

Nurturing and Engaging Prospective Graduate Students in Today's Digital Society

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Presenting

Andrew Goodlife, Associate Dean for Admissions, Recruitment, and Fellowships

Contributing

Kaitlynn Beaird, Director of Graduate Recruitment

Brittany Richardson, IT Specialist

Landon Waid, Director of Graduate Admissions

Susan Carvalho, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Brandie Nabors, Assistant Director of Marketing

The University of Alabama: *Who We Are*

Large R1 state flagship
comprehensive doctoral
research university

- 38,645 students
(5,687 graduate students)
- 1,118 international students
(761 at graduate level)
- 6,947 staff members
(including 1,986 faculty)
- 350+ degree programs
(~150 at the graduate level)



1. Implementation of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System

And.... What is a CRM?

The UA Lead Nurturing Journey.....

Ten years ago

- Very traditional recruitment – gather names at fairs and load into a database (if lucky)
- Brochures and messaging designed in the Graduate School by non-experts
- Very little international recruitment
- Very poor follow up with prospects and admitted students
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool adopted, but...

Five years ago

- Priorities shifted to focus on graduate student enrollment growth
- International recruitment became a larger target
- Simultaneous increase in domestic recruitment activities
- A shift to a new CRM a little over three years ago (game-changer)

Today

- External and internal digital marketing partners provide tools and market-specific expertise
- Marketing and IT partnerships provide the necessary expertise
- Constant flow of leads to “feed” the CRM and application that are fully integrated with the SIS
- Prospects fully tracked through to enrollment and beyond
- Amazing admissions and recruitment team

CRM Implementation

2019: Launched New CRM

- Implementation Time: 3 months (less than ideal!)
- Campaigns and Communications for Applications and Prospects
- Forms

2020: Launched the CRM application system (during COVID lockdown)

- Implementation Time: ~8 months
- Summer and Fall 2021 apps
- Application, app communications, app portals, app workflows, etc.

2020-2023: Staying Agile

- CRM gives the ability to make quick changes, when necessary
- Flexibility to build additional processes
- Constant input from admissions and recruitment team

CRM Implementation: Lessons Learned

- 1) CRM (Slate) needs dedicated IT support (and that need is growing)
- 2) CRMs are often viewed as just ways to send out messaging to prospects/applicants/admitted students – but they are so much more
- 3) The application associated with our CRM has permitted significant time savings in the application processing workflow (which enable us to absorb significant growth in app numbers)
- 4) Many other areas for time savings – direct links to groups like ETS, IELTS, Parchment
- 5) **The ability to track is a game changer**

A pause for questions and comments.....

2) Use of a digital-first strategy to reach out to prospective students

Getting Prospect Names is Key....

Fairs

- Domestic
- International

RFI Forms

- On web page
- Through digital ads
- Through third parties
- Etc....

Office visit/phone call/email interaction are entered into the CRM



Getting Prospect Names is Key....

Lists

- Preference for fairs that provide the entire attendee list
- NCUR
- GRE name buys
- McNair
- Etc.

Faculty driven lead gathering

- Challenge getting faculty to use Grad School lead forms
- Key is showing ROI....



Getting Prospect Names is Key....

Social media (in-house, student-driven, third party)

- Prospects driven directly to web pages and lead generation forms
- Student-driven social media campaigns are **BY FAR** our most successful activity for lead and applicant generation

In-house digital marketing (Google, Facebook, Instagram)

Third party digital marketing



Lead Tracking is KEY

- All leads are tagged by **source** (fair, list, agent, student influencer, digital campaign, etc.)
- **ROI** for all sources is tracked and used to inform future recruitment strategies
- Data informed changes in recruitment strategy



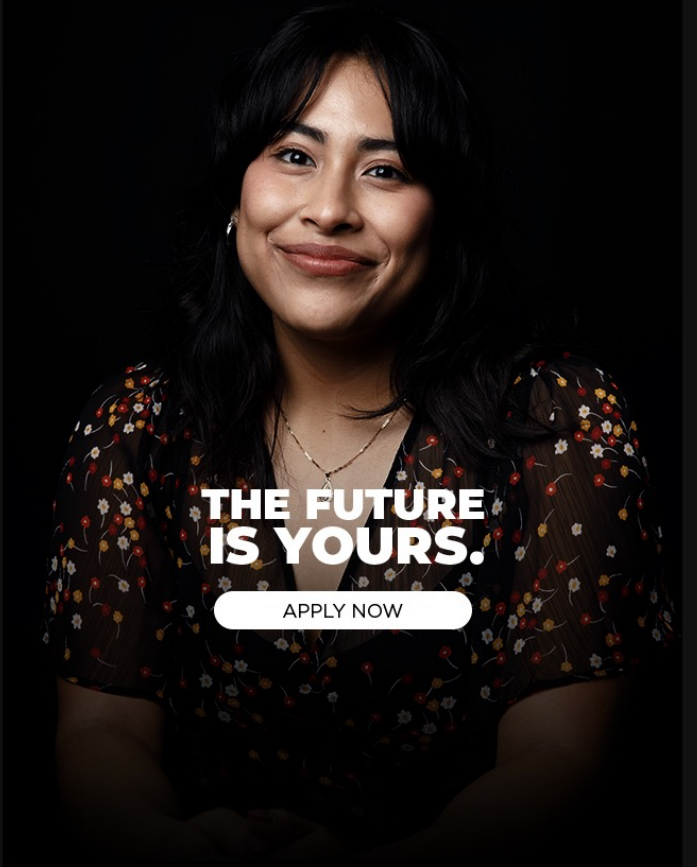
A pause for questions and comments.....

3) Nurturing students through the recruitment funnel

Nurturing the Prospect

Series of (nine +/-) adaptive prospect emails aimed at **starting an application**

- Always directed to application and/or prospect portal
- Content
 - Student stories – telling their story
 - Information important to students (funding, rankings, internships, jobs, facilities)
 - Program-specific information
 - Prospect-specific imagery
 - Portal and emails direct to virtual info sessions (GradConnect)



Tenacious. Dedicated. Unshakeable. Despite all odds, Nayeli's passion and grit have earned her financial freedom and an opportunity to leave a lasting impact.

Shortly after her freshman year, Nayeli took time off to support her family. When she returned to The University of Alabama, she connected with Dr. Cory Armstrong, who took interest in her work and persuaded her to pursue a graduate degree in journalism.

Nayeli applied, was accepted and began her master's the next month.

Now, she's an advocate for Latinx diversity and education. She works with high school students to find their niches and apply to colleges. Last year, she helped the Hispanic Interest Coalition sponsor financial aid legislative Show with Jimmy Fa

"Everything I've done about diversifying th my dream."



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®

Nurturing the Applicant

On starting an application, messaging changes and is aimed at **application completion**

- Submit Your Application
- Graduate Resources
- Missing Checklist Items (Submit your Statement of Purpose)
- Application Status Updates
- Decision Made



Graduate School



Dear Isabel,

It's been 30 days since you started your UA Graduate School application. You're almost there! Submit your application now for a better chance to receive priority consideration.

Here are a few helpful links to help you get started:

[How to Apply](#)

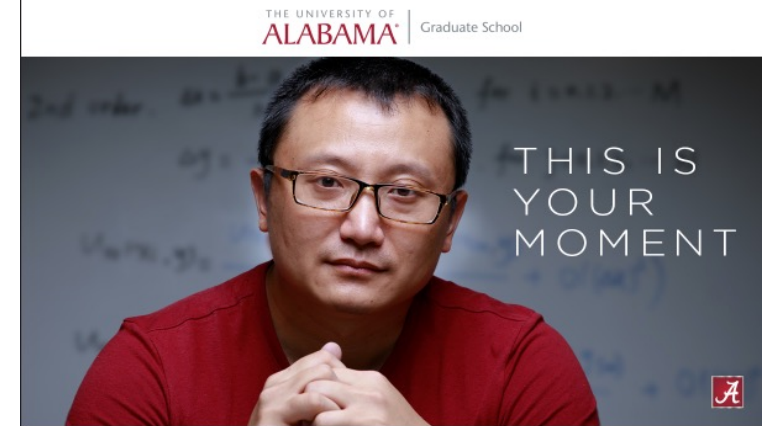
[Supporting Documents](#)

[Graduate Program Directory](#)

Nurturing the Admission

Applicant enters **admitted-yield** campaign (another series of emails)

- Directed to university resources: Student ambassadors, funding, housing, career center, onboarding resources
- Publicize info sessions for admitted students. International and domestic specific.
- Always directed to commit to the offer of admission
- How to register, financial aid, orientation



We noticed you have not yet completed your Reply to Offer. Tell us your enrollment plans by clicking the button below. The questionnaire is mobile friendly and only takes a moment to complete.

REPLY TO OFFER

Note: Submitting your Reply to Offer does not confirm your enrollment at UA. Contact your [graduate program](#) to confirm your status or visit our [Getting Started](#) page to learn more about advising, registration and next steps.

Before you begin your UA journey, tell us about your enrollment plans. Once we know your intentions, we can send you more relevant information regarding your next steps.

Roll Tide!

Graduate School
[The University of Alabama](#)
[Contact Us](#) | [Learn More](#)

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 THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®

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Disability assistance is available at any p

Disability Services [\(256\) 844-1234](#) for more information.

Taking Imagery and Messaging to the Next Level



- Adapt imagery and messaging to the specific prospect – an international prospect will get an international student story
- Don't send STEM lab images to business students
- STEM students generally less-likely to react to football-related imagery
- Consistent use of wording and awareness of institutional personality
- For domestic students, adapting messaging based on household demographics (works better for undergrad recruitment)

Some Lessons Learned about Messaging

- I am a geophysicist not a marketing expert! Make sure that you find the experts on campus
- The importance of “calls to action” and student stories
- A-B testing



vs.



Prospect Portal



Welcome, Hailey.

[Home](#) [Admission Requirements](#) [Supporting Documents](#)

Greetings from the Dean



Greetings from the the Graduate School. As you explore, I hope you find The University of Alabama a good fit for your research and professional goals.

UA's faculty are dedicated mentors whose work shape graduate students across disciplines. Over 80% of our faculty hold terminal degrees, and many have won national awards, ranging from nanoscience and engineering to biological sciences. Our Carnegie Research 1 classification for "very high research activity" places us among the nation's top innovators in fields such as business, healthcare, social work and communications.

Here, you will find over 150 master's and doctoral programs to challenge and elevate you. On top of that, our mentoring and student-lead programs will guide you through your first year and advocate for you.

Here is a list of personal resources available to all UA students:

- [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion](#)
- [Safe Zone Resource Center](#)
- [Women & Gender Resource Center](#)

From application to graduation, The University of Alabama Graduate School will be by your side, supporting you as you define and achieve your aspirations. Please [contact us](#) or your [prospective program director](#) if you have any questions. We look forward to receiving your application.

Roll Tide,

Susan Carvalho
Dean of the Graduate School

Funding Opportunities

With more than \$25 million awarded last year, nearly half of our graduate students received funding to further their educations and reward their accomplishments. Assistantships, fellowships and scholarships are available to qualified students to meet their financial support includes a full-tuition scholarship, health insurance

For more information, visit the Graduate School's [Prospective Stud](#)

2021 Quick Admit Program

Select May and August 2021 UA graduates with a 3.0+ GPA are eli qualify for an expedited application process for Summer and Fall 21 may be eligible for automatic admission. For more information, visit



Introduce yourself

Completing your Graduate School profile helps us connect you with the right professors and opportunities.

[Click here to update your grad profile.](#)

Grad Connect

Meet with an online representative and find out what makes UA Graduate School the perfect foundation for your career.

January 2022

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
						1
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
						31

Legend:

- Available
- Unavailable / Filled
- Not Scheduled

Campus Tours

Interested in visiting campus in-person? [Sign up](#) for one of our campus tours.

Resources

[International Student Resources](#)
[Graduate Admissions FAQ](#)
[Departmental Programs](#)

[APPLY NOW](#)

Outcomes

- Having a strong team and a great marketing strategy in place has been transformational for The University of Alabama Graduate School in the last two years.

Fall 2017

- 5,415 apps
(4,293 domestic, 1,122 international)
- 2,157 admits
(1,929 domestic, 228 international)

Fall 2022

- 19,247 apps
(5,846 domestic, 13,401 international)
- 4,018 admits
(2,300 domestic, 1,718 international)



Managing Pain Points

In State Numbers

- Fall 2017 – 673 in-state admits
- Fall 2022 – 539 in-state admits

Nurturing Strategies

- Increased in-state digital marketing
- Call-a-thons (run through CRM)
- Text messaging through CRM
- In-state partnership and summer (REU) programs
- Lead generation through in-state fairs



Managing Pain Points

- Surge in international applicants
- Nurturing Strategies
 - Better communication with program directors
 - Incorporating more program-level messaging into campaigns
 - Rethinking admissions team roles
 - Implementing Bama Bot (integrated with CRM)
 - Snippets
- Using CRM based email
- NOTE: Increased application load would have been **impossible** without transition to CRM/application combination



Future Directions

- CRM is being extended to track and manage current students
 - Onboarding and professional development attendance, research and travel grant awards, plans of study, committee formations, transfer credits, candidacy, defenses, etc.
 - Mailers to current students regarding milestones in their program
- Graduate faculty appointments through CRM
- GOAL: Have the ability to track the entire student lifecycle from first contact to graduation
 - Analytics on the impact of various activities



Questions?

Andrew Goodliffe, amg@ua.edu

