



## Supporting the Student Journey through a Modern Campus

Can your institution continually adjust to meet the needs of the changing student and changing student journey?

Today's college student experience, from admissions to graduation, is vastly different from that of past generations. Indeed, each student has a unique experience based upon their individual needs and expectations. Looking to the future, student journeys will continue to change as new technologies emerge and students' expectations change. Today's technology provides students with unprecedented levels of responsiveness, accessibility and connection to a school. Technology enables schools to provide students with an experience similar to what they expect, and indeed have, with mainstream technology and social media giants. Student expectations encourage schools to adopt new technologies and technologically-based interactions.

Do you know what your students or potential students expect from your institution? If your students' expectations are not being met by you, they can and will likely be met by another school.

The student experience is a key factor in overall academic success. Your school's ability to adjust to a changing student body hinges upon determining the satisfaction each student has with each phase of their journey. In the past, rigid institutional policies and procedures typically governed students. Today's schools need flexibility and a certain level of intimate connectedness to the student. The student's experience should be holistic, not limited to one advisor or department. Students should also feel connected prior to setting foot on campus.

Engagement does not only occur when on campus but through technology throughout the entire recruitment process. Looking at important factors in the student's journey, we see how technology can facilitate the interactions that in the past were usually in-person, cumbersome and time consuming. Today's student engages and reacts through many forms of dialogue as they explore many available options. Information and interaction accessed through mobile devices helps engage candidates. Prospective students invest significant time gathering information through a variety of channels to find the right school. They use social media sites to get a better feel for each school and its culture. Determining the school that best meets their goals involves them researching the various institutions and deciphering the information most relevant to them. School websites provide a window into the programs and culture students can expect. They also talk to friends and family who are attending or may have attended the school to get valuable insight into its admissions process. Students process a tremendous amount of information so presenting information in a convenient and easy way can help give you an advantage. It's important for your school's website and departmental pages to be easy to access, up to date, intuitive, and understandable.

Once a student shows interest, schools need to engage the student. Having departments, enrollment management offices and College Deans interacting early provides the student with a connection to the institution. The earlier you engage a student the more likely they will apply. Students are often more likely to chat and email rather than phone to get in touch, so respond likewise as early as possible to start and maintain a dialogue with interested students.

## Community and institutional culture plays an important role for today's student as they journey through the engagement process.

Community can be fellow classmates, alumni or student mentors, all of who can provide students with insight on what they may experience at the school. Current students can provide an understanding of the culture and activities. One lesson we continue to learn from students is that each incoming student body has unique needs requiring specific interactions. Leveraging current students to understand the needs of prospective students plays a key role in effective student engagement.

An online application and acceptance process allows the school to confirm a student's interest and can trigger activities to increase enrollment probability. Usually a school's website allows students to submit an application and supporting documentation. A more intuitive online application is less time consuming and more convenient. With so many school choices, applying and status-checking processes should be streamlined. The more transparent the process, the more control the student feels. Schools can enable students to interact early and join their community with an early review and acceptance of their application.

As students confirm their intent to enroll in the institution, there will be uncertainty, questions and doubts about next steps, and they may question if they chose the right institution or can meet the financial commitment. It is critical that the institution respond to these concerns and avoid a student's decision to defer.

The enrollment process should be designed to work not only with a computer, but also with tablets and smartphones. Mobile access allows students to interact with a campus from anywhere. Remember that the student system exists not just to process student transactions, but also to allow faculty, advisors and staff to access information to support student needs—information to readily address student concerns and guide them in the right direction.

Enrollment always plays a vital part in the student's experience. The process should be as efficient and intuitive to navigate as popular online stores. The student's goals should form the foundation of the enrollment, and present the student with the school's most appropriate offerings and value propositions. The more aligned the institution's interactions are with the goals of the student, the more likely the institution will successfully enroll that student.

Enrollment self-services should present students with information needed to make critical decisions, including such things as billing, financial aid and course enrollment. With the amount of student data schools house and process, it is imperative that analytical dashboards support student success. Data can help understand trends or identify risk factors that can be mitigated through the process, making it more likely that the student will be able to complete their program of study. So when a student is struggling with a financial concern the institution should engage proactively with the student and help position the student for success.

As students look to graduate, one of the main goals of any institution is helping their students find success in the marketplace. Today, schools play a critical role in aligning graduating students with their alumni. These alumni can play an important role for gainful employment. Career Service advisors can leverage professional networking sites to help bridge relationships not only to alumni but to corporate leadership. They can also leverage job aggregator sites to guide students with their job search. Success in the marketplace also enables institutions to ask alumni to give back to the school, supporting the students of tomorrow.

In closing, the student's journey is what they make of it. They map out their own journey based on what the institution offers. Today's student support may not match how you'll meet the needs of the future student. Understanding your students and their needs will drive the school's required transformation. Providing students with a modern campus that is able to effectively transform through technology and adjust to student needs is a key part of student success.

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