



Understanding the Graduate Student Mindset

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A public research university in Statesboro, GA with a total enrollment of 27,000 students

Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies

- Provides institutional oversight for 100 graduate curricula programs across 8 colleges
- 3,500 registered graduate students every semester





Future Graduate Growth Is Not Guaranteed

Many Institutions Are Setting Aggressive Growth Goals...

15%

Average revenue growth goal for Deans of Professional and Adult Education²

...That Are Out of Touch with Current Market Projections

<1%

Average annual graduate enrollment growth projected by NCES, 2021-29

...And Many Programs Struggle To Take Off

Master's programs conferrals in each 2-digit CIP Code (2019)

Programs with Fewer Than 5 Conferrals

30%

Business

32%

Healthcare

43%

Education

1) Based on EAB review of 36 randomly selected strategic plans representative of different institutional types.

2) Gross annual revenue

Survey Overview

A Resource for Graduate School Leaders

Supporting Our Graduate School Partners

400+

Institutional partners associated with graduate, professional, online, and degree completion programs

2021 Graduate and Adult Learner Survey



- Data collected **June 2021**
- **2,234** participants
- **37.9%** age 25 and under, **35.5%** 26-40, and **24.6%** 41+
- Primary school types represented include **graduate, business, arts and sciences, online learning, medicine, and law**

- 1** Recruit and Support Students from Underserved Groups
- 2** Online Learning Continues to Gain Popularity
- 3** Your Future Graduate Student is Increasingly Difficult to Find

The Impact of COVID-19



35%

Of survey respondents said that COVID-19 impacted their education plans

The Pandemic Accelerated Some Students' Journeys to Enrollment...

“**COVID actually made my plans more attainable.** Because I have worked from home for the past year, what I saved in commuting time and down-time at my job gave me the opportunity to squeeze in time to work on a second master's degree.”

- Survey respondent

...And Slowed or Derailed Other Students' Education Plans

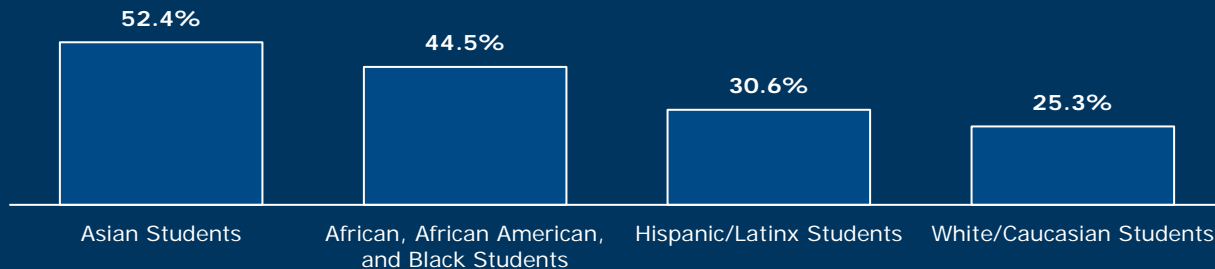
“**Increase demands at work and home (children enrolled in virtual learning) significantly decreased the amount of time I could devote to my education program.**”

- Survey respondent

The Pandemic's Unequal Impacts

Students of Color More Often Report That COVID-19 Impacted Their Plans

Q: "Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your education plans?"



International Students Report Outsize Barriers to Enrollment During COVID-19

“COVID-19 led to the closure of my country's borders for over 7 months. By the time the borders were opened, **classes had already begun and I couldn't enroll.**”

- Survey Participant

60%

of international students who planned to pursue graduate studies in the U.S. said the **pandemic changed their education plans**, compared to 28% of domestic students

Students Increasingly Prioritize Class Diversity



“In terms of your enrollment decision, please indicate the importance of the following factors.”

Mean score for “diverse student body” on a scale of 1-5 (1=not important, 5=extremely important)



“ It starts with a commitment from the institution that they believe in diversity at every level and that they’re going to make a commitment to not only increase it but support these students through completion.”

- JoAnn Canales, Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Professor, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Evaluate Your Admissions Procedures and Policies

Expanding Your Prospect Pool Is Important to Class-Shaping

Take a Holistic Approach to Admissions



Reconsider test requirements



Require only application components necessary to make an admissions decision

Expand Class Diversity to Serve All Students

Offer Incentives to Priority Applicants



Consider incentives such as a scholarship opportunity or faster admissions decisions



Optimize financial aid based on behavior patterns from previous years





Develop an Effective Pricing Strategy

Program Cost Continues to Be the Primary Barrier to Enrollment

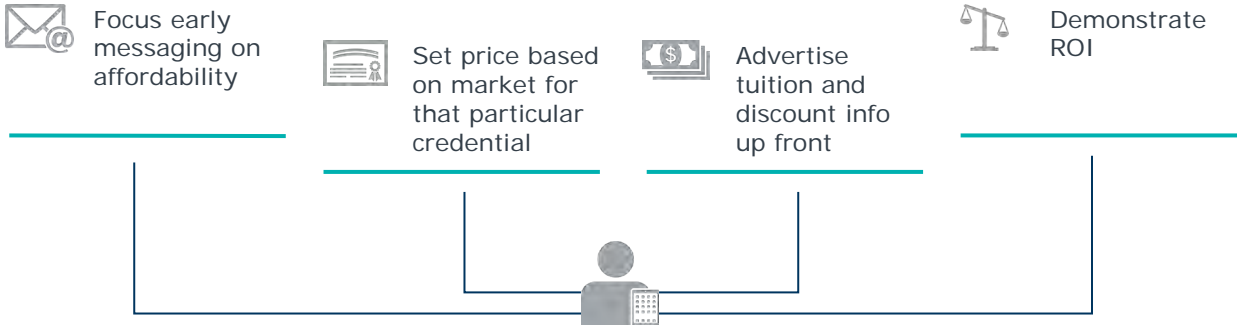
47.7%

of respondents who do not plan to pursue graduate education said “more affordable tuition” would lead them to do so

48.0%

of African, African American, and Black students surveyed said the “high cost of attendance” is their main enrollment obstacle

Strategically Price Graduate, Online, and Adult Education Programs



Connect Graduate Students to Support Services

Available Support Services Impact Students' Enrollment Decisions

"In terms of your enrollment decision, please indicate the importance of the following factors."

Top Criteria	Mean
Online support services	3.70
Length of program/Time required for degree completion	3.69
Full-time program	3.69
Student support services	3.49

Prominently Advertise Support Services

Sample EAB Nurture Email



Unparalleled Support. Unparalleled Success.

At [University Name], your success is our goal, and we offer the support to prove it. As soon as you submit your application, you will have dedicated support from a personal admissions representative who will assist you with everything from obtaining transcripts to choosing the right classes. As experts on curriculum, programs, and processes, our representatives will ensure that you reach graduation quickly and on track to achieve your goals.

Apply today and move forward in your career with confidence.

[Apply Now](#)



Implications and Campus Perspective

From Georgia Southern University

Adjusting Admissions Policies and Procedures to Meet Student Needs



Identified programs for which GRE and GMAT could be waived—or eliminated



Increased flexibility of transcript policies



Enabled students to complete Duolingo assessment instead of TOEFL and IFL in the short- and long-term



Increased flexibility of admit terms for international students

1

Recruit and Support Students from Underserved Groups

2

**Online Learning Continues to Gain
Popularity**

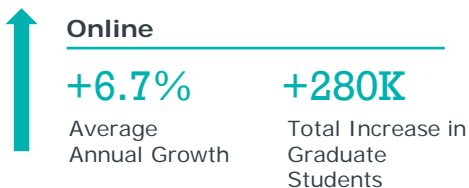
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Your Future Graduate Student is Increasingly Difficult to Find

COVID Encouraged Some to Pursue Online Options

Online Enrollment Represents a Fast-Growing Share of the Graduate Market

5-Year Graduate Enrollment Growth Trends, 2014-2019



The Pandemic's Impact on Online Learning

60%

of surveyed students who participated in online learning during the pandemic said **online learning was a positive experience**

39.2%

of survey respondents said they are **considering online programs**

“ I will be getting my master's online now. COVID has shown me how to do that.”

- Survey Participant

1) Recorded as "Distance Education" in IPEDS data.

You Can Support Your Online Students By...



Making the Basics Routine

Build knowledge base of FAQs for self-help and aggregate important links and resources in one place



Moving Beyond the Phone

Use live chat for speedier troubleshooting and to use the communication methods students most often prefer



Lowering the Cost of 24/7

Employ students for late-night, off-site shifts using live chat



Achieving Scale

Use existing LMS partnerships to outsource staff or time-intensive service provision



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Prioritizing Online Programs as Part of Growth Strategy

- ▶ Increase in student inquiries about online options
- ▶ Exploring ways to expand online programming beyond the College of Education



Enhancing Support Services On and Offline

- ▶ Offering more peer mentoring and professional development opportunities online
- ▶ Will continue to offer support services virtually, in-person, and in hybrid formats given strong student response

1

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**Your Future Graduate Student is
Increasingly Difficult to Find**

Test-Taker Lists Are Just Part of the Puzzle

The Number of Students Taking Admissions Tests Continues to Fall

29.4%

Of survey respondents said they do not plan to take a graduate admissions test

“ COVID caused the elimination of the GRE requirement...For all the bad, COVID created more equity in the graduate school application process.”

- Survey respondent

Supplement Test-Taker Lists With Students From A Range of Sources:



Your inquiry pool



Consumer databases



Current undergraduates



First-party digital targeting



Young alumni

Graduate Students Continue to Be Highly Pragmatic

Adult Learners Spend Time Researching, Not Applying

40.9%



Applied to two or fewer schools



Emphasize why your school is uniquely positioned to meet student's needs and goals

30.7%



Said an application or admissions requirement did *not* deter them from applying



Consider whether all application and admissions requirements are necessary to make an admissions decision

29.3%



Searched for information about going back to school for 18+ months







Continue to outreach to prospective students who have not engaged with your marketing recently



Implications and Campus Perspective

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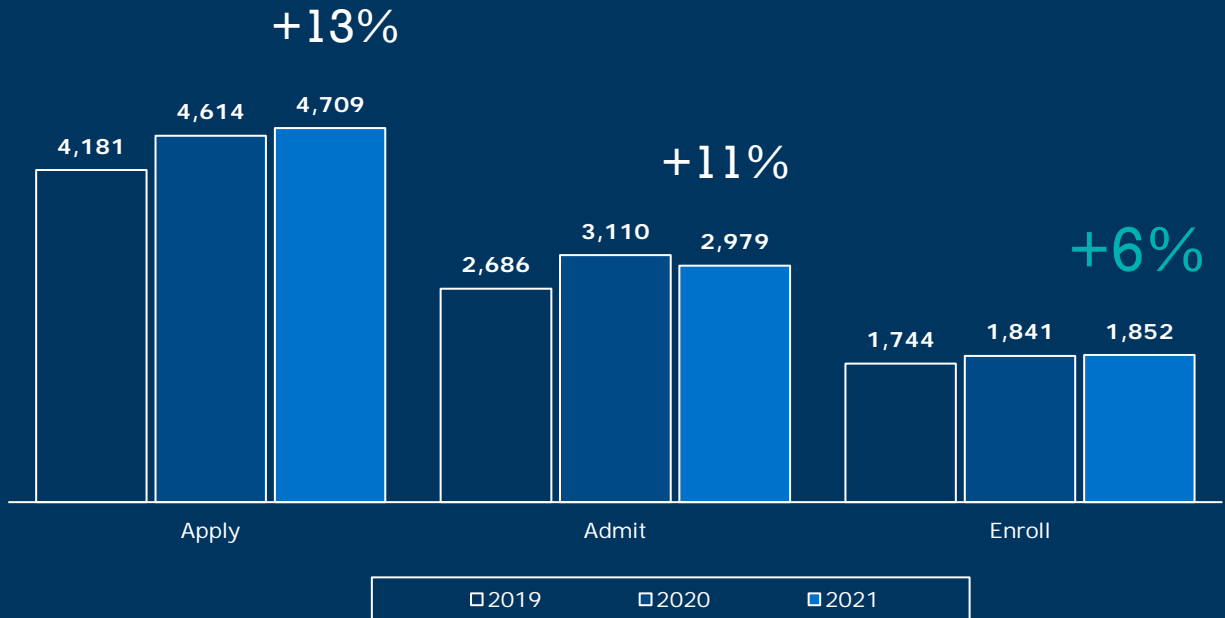
Audience	Previous Strategy	Strategy with EAB
 GRE and GMAT lists	Only for select programs, 2,000-5,000 names purchased annually	Expanded to 32,400 names, based on EAB's data-driven recommendations
 Digital Marketing	Intermittent LinkedIn campaigns	Multi-step digital strategy, including LinkedIn and Facebook campaigns
 Inquiry Pool, Graduate Fairs, and Undergrads	CRM follow-up and limited recruitment campaigns	Augmented follow-up with intent-based nurture campaigns across the student journey via email, digital ads, and mailers
 Additional Audiences	N/A	Generated new high-affinity audience with consumer analytics



Implications and Campus Perspective

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Growth Across the Enrollment Funnel, 2019-2021





Key Takeaways

- 1 The pandemic has amplified the obstacles students face to enrollment—**design admissions policies and procedures to meet their ongoing needs
- 2 Interest in online is growing—**ensure your online programs and support service are up to snuff
- 3 Your future adult learner is increasingly difficult to find—**make sure your audience generation strategy leaves no stone unturned

Q&A



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