

EducationDynamics Releases Most Comprehensive Research on Prospective Students for Online Higher Education

2,000 respondents reveal their secret likes and dislikes in the enrollment process

Hoboken, New Jersey (March 5, 2009)—EducationDynamics today released the findings of a recent survey of nearly 2,000 prospective students who visited and inquired with one or more schools on its flagship web properties, eLearners.com and EarnMyDegree.com. The survey was focused on their perceptions on the positive and negative aspects of the post-inquiry enrollment process. In what may come as a surprise to traditional higher education institutions, the survey indicated that speed of contact and method of communication matter most.

“With no geographic boundaries to consider, competition for online students is intense. When a prospect conducts research and decides to interact directly with a school, he or she expects a rapid, and personalized response,” says Andrew Gansler, president of the [Prospecting Services Division](#) of EducationDynamics.

Demonstrative of the competitive nature of the industry, nearly 65 percent of those inquiring about online education requested information from three or more institutions, while only seven percent of inquirers requested information from one school. The good news is that of the 2,000 respondents, 89 percent indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the entire school selection process. There is always room for improvement, however.

Speed

In the technology enriched world of [enrollment management](#), speed of contact has been heralded as a cornerstone of successful student conversion. For-profit schools seem to be performing well on that front. In fact, more than 65 percent of respondents were contacted within 24 hours of their initial request for information. In addition, students concur that speed is an important element of the enrollment process with nearly half of respondents indicating that the response speed of the schools impacted their final decision to enroll. However, it is worth noting that 60 percent of the respondents did not select the school that contacted them first.

“Responding quickly is important, but that by itself is not sufficient,” continues Gansler. “A school has to engage the student, and explain to them how their particular offering addresses the prospect’s needs and concerns.”

Method

When asked their preferred method of communication respondents gave greater preference to email followed by phone, out-ranking regular mail by a significant margin. Interestingly, respondents indicated that the form of communication they most used with their prospective school was email, followed by phone.

“The findings tell us that many prospects like to step into the ‘shallow water’ first, preferring to communicate by email during the early stage. But eventually, human interaction is a key ingredient to success in the enrollment process,” says Gansler.



In fact, students in the survey revealed that the most useful school-sponsored activity in their decision making process was enrollment counselors. The respondents gave high ratings to these interactions, often commenting that while the enrollment counselors were often assertive, they were also honest, caring and knowledgeable. In fact, it was the influence of enrollment counselors that participants ranked them as the single most influential factor in their school selection; this was followed by interactions with the school's website, discussions with faculty, printed literature and current student opinions.

Other useful school-sponsored activities topping prospective students' wish lists were school website-related activities, such as online course demos, blogs and forums, and webinars. However, schools are cautioned to use these methods as a way to supplement a more comprehensive recruitment process and not as a substitute for direct human interaction.

"At the end of the day, it's a selling process. Some schools are reluctant to embrace the concept of selling," concluded Gansler. "But if they don't, another school will, and in the online world, that school may be down the street or on the other side of the country."

The [EducationDynamics](#) "Prospective Student Enrollment Process Research" was conducted in November 2008 with nearly 2,000 respondents. Of those responding, 32 percent were studying at the associate's level, 37 percent at bachelor's, seven percent at master's and 23 percent at the doctorate level. Sixty-two percent were male with nearly 75 percent falling between the ages of 26 and 59.

About EducationDynamics

EducationDynamics, a portfolio company of Halyard Capital, is the leading marketing and information services company dedicated to helping higher education institutions find, enroll and retain students. Its content-rich and highly visible education websites, including [EarnMyDegree.com](#), [eLearners.com](#), [GradSchools.com](#), [StudyAbroad.com](#) and its more than 50 special interest microsites, make EducationDynamics the premier provider of qualified prospective students for colleges and universities. In addition, the company offers a full suite of Web-delivered services proven to drive enrollment growth and reduce student attrition. For more information, visit <http://www.educationdynamics.com>.