach out to students and their parents," said Director of Recruitment and Communications Joyce Lantz. "We can be much more proactive and more productive and are able to communicate with families more frequently in a more personal way... These invitation-only events give us a way to hone in on questions that are relevant to admitted students before they decide to enroll. This will be extremely helpful for parents [of prospective students], who are making a decision about sending their child to a university so far from home." These online conversations have enabled the university to improve yield and increase the diversity of its student body. 89% of admitted students are among those who participated in CollegeWeekLive activities.



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME



CHALLENGE

RUNDOWN

Gaining more predictable outcomes

Inability to predict yield is a widespread problem. For example, Moody's recently put a private university in California on a negative credit outlook after a 22 percent drop in the size of the incoming class created a \$1.1 million shortfall. While many elite schools have large endowments and don't face the financial burdens of other private institutions, they do face similar challenges in uncovering stealth applicants and assessing demonstrated interest.

GAME PLAN

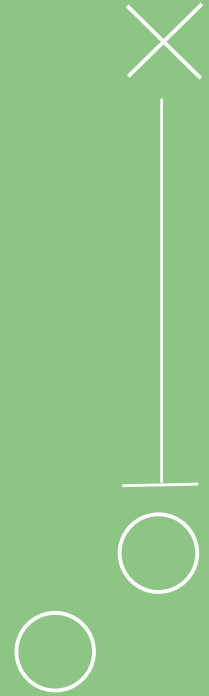
Give students a reason to stay connected

Stealth applicants do their own college research and don't make themselves known until they submitted an application. In other words, many students see no reason to identify themselves ahead of time because there is no need - or no way - to engage.

SUPPORT

How eRecruiting can help

The more information a school can discover about applicants, the better able they are to improve upon – and predict - yield. To do so, universities need to give these students a reason to engage with them early on, and throughout the enrollment process. eRecruiting opens the door to a host of customized programming to pique the interest of prospective students.



HALL OF FAME

Roger Williams University

Roger Williams University has broken through these challenges by offering highly customized live video programming. If an admitted student can't visit campus, they're invited to participate in a live video session, shot from interesting locations around campus. Students from different fields, and even the school mascot, video chat with admitted students to give them a real flavor of what it's like to be part of that campus community. The admissions team uses a 10-point scale to gauge student interest after the sessions are over. They've found these online sessions hold the same level of influence as a campus visit.



ABOUT COLLEGEWEEKLIVE

CollegeWeekLive provides a highly cost-effective way of engaging with students throughout the enrollment process. This more fluid, interactive approach aligns well with the way that students are most comfortable communicating. Whether they're just beginning to research schools or are well down the enrollment funnel, there's a way for universities to stay connected with them.

No longer are admissions departments hampered by time and distance. They can reach students, parents, and counselors around the world, giving them a more personalized view of the university. More importantly, this accessibility brings an added comfort factor for students who may be reluctant to open up during a campus interview or tour. It gives applicants who previously would have remained stealth to the forefront. This added visibility and flexibility benefits students and representatives alike; the ability to have more frequent, in-depth conversations helps ensure the right college match. Ultimately, this approach improves the efficiency of recruiting efforts and increases both yield and retention rates.

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- 1 Bain & Company
 - 2 NACAC
 - 3 Moody's Investors Service
 - 4 Boston Globe
 - 5 Noel-Levitz

The logo for CollegeWeekLive, featuring the word "CollegeWeek" in white text on an orange rectangular background, followed by the word "Live" in blue text.

CollegeWeekLive

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