INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENT RECRUITMENT

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UBC CONTEXT

- Top 40 – world ranking; Top 20 – public
- 10,000 grad students – 3600 doctoral, 6400 masters
- 35% international grad students
- Almost no tuition differences domestic vs. international (research programs)
- Avg. PhD funding – $30,000/yr (4 yrs)
- Avg. MA/MSc funding - $17,500/yr (2 yrs)
- Recently implemented minimum PhD guarantee ($18,000)
- Very high cost of living in Vancouver
UBC CONTEXT

• Recruitment efforts: both centralized and decentralized

• Recruitment goals: no enrolment increase necessarily, but better students; new professional masters program recruitment
% Change in Application Numbers from 2016 to 2017
(BASELINE) APPROACHES TO RECRUITMENT

Digital
• Website (>1.5M unique visitors/yr)
• Social media

Systems/operations
• Inclusion in compilations/databases
• Funding processes, amounts
• International offices
• International partnerships, funding programs

In-person
• Provision of material for faculty events (e.g. conferences)
• Grad fairs
RECENT ENHANCEMENTS

Digital
• Increased advertising (social media and traditional)
• Added more, better info for prospective students
• Implemented virtual events, community forum

Systems/operations
• Increased student funding by $8M, new $30K int’l doctoral award
• Increased flexibility for programs’ use of funds
• Implemented minimum PhD guarantee
• Extended deadlines post-Exec Order, offered ‘Open Border Award’

Other
• Engage with trade commissioners
• Provided program recruitment seed funding
• Leading university-wide task force
RECENT ENHANCEMENTS

Added more, better info for prospective students

• How much will it cost to live here?
• How is a program different from others?
• What’s the quality of a program? Attrition rate? Average times?
• What are actual & possible career outcomes for different programs?
• Can I talk to someone who went through the program(s)?

https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/graduate-degree-programs/phd-chemistry

https://www.grad.ubc.ca/campus-community/alumni
RECENT ENHANCEMENTS

Added more, better info for prospective students

• What supervisors are available across the university?
  • What is their publication record?
  • Are they looking for students?
  • Do they have funding?
  • Who are their past students, and what did they work on?
  • Do/would they collaborate with external partners? (e.g. through PSI)
• What projects are available?

https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/research-supervisors
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/research-projects
 (>250,000 visitors in first year)
RECENT ENHANCEMENTS

Implemented virtual events, community forum

• Virtual Events - typically 1000 registrations each
  • “Office hours” (monthly) - virtual open-houses
  • Webinar series (helping students to write better applications)
  • Collaborative sessions with programs (theme-based)
RECENT ENHANCEMENTS

Implemented virtual events, community forum

• Online community forum for students offered admission (but not necessarily accepted) & current students

Practical support (e.g. housing)

I live in a 2 bedroom garden-level suite. My current roommate is moving away, so I am looking for someone else who needs a place starting in August.

Hi [name]... I will be starting a Masters at UBC this Fall. Your place and your profile sound great. Is it still available? Is the bedroom furnished?

Degree program community

Hello everyone, I'm [name] from Iran, reading all about your interests excited me so much! ....My Facebook address is [·], please add me so we can be in touch. Love you all and counting seconds to start a new life with you guys.

Home country community

Hi [name], nice to know about you. I have got admission in [Masters degree]....Where are you from? i am from Ludhiana, Punjab,India I am from Rajasthan...
RECENT ENHANCEMENTS

Provided program recruitment seed funding

- Promotional videos
- Outreach at conferences
- Meeting days (fly in top candidates)
- Profiles
- Open Houses
- Digital Initiatives
- Webinars
RECENT ENHANCEMENTS
Reimagining the PhD initiatives

Public Scholars Initiative
• Support for multisectoral collaborations, impactful non-traditional scholarship in dissertation

Killam Connection course
• Publicly-engaged multidisciplinary course on ‘grand challenge’

Graduate Pathways to Success
• Full suite of professional development offerings
WHAT WORKS?

Difficult to show causation…BUT

Macroconversions:

• Individual faculty member contacts ‘tried and true’
• A few excellent students came through ‘Open Borders’
• Increasing interest in PSI as draw to UBC
• Many IDF recipients said they wouldn’t have come otherwise
• Significant traffic from external databases (but not desired quality)

Microconversions:

• Website and ads attract many views
WHAT NEXT?

• Develop/coordinate tier 1 research partnerships
• Track conversion to application system
• Create more conversion points on website (e.g. through profile creation)
• Improve coordination with faculty on networks (travel, conferences, etc)
• Improve best practice sharing between units
• Other – depending on task force findings and $