2017 Marketing and Student Recruitment Report of Effective Practices

Effective practices for four-year undergraduate colleges and universities, as rated by campus officials on an April 2017 poll

RUFFALO ^{SM}
NOEL LEVITZ

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WHAT'S WORKING IN MARKETING AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT?

What is the competition doing? How is today's outreach changing? How are best practices evolving?
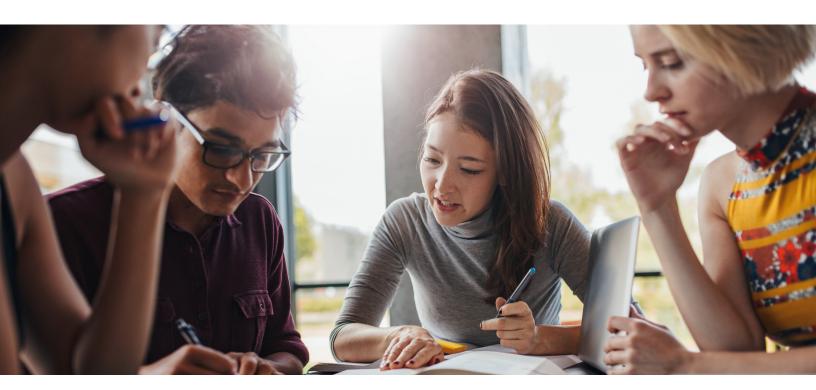
To explore these questions, undergraduate officials from a broad cross-section of private and public U.S. colleges and universities participated in an April 2017 poll that produced this *2017 Marketing and Student Recruitment Report of Effective Practices* from Ruffalo Noel Levitz. Notable differences are included from a parallel RNL poll conducted in 2015.

Highlights from the study:

- Purchased names, campus visitors, and stealth applicants were the top three sources of enrollees.
- Online display advertising was the top form of advertising, but was rated less effective than text messaging, email, websites, and, for private institution respondents, publications.
- Qualifying inquiries was a top practice for public institution respondents in the category of internal operations, but 57 percent of respondents weren't using it.
- Statistical financial aid awarding was a top practice for private institution respondents in the category of internal operations, but 21 percent of respondents weren't using it.
- Text messaging was a top-rated communication channel, but many respondents weren't using it.

Ready to compare your practices for recruitment and marketing? Keep reading.

WHAT'S WORKING? HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FINDINGS

Top 5 most effective communication channels
(of 11 channels measured, based on overall effectiveness)

Channels of Communication	INSTITUTIONS USING CHANNEL	VERY OR SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
Four-year private institutions		
Website optimized for mobile browsers	93.7%	**94.9%**
Text messaging	74.6%	**93.6%**
Email communication	100.0%	**87.3%**
Publications in general (viewbook, search piece, etc.)	96.8%	**85.2%**
Calling cell phones	96.8%	**83.6%**
Four-year public institutions		
Email communication	100.0%	**92.9%**
Website optimized for mobile browsers	78.6%	**90.9%**
Video calls using Skype or similar services	17.9%	**80.0%**
Text messaging	48.1%	**76.9%**
Publications in general (viewbook, search piece, etc.)	100.0%	**75.0%**

Text messaging made the top 5, but 25 percent of private institution respondents and 52 percent of public institution respondents weren't using it.

Texting beat email for four-year private respondents.

No surprise! Cell phones are central, for calls, texts, browsing, and more.

Video calls were rated effective by a high percentage of users at public institutions, but fewer than 20 percent of respondents were using them.

What's changing?

Use of text messaging increased for both sectors, based on a comparison of RNL poll responses in 2017 vs. 2015. For private institutions, 75 percent of poll respondents in 2017 reported using texting, vs. 61 percent of poll respondents in 2015. For public institutions, 48 percent of poll respondents in 2017 reported using texting, vs. 31 percent of poll respondents in 2015.

For public institutions, effectiveness of video calls increased and effectiveness of print publications decreased, based on RNL poll responses. In 2017, 80 percent of public respondents rated video calls effective vs. 33 percent of 2015 respondents. Also in 2017, 75 percent of public respondents rated print publications effective vs. 85 percent of 2015 respondents.

Takeaways

- Using a mix of communication channels is necessary, as 10 of the 11 channels measured in this study were rated very or somewhat effective by the majority of respondents.
- Don't throw out your print and publication budget—it still ranks in the top five of use and effectiveness!
- More institutions should begin to incorporate texting, based on the ratings of effectiveness.

Top 3 advertising practices
(of 8 practices measured, based on overall effectiveness)

Advertising Practices	INSTITUTIONS USING METHOD	VERY OR SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
Four-year private institutions		
Online display advertising in general	82.5%	**65.4%**
Pay-per-click ads on Facebook or other social media sites	77.8%	**61.2%**
Cookie-driven 'retargeting' ads that target users who've previously visited your website	71.4%	**57.8%**
Four-year public institutions		
Online display advertising in general	75.0%	**76.2%**
Pay-per-click ads on Facebook or other social media sites	71.4%	**70.0%**
Cookie-driven 'retargeting' ads that target users who've previously visited your website	67.9%	**68.4%**

HIGHLIGHTS

Online display advertising received the highest advertising marks for both sectors, but, for private institutions, none of the advertising channels rated as highly for effectiveness as the top five communication channels on the previous page.

In general, digital advertising practices led the way among all the advertising practices measured, ahead of television, print, radio, and other media (see the Appendix page 9).

Retargeting was rated third, but more than one-quarter of respondents weren't using it.

What's changing?

Use of retargeting increased for both sectors, based on a comparison of RNL poll responses in 2017 vs. 2015. For private institutions, 71 percent of poll respondents in 2017 reported using retargeting, vs. 62 percent of poll respondents in 2015. For public institutions, 68 percent of poll responders in 2017 reported using retargeting, vs. 44 percent of poll respondents in 2015.

For public institutions, use of pay-per-click ads on social media sites increased, based on RNL poll responses which showed 71 percent of 2017 respondents were using these, vs. 57 percent of 2015 respondents.

Takeaways and additional findings

- While respondents from both private and public institutions rated digital advertising effective, better tracking and conversion strategies are needed (see next page—RNL often works with clients on their digital conversion strategies).
- Assuring that digital advertising is integrated with other communication channels is important as publications, email, text messaging, and websites all had higher ratings of effectiveness overall.
- Despite being rated most effective, the top three (digital) advertising practices for public institutions were not being used by 25 percent or more of public institution respondents.

Sources of freshman inquiries and enrollees—median responses
(ordered by median response for enrollees for private institutions)

Color Key
Inquiries   Enrollees

FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Source	Inquiries	Enrollees
Purchased names	16.0%	20.0%
Application as first contact	5.0%	15.0%
Campus visits	5.0%	10.5%
Travel to high school and college fairs	14.5%	10.0%
Website web form	7.5%	7.0%
Test scores	5.0%	5.0%
Student self-initiated inquiry	5.0%	5.0%
Referrals	2.0%	1.0%
Paid online ads	0.0%	0.0%

FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Source	Inquiries	Enrollees
Purchased names	35.0%	15.0%
Application as first contact	10.0%	20.0%
Campus visits	5.0%	15.5%
Travel to high school and college fairs	17.0%	12.5%
Website web form	5.0%	3.5%
Test scores	5.0%	5.0%
Student self-initiated inquiry	1.5%	0.6%
Referrals	0.0%	0.0%
Paid online ads	0.0%	0.0%

Common sources of inquiries, such as purchased names and campus visits, continue to be leading sources of both inquiries and enrollees, along with stealth applicants.

Travel still matters!

Digital ads were the least productive source of inquiries and enrollees for both sectors. (See takeaways below: Is this a tracking problem, a conversion problem, or both?)

What's changing?

No substantial source changes were evident, based on a comparison of RNL poll responses from 2017 vs. 2015 inquiry sources.

Takeaways

- Continue to prioritize your search strategy and make sure you are getting a significant enrollment rate from your purchase. For RNL client institutions, 42 percent of enrollees on average come from purchased names, far above the 15 percent median shown above.

- Work to improve your digital strategy. To date, institutions are seeing little measured return from paid online ads compared to other sources. Improvement here is essential, because institutions cannot afford to keep investing resources on ads without certainty that they convert to inquiries and enrollees. If the problem is tracking, keep testing different landing pages that include "gated carrots"—resources, privileges, or opportunities that can only be accessed after submitting a name and contact information. If the problem is conversion, test different platforms, audiences, offers, landing pages, contact flows, etc., and seek outside help if needed. Testing is a key component of RNL's work with clients.

- Look for ways to ramp up your efforts with stealth applicants: qualify their interest; work with them to complete their applications (many of them leave their applications incomplete); test more ways to capture their names earlier; and develop a separate flow of contacts and integrated communication for them to emphasize value, affordability, and financing.

Top 5 internal operations

(of 13 operations measured, based on overall effectiveness)

Internal Operations	INSTITUTIONS USING CHANNEL	VERY OR SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
Four-year private institutions		
Using statistical analytical approach to determine financial aid award levels by predicting enrollment rated based on award amounts (aka 'financial aid awarding strategy')	78.7%	**91.7%**
Systematically contacting admitted students to code their level of interest in enrolling at your institution ("qualifying" admits)	71.0%	**88.6%**
CRM solution for managing and tracking recruitment communications, online applications, etc.	82.5%	**86.5%**
Outsourcing print or electronic campaigns for student search	58.1%	**83.3%**
Statistical modeling to predict the likelihood of a prospective student enrolling at your institution	67.2%	**82.9%**
Four-year public institutions		
Systematically contacting inquiries to code their level of interest in enrolling at your institution ("qualifying" admits)	42.9%	**91.7%**
Admissions tracking to monitor and predict students' incremental rates of movement toward enrollment	71.4%	**90.0%**
Systematically contacting admitted students to code their level of interest in enrolling at your institution ("qualifying" admits)	46.4%	**84.6%**
Statistical modeling to predict the likelihood of a prospective student enrolling at your institution	67.9%	**84.2%**
CRM solution for managing and tracking recruitment communications, online applications, etc.	89.3%	**84.0%**

HIGHLIGHTS

Statistical financial aid awarding was the top practice for private institutions, and predictive modeling made the top five for both sectors.

Outsourcing search campaigns made the top five for private institutions, but 42 percent of respondents from both sectors were not outsourcing (see Appendix pages 18 and 19)

Qualifying inquiries was the top practice for public institutions, but 57 percent of public respondents weren't doing it.

What's changing?

For public institutions, use of qualification of admits is decreasing despite its high ratings for effectiveness, based on RNL poll responses from 2017 vs. 2015. Use of admit qualification declined to 46 percent of poll respondents in 2017 vs. 56 percent of poll respondents in 2015.

Takeaways and additional findings

- A public institution that is not qualifying its inquiries should start doing this, as 92 percent of the public respondents using this practice rated it effective.
- Nearly one-quarter of private institution respondents (21 percent) weren't using a statistical analytical approach to financial aid awarding. However, 92 percent of the private respondents using this practice rated it effective. If your institution isn't yet doing this, is it time to begin? And if you've tried it in the past, do you need to improve your technique?
- Many of your competitors—both private and public—are qualifying their admitted students as an effective strategy. If your institution isn't yet using this practice, is it time to begin? And if you've tried it in the past, do you need to improve your technique? See RNL products on page 26.

COMPLETE FINDINGS | APPENDIX

11 Channels of Communication Ordered by Percent Rated "Very Effective"

Channels of Communication	INSTITUTIONS USING CHANNEL	VERY EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	VERY OR SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
Four-year private institutions					
Text messaging	74.6%	61.7%	31.9%	6.4%	**93.6%**
Website optimized for mobile browsers	93.7%	40.7%	54.2%	5.1%	**94.9%**
Email communication	100.0%	38.1%	49.2%	12.7%	**87.3%**
Publications in general (viewbook, search piece, etc.)	96.8%	23.0%	62.3%	14.8%	**85.2%**
Video calls using Skype or similar services	38.1%	20.8%	29.2%	50.0%	**50.0%**
Calling cell phones	96.8%	19.7%	63.9%	16.4%	**83.6%**
Videos embedded in campus website	90.5%	19.3%	56.1%	24.6%	**75.4%**
Social media	98.4%	16.4%	52.5%	31.1%	**68.9%**
Digital advertising	82.3%	13.7%	47.1%	39.2%	**60.8%**
Online chat	32.3%	10.0%	30.0%	60.0%	**40.0%**
Calling home phones	96.8%	4.9%	49.2%	45.9%	**54.1%**
Four-year public institutions					
Text messaging	48.1%	53.8%	23.1%	23.1%	**76.9%**
Website optimized for mobile browsers	78.6%	50.0%	40.9%	9.1%	**90.9%**
Email communication	100.0%	35.7%	57.1%	7.1%	**92.9%**
Publications in general (viewbook, search piece, etc.)	100.0%	32.1%	42.9%	25.0%	**75.0%**
Calling cell phones	92.9%	30.8%	34.6%	34.6%	**65.4%**
Online chat	46.4%	23.1%	30.8%	46.2%	**53.8%**
Social media	96.4%	22.2%	40.7%	37.0%	**63.0%**
Videos embedded in campus website	82.1%	21.7%	47.8%	30.4%	**69.6%**
Digital advertising	82.1%	17.4%	39.1%	43.5%	**56.5%**
Calling home phones	89.3%	8.0%	44.0%	48.0%	**52.0%**
Video calls using Skype or similar services	17.9%	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	**80.0%**

8 Advertising Practices Ordered by Percent Rated "Very Effective"

Advertising Practices	INSTITUTIONS USING METHOD	VERY EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	VERY OR SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
Four-year private institutions					
Cookie-driven 'retargeting' ads that target users who've previously visited your website	71.4%	22.2%	35.6%	42.2%	**57.8%**
Pay-per-click ads on Facebook or other social media sites	77.8%	16.3%	44.9%	38.8%	**61.2%**
Online display advertising in general	82.5%	15.4%	50.0%	34.6%	**65.4%**
Pay-per-click ads on search sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo	66.1%	14.6%	41.5%	43.9%	**56.1%**
Billboard, bus, or other outdoor advertising	54.0%	11.8%	35.3%	52.9%	**47.1%**
Television ads	36.5%	4.3%	47.8%	47.8%	**52.2%**
Print media ads in general	81.0%	3.9%	25.5%	70.6%	**29.4%**
Radio ads	55.6%	0.0%	48.6%	51.4%	**48.6%**
Four-year public institutions					
Cookie-driven 'retargeting' ads that target users who've previously visited your website	67.9%	26.3%	42.1%	31.6%	**68.4%**
Pay-per-click ads on Facebook or other social media sites	71.4%	15.0%	55.0%	30.0%	**70.0%**
Print media ads in general	82.1%	13.0%	17.4%	69.6%	**30.4%**
Billboard, bus, or other outdoor advertising	60.7%	11.8%	41.2%	47.1%	**52.9%**
Pay-per-click ads on search sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo	67.9%	10.5%	52.6%	36.8%	**63.2%**
Online display advertising in general	75.0%	9.5%	66.7%	23.8%	**76.2%**
Radio ads	46.4%	0.0%	38.5%	61.5%	**38.5%**
Television ads	39.3%	0.0%	27.3%	72.7%	**27.3%**

12 Event Marketing and Recruitment Practices Ordered by Percent Rated "Very Effective"

Event Marketing Practices	INSTITUTIONS USING METHOD	VERY EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	VERY OR SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
Four-year private institutions					
Campus open house events	93.7%	84.7%	13.6%	1.7%	**98.3%**
Overnight visits for high school students	69.8%	63.6%	31.8%	4.5%	**95.5%**
Campus visit days for high school students	96.8%	60.7%	32.8%	6.6%	**93.4%**
Weekend visit days	87.3%	43.6%	47.3%	9.1%	**90.9%**
Off-campus group meetings for prospective students and/or their parents	82.5%	34.6%	51.9%	13.5%	**86.5%**
Campus visit events designed for high school counselors	65.1%	34.1%	46.3%	19.5%	**80.5%**
College-paid trips to campus for prospective students	47.6%	26.7%	53.3%	20.0%	**80.0%**
Meetings or events for high school counselors	71.4%	22.2%	46.7%	31.1%	**68.9%**
Special interest workshops, seminars, or camps (music, sports, science, etc.)	81.0%	19.6%	47.1%	33.3%	**66.7%**
National or regional college fairs	100.0%	11.1%	54.0%	34.9%	**65.1%**
Podcasts and webinars	20.6%	0.0%	30.8%	69.2%	**30.8%**
Online college fairs	27.0%	0.0%	17.6%	82.4%	**17.6%**
Four-year public institutions					
Campus open house events	100.0%	85.7%	10.7%	3.6%	**96.4%**
Campus visit days for high school students	92.9%	73.1%	23.1%	3.8%	**96.2%**
Weekend visit days	78.6%	40.9%	50.0%	9.1%	**90.9%**
Overnight visits for high school students	17.9%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	**80.0%**
Campus visit events designed for high school counselors	89.3%	36.0%	36.0%	28.0%	**72.0%**
Off-campus group meetings for prospective students and/or their parents	89.3%	28.0%	60.0%	12.0%	**88.0%**
College-paid trips to campus for prospective students	28.6%	25.0%	62.5%	12.5%	**87.5%**
Meetings or events for high school counselors	92.9%	23.1%	57.7%	19.2%	**80.8%**
Special interest workshops, seminars, or camps (music, sports, science, etc.)	75.0%	14.3%	47.6%	38.1%	**61.9%**
National or regional college fairs	100.0%	10.7%	39.3%	50.0%	**50.0%**
Podcasts and webinars	14.3%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	**50.0%**
Online college fairs	53.6%	0.0%	13.3%	86.7%	**13.3%**

SEARCH PRACTICES AND INITIAL OUTREACH

Approximate Number of High School Student Names Purchased Each Year for Use in Direct Mail or Email to Generate Inquiries and Applicants

Purchased Name Volume	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC
First quartile	25,000	32,500
Median	80,000	64,000
Third quartile	130,000	110,000

Approximate Number of High School Student Names Purchased Each Year (Subset of Above) Who Receive Direct Mail/"Snail Mail"

Purchased Name Subset—Direct Mail	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC
First quartile	2,000	19,000
Median	50,000	50,000
Third quartile	100,000	100,000

Percentage of Purchased High School Student Names Who Receive Direct Mail/"Snail Mail" (Based on Prior Two Tables Above)

Purchased Name Subset—Direct Mail Percentage	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC
First quartile	6.0%	90.5%
Median	72.0%	100.0%
Third quartile	100.0%	100.0%

Why do we report the 25th and 75th percentiles?
The quartiles are provided to make comparisons more precise for readers. For example, in the table at the top of this page, the quartiles for four-year private institutions show that the middle 50 percent of respondents reported the approximate number of names purchased between 25,000 (the 25th percentile) and 130,000 (the 75th percentile). In addition, one can observe that 25 percent of respondents in the data set were below 25,000 and 25 percent of respondents in the data set were above 130,000.

Percent of Respondents Purchasing High School Names by High School Grade Level

(Respondents were instructed to "check all that apply")

High School Grade Level of Purchased Names	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC
Prior to grade 10	7.9%	7.1%
Sophomore year	57.1%	53.6%
Junior year	85.7%	85.7%
Summer prior to senior year	69.8%	64.3%
Fall of senior year	71.4%	64.3%
Winter or later of senior year	44.4%	42.9%

8 Methods for First and Subsequent Contacts With High School Purchased Names

(Respondents were instructed to "check all that apply")

Contact Types	FIRST CONTACT WITH PURCHASED NAMES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS	SUBSEQUENT CONTACT(S) WITH NON-RESPONDING PURCHASED NAMES BEFORE GIVING UP ON THEM
Four-year private institutions		
Email message	71.4%	76.2%
Self-mailer brochure or postcard	39.7%	41.3%
Letter	31.7%	23.8%
Email message with link to a personalized URL	30.2%	34.9%
Outbound phone call to all or a selected subset	20.6%	30.2%
Digital advertising	14.3%	23.8%
Viewbook	14.3%	11.1%
Text message	6.3%	11.1%
Four-year public institutions		
Email message	67.9%	71.4%
Self-mailer brochure or postcard	53.6%	35.7%
Email message with link to a personalized URL	32.1%	17.9%
Letter	14.3%	14.3%
Digital advertising	10.7%	28.6%
Outbound phone call to all or a selected subset	7.1%	25.0%
Viewbook	3.6%	7.1%
Text message	0.0%	10.7%

Typical Number of Additional Contacts Made (Subsequent to the First Contact) With Purchased High School Names Before Giving Up on Them—Reported Separately for Email vs. Mail vs. Phone

Additional Contacts	EMAIL CONTACTS	MAIL CONTACTS	PHONE CONTACTS
Four-year private institutions			
First quartile	6	1	0
Median	**10**	**2**	**0**
Third quartile	12	3	3
Four-year public institutions			
First quartile	5.5	1	0
Median	**8**	**2**	**0**
Third quartile	13	3	1.5

Do You Send a Subset of Purchased Names the Same Communications as Inquiries?
(Percent "Yes")

Four-year private institutions	**59.3%**

Four-year public institutions	**50.0%**

Approximate Percentage of Inquiries by Source—Ordered by Median Response

Inquiries by Source	FIRST QUARTILE	MEDIAN	THIRD QUARTILE
Four-year private institutions			
Purchased names	10.0%	**20.0%**	40.0%
Travel to high schools and college fairs	8.0%	**14.5%**	20.0%
Website web form	5.0%	**7.5%**	19.8%
Test scores	1.0%	**5.0%**	7.0%
Campus visits	2.0%	**5.0%**	10.0%
Application as first contact	2.3%	**5.0%**	15.0%
Student self-initiated inquiry	1.0%	**5.0%**	10.0%
Referrals	0.0%	**2.0%**	5.0%
Paid online ads	0.0%	**0.0%**	2.0%
Four-year public institutions			
Purchased names	12.5%	**35.0%**	45.5%
Travel to high schools and college fairs	10.0%	**17.0%**	28.5%
Application as first contact	3.0%	**10.0%**	15.0%
Website web form	2.0%	**5.0%**	10.0%
Test scores	2.8%	**5.0%**	10.8%
Campus visits	2.8%	**5.0%**	15.0%
Student self-initiated inquiry	0.0%	**1.5%**	5.0%
Paid online ads	0.0%	**0.0%**	2.0%
Referrals	0.0%	**0.0%**	0.3%

In an open-ended field for "Other," several respondents from four-year private institutions indicated athletics recruiting as an inquiry source.

Approximate Percentage of Freshman Enrollees by Source—Ordered by Median Response

Enrollees by Source	FIRST QUARTILE	MEDIAN	THIRD QUARTILE
Four-year private institutions			
Purchased names	5.0%	**16.0%**	30.0%
Application as first contact	5.0%	**15.0%**	25.0%
Campus visits	5.0%	**10.5%**	20.0%
Travel to high schools and college fairs	6.2%	**10.0%**	18.0%
Website web form	3.3%	**7.0%**	13.8%
Student self-initiated inquiry	1.0%	**5.0%**	10.0%
Test scores	1.0%	**5.0%**	10.0%
Referrals	0.0%	**1.0%**	5.0%
Paid online ads	0.0%	**0.0%**	1.8%
Four-year public institutions			
Application as first contact	10.0%	**20.0%**	26.3%
Campus visits	5.0%	**15.5%**	26.3%
Purchased names	6.5%	**15.0%**	36.5%
Travel to high schools and college fairs	6.8%	**12.5%**	25.0%
Test scores	1.8%	**5.0%**	13.5%
Website web form	0.0%	**3.5%**	5.0%
Student self-initiated inquiry	0.0%	**0.6%**	5.0%
Paid online ads	0.0%	**0.0%**	0.0%
Referrals	0.0%	**0.0%**	1.0%

In an open-ended field for "Other," several respondents from four-year private institutions indicated athletics recruiting was a source of enrollees, and at least two respondents indicated FAFSA, summer campus, and college search websites were sources of enrollees.

WRITTEN CONTACTS, STUDENT-TO-STUDENT CONTACT PROGRAMS

Number of Written Communications a Typical Prospective Student Receives From Marketing and Recruitment Offices by Stages

(Combination of direct mail, email, and texting)

Written Contact Volume	PURCHASED NAME/PROSPECT STAGE	INQUIRY STAGE	APPLICANT STAGE	ADMIT STAGE	DEPOSIT/ CONFIRMED STAGE
Four-year private institutions					
First quartile	6.0	8.5	5.0	8.0	5.0
Median	**10.0**	**12.0**	**10.0**	**12.0**	**10.0**
Third quartile	15.0	24.0	20.0	15.0	15.0
Four-year public institutions					
First quartile	5.0	4.0	4.5	5.0	3.0
Median	**9.0**	**10.0**	**8.0**	**10.0**	**5.0**
Third quartile	14.0	20.0	15.0	12.8	10.0

Do You Have a Student-to-Student Contact Program in Which Current Students Stay in Touch With Prospective Students Via Phone, Email, Text Messages, Social Media Such as Facebook, and/or Personal Handwritten Notes?

(Percent "Yes")

Four-year private institutions	**71.4%**

Four-year public institutions	**32.1%**

Volume of Student-to-Student Contacts for Campuses That Responded Yes to Previous Item—Reported Separately for Phone vs. Email vs. Text vs. Social Media vs. Handwritten Notes

Student-to-Student Contact Volume	PHONE CONTACTS	EMAIL CONTACTS	TEXT MESSAGES	SOCIAL MEDIA CONTACTS	HANDWRITTEN NOTES
Four-year private institutions					
First quartile	2.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	1.0
Median	**3.0**	**1.5**	**0.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**
Third quartile	5.0	3.0	2.0	4.5	2.0
Four-year public institutions					
First quartile	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
Median	**2.0**	**1.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**1.0**
Third quartile	3.0	2.0	1.5	1.0	2.0

13 Internal Operations Practices Ordered by Percent Rated "Very Effective"

Internal Operations	INSTITUTIONS USING METHOD	VERY EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	VERY OR SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
Four-year private institutions					
CRM solution for managing and tracking recruitment communications, online applications, etc.	82.5%	53.8%	32.7%	13.5%	**86.5%**
Using a statistical, analytical approach to determine financial aid award levels by predicting enrollment rates based on award amounts (aka 'financial aid awarding strategy')	78.7%	50.0%	41.7%	8.3%	**91.7%**
Statistical modeling to predict the likelihood of a prospective student enrolling at your institution	67.2%	48.8%	34.1%	17.1%	**82.9%**
Outsourcing print or electronic campaigns to generate applications from the search or inquiry pool	53.2%	39.4%	42.4%	18.2%	**81.8%**
Outsourcing telephone qualification to rate the interest levels of prospective students by phone	30.6%	36.8%	42.1%	21.1%	**78.9%**
Outsourcing print or electronic campaigns for student search	58.1%	36.1%	47.2%	16.7%	**83.3%**
Admissions tracking to monitor and predict students' incremental rates of movement toward enrollment	83.9%	34.6%	46.2%	19.2%	**80.8%**
Systematically contacting admitted students to code their level of interest in enrolling at your institution ("qualifying" admits)	71.0%	34.1%	54.5%	11.4%	**88.6%**
Search engine optimization process to improve organic search results	85.5%	22.6%	50.9%	26.4%	**73.6%**
Systematically contacting inquiries to code their level of interest in enrolling at your institution ("qualifying inquiries")	57.1%	22.2%	47.2%	30.6%	**69.4%**
Analytics resources such as Google Analytics to provide data for decision-making (search engine optimization, fine-tuning recruitment/admissions portion of the website, etc.)	82.5%	21.2%	40.4%	38.5%	**61.5%**
Outsourcing market research (lost applicant analysis, brand perceptions, pricing analysis, SEO, etc.)	32.8%	20.0%	55.0%	25.0%	**75.0%**
Outsourcing international recruitment	19.4%	16.7%	0.0%	83.3%	**16.7%**

Internal Operations	INSTITUTIONS USING METHOD	VERY EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	VERY OR SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE
Four-year public institutions					
CRM solution for managing and tracking recruitment communications, online applications, etc.	89.3%	64.0%	20.0%	16.0%	**84.0%**
Systematically contacting admitted students to code their level of interest in enrolling at your institution ("qualifying" admits)	46.4%	53.8%	30.8%	15.4%	**84.6%**
Admissions tracking to monitor and predict students' incremental rates of movement toward enrollment	71.4%	50.0%	40.0%	10.0%	**90.0%**
Outsourcing print or electronic campaigns to generate applications from the search or inquiry pool	50.0%	42.9%	14.3%	42.9%	**57.1%**
Outsourcing print or electronic campaigns for student search	57.1%	37.5%	31.3%	31.3%	**68.8%**
Systematically contacting inquiries to code their level of interest in enrolling at your institution ("qualifying inquiries")	42.9%	33.3%	58.3%	8.3%	**91.7%**
Outsourcing international recruitment	25.0%	28.6%	28.6%	42.9%	**57.1%**
Search engine optimization process to improve organic search results	67.9%	26.3%	52.6%	21.1%	**78.9%**
Analytics resources such as Google Analytics to provide data for decision-making (search engine optimization, fine-tuning recruitment/admissions portion of the website, etc.)	85.7%	25.0%	58.3%	16.7%	**83.3%**
Statistical modeling to predict the likelihood of a prospective student enrolling at your institution	67.9%	21.1%	63.2%	15.8%	**84.2%**
Using a statistical, analytical approach to determine financial aid award levels by predicting enrollment rates based on award amounts (aka 'financial aid awarding strategy')	57.1%	18.8%	56.3%	25.0%	**75.0%**
Outsourcing market research (lost applicant analysis, brand perceptions, pricing analysis, SEO, etc.)	50.0%	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%	**57.1%**
Outsourcing telephone qualification to rate the interest levels of prospective students by phone	21.4%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	**50.0%**

Do You Outsource Your Financial Aid Awarding Structure?

(Percent "Yes")

Four-year private institutions	**54.0%**

Four-year public institutions	**14.3%**

If You Answered No, What Is the Main Reason Why You Do Not Outsource?

REASONS FOR NOT OUTSOURCING FINANCIAL AID AWARDING STRUCTURE	PERCENTAGE
Four-year private institutions	
Have our own structure that works	**58.6%**
Too expensive	**27.6%**
Not applicable	**10.3%**
Four-year public institutions	
Have our own structure that works	**39.1%**
Too expensive	**17.4%**
Not applicable	**30.4%**

If You Received Additional Budget Dollars, Where Would You Invest First?

In response to this open-ended question on the poll, a small number of respondents from four-year private institutions indicated they would invest first in personnel/staff, digital marketing, marketing in general, and in website development. For four-year public respondents, digital marketing and personnel/staff were identified as the first places for future investment.

BUDGETS FOR ENROLLMENT MARKETING

What Is Your Total Enrollment Marketing Budget Minus Your Personnel Costs?

Budget for Enrollment Marketing Minus Personnel	TOTAL BUDGET
Four-year private institutions	
First quartile	$264,000
Median	**$550,000**
Third quartile	$960,000
Four-year public institutions	
First quartile	$204,000
Median	**$327,550**
Third quartile	$600,000

What Portion of Your Enrollment Marketing Budget Do You Allocate to the Following Activities?

Portion of Budget for Specific Activities	MEAN RESPONSES
Four-year private institutions	
Traditional marketing (publications, direct mail, TV/radio, postage, etc.)	30%
Admissions travel	22%
Admissions events	16%
Digital marketing (digital advertising, paid search, etc.)	12%
Transfer recruitment	5%
International recruitment	3%
Website development and maintenance	3%
Other*	10%
Four-year public institutions	
Traditional marketing (publications, direct mail, TV/radio, postage, etc.)	33%
Admissions travel	20%
Admissions events	15%
Digital marketing (digital advertising, paid search, etc.)	9%
Transfer recruitment	6%
International recruitment	3%
Website development and maintenance	2%
Other	11%

*Other responses named by two or more respondents in a blank, open-ended field included 1) supplies; and 2) professional development.

What Changes to Your Enrollment Marketing Budget Do You Anticipate in the Next 12-24 Months? (Mean Responses)

Anticipated Changes to Budget	BUDGET WILL DECREASE	BUDGET WILL STAY THE SAME	BUDGET WILL INCREASE
Four-year private institutions			
Admissions events	3%	67%	29%
Admissions travel	14%	62%	24%
Digital marketing (digital advertising, paid search, etc.)	4%	47%	49%
International recruitment	11%	72%	17%
Traditional marketing (publications, direct mail, TV/radio, postage, etc.)	20%	69%	11%
Transfer recruitment	5%	75%	20%
Website development and maintenance	3%	51%	46%
Four-year public institutions			
Admissions events	8%	58%	35%
Admissions travel	19%	62%	19%
Digital marketing (digital advertising, paid search, etc.)	11%	43%	46%
International recruitment	13%	69%	19%
Traditional marketing (publications, direct mail, TV/radio, postage, etc.)	21%	61%	18%
Transfer recruitment	17%	67%	17%
Website development and maintenance	0.0%	90%	10%

ABOUT THIS STUDY

SOURCE OF DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data in this report reflect responses from 91 nonprofit four-year colleges and universities that collectively enroll 557,000 students. Respondents participated in the Ruffalo Noel Levitz national electronic poll of undergraduate marketing and recruitment practices between March 28 and April 19, 2017. The poll was emailed to enrollment and admissions officers at accredited, degree-granting institutions across the United States. Respondents to the poll included 63 four-year private institutions and 28 four-year public institutions, as listed below.

THANK YOU
to those who
participated

Standard descriptive statistics (such as sample means) were used to analyze the results of the survey for central tendency and variation. Due to the relatively small sample size, these results should be read as indicators.

To report the findings as accurately as possible, the rankings of effectiveness were based only on the relative effectiveness **options that were given to respondents: "very effective," "somewhat effective," and "minimally effective."** This approach of excluding the fourth response, "practice not used," allowed promising, less-frequently-used practices to be included. For example, the "top five" ratings included practices that were rated somewhat or very effective but which were not being used by the majority of institutions.

FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Note: Any participating two-year private institutions are included on this list.

Appalachian Bible College (WV)
Aurora University (IL)
Becker College (MA)
Bethany College (KS)
Cabrini University (PA)
Caldwell University (NJ)
Cazenovia College (NY)
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University (MN)
College of Saint Scholastica, The (MN)
Columbia College - MO (MO)
Concordia University - Seward (NE)
Converse College (SC)
Corban University (OR)
Delaware Valley University (PA)
Dickinson College (PA)
Dominican University (IL)
Drew University (NJ)
Dunwoody College of Technology (MN)
Elmhurst College (IL)
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University-Prescott (AZ)
Friends University (KS)
Indiana Tech (IN)

Four-year private institutions cont'd

Iowa Wesleyan University (IA)

Kentucky Mountain Bible College (KY)

Kentucky Wesleyan College (KY)

Lackawanna College (PA)

Manchester University (IN)

Manhattan Christian College (KS)

Marian University (IN)

Marquette University (WI)

Mercy College (NY)

Miles College (AL)

Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (WI)

Monmouth College (IL)

Mount Ida College (MA)

Multnomah University (OR)

Newman University (KS)

Occidental College (CA)

Ohio Northern University (OH)

Oklahoma Baptist University (OK)

Ouachita Baptist University (AR)

Pace University (NY)

Point University (GA)

Randolph-Macon College (VA)

Regis University (CO)

Rosedale Technical Institute (PA)

Sewanee: The University of the South (TN)

Simpson University (CA)

Southwestern Adventist University (TX)

St. John's College (NM)

St. Thomas Aquinas College (NY)

Stratford University (VA)

Texas Wesleyan University (TX)

University of Bridgeport (CT)

University of Scranton, The (PA)

University of Western States (OR)

Viterbo University (WI)

Washington College (MD)

Washington University in St. Louis (MO)

Wesley College (DE)

Wheeling Jesuit University (WV)

Whitworth University (WA)

York College of Pennsylvania (PA)

FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Colorado State University-Pueblo (CO)

Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus (IN)

Keene State College (NH)

Kennesaw State University (GA)

Maine Maritime Academy (ME)

Millersville University of Pennsylvania (PA)

Mississippi State University (MS)

Montana State University - Northern (MT)

North Dakota State University Main Campus (ND)

Ohio University Main Campus (OH)

Oregon State University - Cascades (OR)

San Diego State University (CA)

Shawnee State University (OH)

State University of New York College at Oswego (NY)

SUNY Polytechnic Institute (NY)

Tarleton State University (TX)

Texas Tech University (TX)

United States Coast Guard Academy (CT)

University of Houston - Victoria (TX)

University of Illinois at Springfield (IL)

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (MN)

University of North Georgia (GA)

University of Northern Colorado (CO)

University of Pittsburgh at Bradford (PA)

University of Vermont (VT)

University of West Alabama (AL)

Weber State University (UT)

West Texas A & M University (TX)

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Maximize engagement through true multi-channel experiences and generate genuine interest from your student search list with RNL Demand Builder™.

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Launch campaigns that build a stronger pool of qualified, interested applicants who are a great fit for your institution and goals using RNL Applicant Cultivator™ and RNL Forecast*Plus*™.

Optimizing Yield
Align financial aid, yield, and revenue while communicating value to your admitted students using RNL Class Optimizer™, RNL Advanced FinAid Solutions™, RNL True Cost Calculator™, and RNL Yield Campaign™.

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Increase student retention and completion rates using RNL Student Success™, RNL Student Retention Predictor™, RNL Retention Management System *Plus*™, and RNL Satisfaction-Priorities Assessments™.

Strategy Roadmap
Chart your course to success with consulting and research solutions: RNL Strategic Enrollment Planning™, RNL Consulting, RNL Web and Interactive Marketing, RNL Market Research, RNL Academic Program Demand Analysis™, and RNL Price Sensitivity Analysis™.

About Ruffalo Noel Levitz
Ruffalo Noel Levitz provides higher education and nonprofit organizations with technology-enabled services, software, and consulting for enrollment and fundraising management. Since 1973, we have partnered with more than 3,000 colleges and universities and numerous nonprofit clients worldwide.

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