

RECRUIT ENROLL THRIVE

BEST STUDENT RECRUITMENT
PRACTICES 2022



Brought to you by



MAKE YOUR STUDENT RECRUITMENT THRIVE IN 2022

In international student recruitment, building awareness and visibility online has been integral to the successful promotion of the partner schools and universities we work with.

Today, the market for higher education has evolved to become much more competitive and globalized, creating the need for more advanced and tailored marketing strategies. The emergence of Generation Z (“Gen Z”) as key recruitment demographic has also created new challenges. Born into a digital world, Gen Zers are advanced technology users, simultaneously communicating across multiple platforms with ease every day. Expecting no less from their marketing interactions, their expectations are more discerning than ever before.

To differentiate themselves against the competition, universities must capture the interest of students and keep them engaged. Methods to encourage engagement such as personalization and tailored communications can be costly and time-consuming, creating new challenges for budget-conscious educators. This is especially so when large volumes of students are involved. In anticipation of evolving market needs, Keystone is excited to share this guide which can help inspire your institution’s student recruitment as we head into 2022.

ABOUT KEYSTONE - HOW WE CAN HELP

Keystone offers an array of digital marketing solutions in tandem with marketing automation software specifically designed for the higher education industry. We are the leading online resource for people seeking the best educational path for them.

What do we offer?

- Student lead generation and visibility across our 420+ website domains, including Masterstudies.com
- Educations.com, FindAMasters.com, and Studentum.se
- Our websites are visited by 110+ million unique students each year
- Multilingual optimization and promotion in 46+ languages
- Lead nurturing and enrollment generation services with Recruit, Blueberry, and UniQuest
- Marketing automation & CRM tools
- International student-athlete placement services (perfect for colleges in the US & Canada)

If you would like to know more about us, visit keystoneacademic.com.

eBook SPECIAL OFFER: When speaking to our sales team, please mention “2022 eBook” to receive a surprise welcome gift for new Keystone customers!

From our team to yours, we hope you will find these insights and best practices useful for your 2022 recruitment efforts.

- The Keystone Team



THE STUDENT RECRUITMENT CHECKLIST

by Chelsea Castonguay Stanhope

It's not much of a secret the game has changed in regards to student recruitment, especially over the last year. COVID-19 turned the world on its ear, and with it went the relatively well-understood cycles of student recruitment. However, sometimes getting back to basics can be a great way to figure out where you're at, and where you need to be headed in order to move forward. This checklist for student recruitment can help you and your institution figure out what the next steps are in regards to making a great game plan for catching the attention of prospective students.

Dig Into the Data

Take a look at whatever data you can gather. Check out email replies, clicks on websites, or advertisements, as well as feedback given by students and parents. Once it's compiled, break it down to see what worked, what didn't, and which areas proved to be surprisingly successful. For example, did you see an increase in clicks on social media ads? Did students enjoy social media takeovers? Whatever's working, figure out how to utilize it so you can continue to reap the benefits.

Don't be afraid to share data students are interested in, either. Make sure you're sharing positive highlights of your school regularly, such as job placements, salary ranges, improvements to the school, and other successes. In the wake of COVID-19, let students and their families know how your institution is planning to continue to keep their students safe and on track for graduation.

Ask Yourself the Question, "What Do Students Truly Want?"

It's easy to assume we know what students want, but sometimes this just isn't the case. While in the past sending out paper mailers of information, or large admissions packets was the norm, nowadays students are going digital. They expect their universities to keep up. In addition to needing campus visits to help secure their decision, students are reviewing information about universities all year long. There is no longer a formal "recruitment season"; instead students are online at all times. Therefore, it's important to make sure admissions and recruitment staff are ready to be responsive to questions, providing information readily, and inviting students to campus to tour their future schools. Developing a social media calendar can help staff stay on track when it comes to regular offerings for students, which will help keep content fresh and engaging.



Define Your Strategy

Recruitment is important for the long term success of a university, but “research shows that less than half of all higher education institutions have a clear strategy that guides the development of their recruitment efforts.” Therefore, it’s critical to have a strategy in place to help manage the rapidly changing recruitment environment. If your office is finding itself overwhelmed, getting help to harness the available tools and techniques to reach prospective students can greatly increase the overall awareness of your school. Remind yourself that the ultimate goal is to get students to commit to attending your institution, so keeping the student journey in mind is critical.

Utilize Your Student Base

One of the best ways to reach prospective students is to utilize your current student population. After all, who’s better at attracting students than their own peers who are loving their education and their university? The top universities in the world with the best recruitment practices are using student ambassadors, and asking students to step in and help generate content for social media. Prospective students are seeking authentic views into life at your university, and want to understand all aspects of it. Ask students to share their classes, their residence halls, programs, clubs, sports, and anything that might appeal to prospective students. Allowing current students to share their experiences is a great way to give the insider’s perspective on what it’s really like to attend your

school.

Consider Virtual from a Long-Term Perspective

Times are changing, and even though universities are opening again, students may not want to come in person, or are understanding the benefits of continuing their education online. Therefore, it’s going to be important to continue streamlining and offering virtual services to students. This includes open houses or open days, admissions sessions, college fairs, and orientations. Allow students to get a taste of what life is like at your school while staying in the safety and comfort of their homes. Students who may not be able to attend in person still want to feel valued and included, so making the online experience enjoyable is going to help them feel as though they are wanted by your school.

Recruitment is something that has changed rapidly in recent years, and is undoubtedly going to keep adapting. Even though it seems like the future of education is online, students are ready to return to campus. Therefore, recruiting them to your campus is key. By taking the time to assess where your recruitment process is currently at, and making a plan to go forward, you can position your university to successfully weather any storm.

Words from our higher ed experts:

“Higher education institutions have traditionally utilized the power of reputation and word of mouth in order to attract new students. It is now vital for colleges and universities to have a strong digital footprint.”

Steve Yun, VP of Sales



ENHANCING YOUR COLLEGE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

by Benjamin Boivin



Since the dawn of the Internet, the role of a college admissions professional has significantly changed. Of course, prospective student recruiters have always worn many hats. Still, there is now a digital marketing element to the job with digital applications like Common App, customer relationship manager (CRM) software, paperless application review, and enhanced email automation tools.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the power of virtual communication in the college search process. Not only were students attending Open House, information sessions, campus tours, and counselor meetings from the comfort of home — counselors were not allowed to schedule in-person visits due to the social distancing restrictions. The ability to adapt to change should be in the job description of every admission counselor job post. “New normal” recruitment strategies transformed the way admissions professionals communicate with students (and their families), but we also saw

a shift in how students engage with the future colleges. As the well-known proverb says, “Necessity is the mother of invention,” and now is the time for traditional recruiters to learn lessons from the digitally-saturated, socially distanced lifestyle of 2020-2021 for future communication strategies.

Give Them Options

Before the Internet changed everything, admissions communication strategies revolved around print collateral, campus events, and good old-fashioned phone calls. Today colleges and universities have more ways than ever to engage with prospects. If done correctly, this is a benefit. However, if not done correctly, multi-channel marketing efforts will deter students from considering your institution.

One positive outcome of the pandemic is colleges were forced to put a microscope on their virtual communication efforts. Visiting the same list of high schools and attending in-person college fairs was no longer an option, so screen-to-screen communication was vital. Colleges with low budgets and outdated virtual campus tours were forced to revamp their content immediately, and Zoom conferences became part of the daily routine. Prospective students learned that visiting a college and scheduling an in-person meeting was not the only way to communicate. Now that there are far fewer social distancing restrictions in late 2020, colleges must continue focusing on virtual communication for students while returning to the old-school strategy of in-person recruiting.

See Why Virtual Campus Tours Work

Providing options will modernize your institution

while giving students the power to connect at their own pace. It will save families money on travel costs as tuition affordability concerns increase among future college students. By normalizing screen-to-screen communication, your recruiters also cast a wider net. Students from the other side of the world can form bonds with admissions professionals like never before, and advancements in technology will only make this process more common in the years ahead.

Stop Sending Irrelevant Content

Generation Z knows when they are talking to a robot. They are experts at ignoring irrelevant content and expect a personalized experience throughout the college search process. One way to combat generic messaging is by segmenting the student search list at the first stage of the marketing funnel (the prospective student stage) and modify your content as you get to know more about each student. Don't send the same campaign to a prospective student-athlete as you would to a theater major. Don't tell your English programs applicants how a STEM education will help them find a career. And international students would likely benefit from a virtual tour link rather than an in-person invite to an "Open House."

A common mistake is placing relevancy on what you think students want to hear rather than asking them what they want to hear. To keep a finger on the pulse of future student engagement, make short surveys a part of the recruitment strategy. Empower prospective students by valuing their opinion getting feedback from them. Send home surveys after on-campus and virtual events. Don't expect every student and family to complete every survey (many won't even open the link). Still, the feedback you do receive will result in more relevant content for future campaigns. Also, reach out to current first-year students for focus groups, testimonials, and feedback from their college search journey. Who knows your institution better than the students?

Communicate with CURVE

Long-form content writing does not belong in higher education marketing anymore. Gone are the days of sending home course catalogs. Student engagement begins with Curiosity, Urgency, Relevancy, Value, and Emotion (CURVE). Don't write another email, print campaign, digital advertisement, or text message without elements of CURVE in mind. And it isn't just what content you send, but when and how you send it.

Immediacy and Simplicity

Because Generation Z has a shorter attention span than their parents, college marketers only have about 5-10 seconds to engage students at the early stages of the recruitment funnel. Therefore, when they digitally raise their hand to express interest, it is essential to have an automated response ready to go. This tip may seem obvious, but it is shocking how many institutions allow newly interested students to sit and wait for a response. Automated emails respond to students' desire for immediacy and provide clear instructions regarding "Next Steps" at every stage.

The easier it is for prospective students to complete a task, the more likely they will do so. On the other hand, colleges and universities with seemingly automated admissions reviews may appear less competitive and even desperate for students, so immediacy should only be considered in engagement, not always in the admissions process itself.

Words from our student recruitment experts:



"On top of these tips, our in-house team of recruitment experts will not just email but call, message all your student leads to filter out the right student candidates for your programs" [Learn more about Keystone Recruit.](#)

Louise Aalerud, Head of Recruit

Take Better Notes

This one may seem simple but utilize the power of your CRM. Unlike the late 20th century, there is no need to sift through paper inquiry forms each night after a college fair and mark each one with hand-written notes. Personalize the student journey by remembering every detail about your interactions. Where did you first meet the student? What are their interests outside of the classroom? How are they enjoying high school? What is their ability to afford tuition at your school? Have they asked you for help in a specific area?

It would be impossible for one admissions counselor to form personal bonds with every student, and they go from inquiry to a first-year student, but with proper tracking and note keeping, counselors can stand out. When there isn't a budget to hire an assistant for every recruiter, the CRM becomes admissions' best friend.

There is no magic bullet or perfect strategy for college searching or student recruiting. Statistically, even the institutions with the best retention rates in the country rarely meet a perfect 100% for first-year students. There are, however, ways to improve recruitment strategy, marketing communication, student engagement, boost first-year confidence, and reduce melt. Everyone likes a good story, and it is up to your admissions team to tell your story from the road, behind the screen, and during campus visits. Eliminate confusing content clutter, keep messaging clear and concise, and utilize modern technology like many other industries do outside of higher ed. By looking at the big picture, you can improve the student journey while helping counselors work on what matters most—creating authentic experiences for future students.

Maximize your student reach with virtual fairs.



[Learn how](#) 

We have a dedicated solution to meet your student marketing needs. Reach students directly as they search online across our 460+ global student websites.

[Get in touch ▶](#)

STUDENT MOTIVATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

by Julia Sachs

Going to college has always represented opening your horizons regarding future opportunities and career fields usually reserved for college graduates.

Today, when many businesses are getting rid of that requirement in their hiring process, many students question whether the degree they were once told they needed still holds the same value. With student motivations changing according to changes in various professional industries, universities need to reevaluate why students are still pursuing higher education and leverage that in their marketing to appeal to prospective students in the future.

Education Required for Specific Career Paths

Some career paths, like those in the medical, educational or scientific fields, require a degree because they require specialized instruction to work in the area. Students looking to enter such fields are likely to look for schools that have programs with high respectability in their industry or have the resources students need to enter the area directly after graduating.

Expand Potential Earnings

While many businesses are open to the idea of hiring employees that have not completed a degree, many still require a degree from their applicants. Many students enter college with the expectation that they will expand their potential earnings after graduation by entering their desired field with the necessary credentials.

Networking

Schools with robust and widespread alumni net



works will likely attract students looking to break into similar fields. Many students, especially those in graduate and Ph.D. programs, are looking to network during their time at school. For these students, networking opportunities are likely the primary reason for choosing one program over another.

Independence & Social Opportunity

Many young students attend college for the autonomy and social freedom they experience in an on-campus environment. For students looking for a robust social experience, on-campus clubs and activities might be critical in choosing which schools they want to apply to.

Expand Career Options

Students that are unsure of what they want to pursue in life often go to college to test different fields. These students are often drawn to schools with many programs or the opportunity to test the waters with other classes until they decide on a schedule. These students may feel that college is an

excellent way to learn about several fields quickly but might seek additional resources like career information or advice from guidance counselors.

Learn New Skills

Some students enter college because they want to learn new skills or a wide variety of skills. They may have a niche interest or hobby that they can further pursue by attending a specific university. Schools that are located in a mountain or wilderness area, for example, might attract students interested in exploring the wilderness or participating in mountain sports. Similarly, schools located in tropical places or regions near the ocean may attract students interested in the local landscape or hobbies associated with it, like surfing or diving.

With different reasons that students might go to college in mind, you can adjust your marketing based on which students you're targeting at any given moment. More prominent universities targeting several of these demographics can A/B test their advertising to reach more than one demographic at once.

Schools located in unique places, like near ski resorts or on the beach, can use student hobbies to their advantage in their advertising and marketing. Take advantage of local hobbies and integrate them into your marketing, or offer unique classes to let students get more in touch with their natural surroundings. These things can make your school stand out, and when used in advertising, can help attract students that may not have thought about your school before.

Schools in remote areas can offer camping classes, such as other outdoor courses that will give them valuable life skills and might attract them to your school over another. In places like New York City, schools can embrace local activities like museum-going or visiting remarkable landmarks in their advertising to attract students that share those interests. Look for ways your school can stand out to students interested in expanding their skills and hobbies, and embrace that in your marketing.

Social media advertising allows schools to target niche, interest-based demographics in their marketing efforts. You can specify interests or liked businesses and age and geographic location data to deliver high-quality advertisements to specific groups of students.

Students interested in pursuing specialized careers that require a degree to get into the field would benefit from learning more about your programs specifically. Take advantage of collected data from informational events, online searches, or short web surveys to understand better why students want to attend your college and integrate your findings into your marketing strategy.



RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ATHLETES

by Stewart Stanbra

For those with an aptitude for athletics, sports might provide a unique pathway to higher education. In the United States, sports recruitment offers many students the opportunity to play their chosen sport while earning a degree. According to ncaa.org, over eight million students currently participate in college athletics. Additionally, “More than eight out of 10 student-athletes will earn a bachelor’s degree, and more than 35 percent will earn a postgraduate degree.”

To help these students, there are many services available such as CSUSA, which are designed to help students find the right college and team, guiding them and helping them to connect with potential universities. For those who want to learn more about playing sports in college, we’ve gathered some information.



The Process of Getting Recruited

For many high school students, college athletics is the way towards achieving their higher education. Understanding how the recruitment process works can help students get better prepared. As ivywise.com reports, “recruitment is a two-way street,” between the student and their future team. Students should spend time researching programs in order to make sure they’re a good fit, both academically and athletically.

The recruitment process generally starts with the student-athlete receiving a letter of interest from a coach or program. This doesn’t mean the student is being actively recruited but is an opportunity for universities to build awareness about their sports programs. Students interested in playing college sports should start by having a conversation with their current coach to determine if it’s feasible for them to play at a higher level. After that, students should begin researching colleges and programs of interest. Once the student has a list of places they’re interested in, they should start reaching out to coaches. Send an updated resume, sports stats, and game footage, if possible. Students may also want to familiarize themselves with the NCAA timelines and rules for recruitment.

Students who are being recruited will either receive a phone call, a visitor will receive a formal invitation to join the team. In the meantime, students should make sure they’re being appropriate on their social media, as they want to be the best representation of themselves for their future schools and team. Additionally, students should continue to focus on maintaining a good GPA. Even if a coach wants to recruit a student, they can’t guarantee admittance to the university without good grades.

Scholarships

While considering options, students and their parents should also be aware not all schools offer scholarships. For example, Division III schools offer no sports scholarships to student-athletes, whereas other divisions may offer partial or full scholarships. It's ultimately dependent upon the school and sports program.

Division I schools, of which there are 350 schools in the United States that qualify, generally have the most money to give to students. Students that play at this level are not only held to the highest standards athletically but also academically.

For those attending a Division II school, there's generally less compensation offered to student-athletes. With that being said, students at these schools are expected to maintain high GPAs but are often afforded more time to get involved on campus. There are about 300 schools that compete at the Division II level.

In Division III, which has 450 schools with over 18,000 student-athletes, students enjoy shorter sports seasons. This gives more time to focus on academics, as well as gain further connections to their campus. Students who play Division III sports generally aren't offered sports scholarships but may be awarded merit-based scholarships for good grades.

International Students

While the road to earning a sports scholarship might be a bit tougher for international students, it can certainly be done. According to [usnews.com](https://www.usnews.com), there are three things a prospective international student-athlete should do before trying to earn a spot on a US university sports team. This includes starting early, understanding the college sports organizations and their functions, then working on developing their online presence.

Students who want to attend university in the United States and play sports should start looking

into their options 18-24 months before they'd like to start school. In addition, students will need to have excellent grades, and will probably need to take an English language proficiency test.

International students, much like students from the United States, should also spend time researching the three college sports organizations to better understand their options. As not all organizations or schools provide scholarships, it's important for students to know exactly what's offered by each. This should be extended to the universities they hope to attend as well. Students should spend time researching to make sure they understand exactly what's required of them to apply before reaching out.

With COVID-19 grinding the world to a halt, many coaches haven't been able to travel to recruit. Therefore, it's up to students, especially international students, to capture a coach's attention by creating a strong online presence. Students can use social media to highlight their high school sports career, connect with coaches, or post-game footage so recruiters can view it. Kyle Winters, recruiting manager for Next College Student Athlete (NCSA) said "...if an international student-athlete does everything they can to be seen online – actively connect with college coaches and keep their grades up – they'll have a much better chance of earning a scholarship."



While pursuing a placement on a college team can feel overwhelming, it doesn't have to be something that stops students from participating in the recruitment process. For international students understanding the system, being prepared, and staying a few steps ahead can make all the dif-

ference. For students in the United States hoping to play at the collegiate level, many of the same applications. Take the time to research the school you hope to attend, get serious about honing your skills and make sure your expectations match what your prospective school has to offer.

Words from our student athlete recruiting experts:

CSUSA have the mission to help driven people Pursue Ambition. Since 2007 we have helped more than 2500 young people combine their education with their sporting passion in North America.
Stu Stanbra, Keystone Sports



Connect with international student athletes.



[Learn how](#) ▶

Learn more at
keystoneacademic.com

Stay up to date with the latest in higher ed at
keystoneacademic.com/news

Watch our latest webinars at
keystoneacademic.com/events-webinars