

T2.4

# An Enrollment Power Formula

Understanding the Math and Science  
of Sustainable Enrollment Success

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Old Dominion University

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Abilene Christian University

- 1 An Enrollment Power Formula
  - 2 Old Dominion University's Experience
  - 3 Abilene Christian University's Experience
-

# The Challenge We All Face

Most-Recent Demographic Estimates Paint a Troubling Picture

## Demographic Shifts Selectively Winning College Demographics

*College-Age Population, 2018*



College Goers

*College-Age Population, 2026*

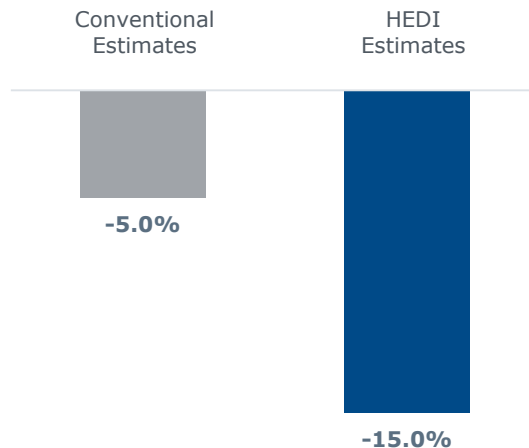


College Goers

Decline in relevant age group + decline in college-going demographics

## Likely Declines Larger than Previously Imagined

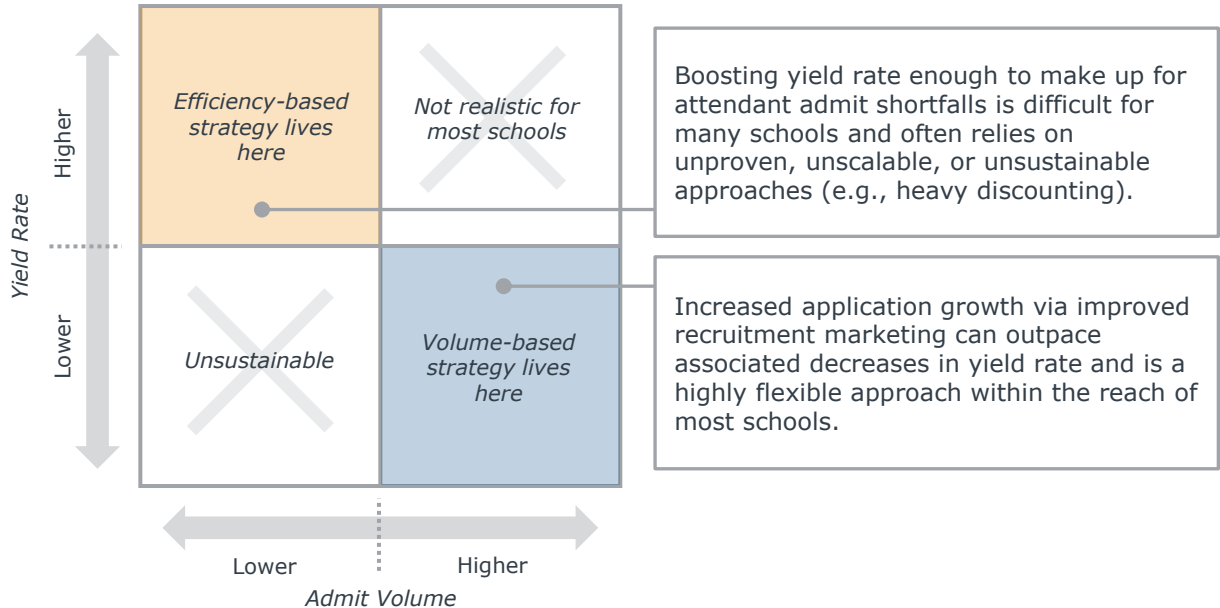
*Change in Number of College-Bound High School Graduates by 2026, Northeast and Midwest*



# Beyond Efficiency

## Understanding the Power of Volume in Student Recruitment

### Efficiency-Based Versus Volume-Based Enrollment Strategy



# New Enrollment Is Built, Not Found

Appreciating How You Can Inflect the Simple Math Underlying Enrollment

## What Drives Your Enrollment Numbers

Enrollment = Outreach Volume x Conversion Rate

Expert **list sourcing and targeting**, supported by appropriate budget, ensure that all viable candidates are included in outreach.

Expert **recruitment-marketing communications**, financial aid optimization, and yield analytics cause students in your recruitment pipeline to convert at higher rates.

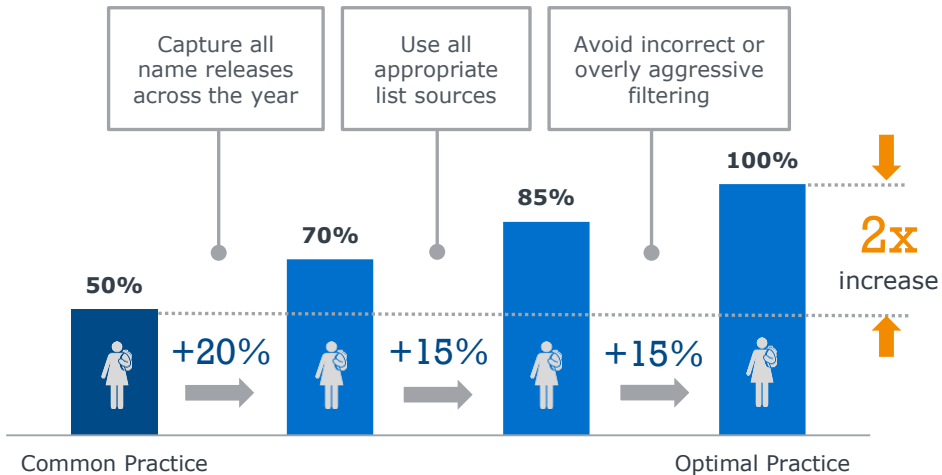
# Ensuring Appropriately Expansive Outreach

Optimized List Sourcing and Targeting Greatly Increase Prospect Pool

## Outreach Volume

$$\text{Enrollment} = \text{Outreach Volume} \times \text{Conversion Rate}$$

Percentage of Desirable Prospects Captured, by List-Sourcing Scenario



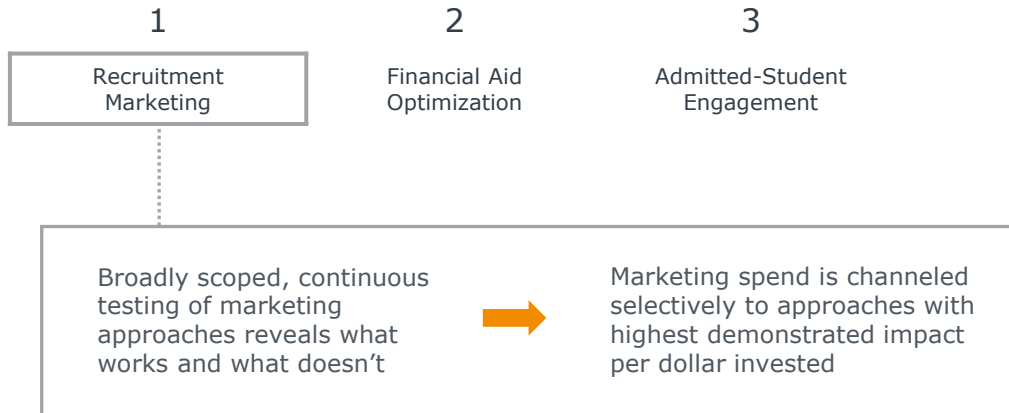
# Maximizing Conversions

The Science of Influencing Student Behaviors and Decisions

## Conversion Rate

Enrollment = Outreach Volume x **Conversion Rate**

*3 Key Conversion Levers*

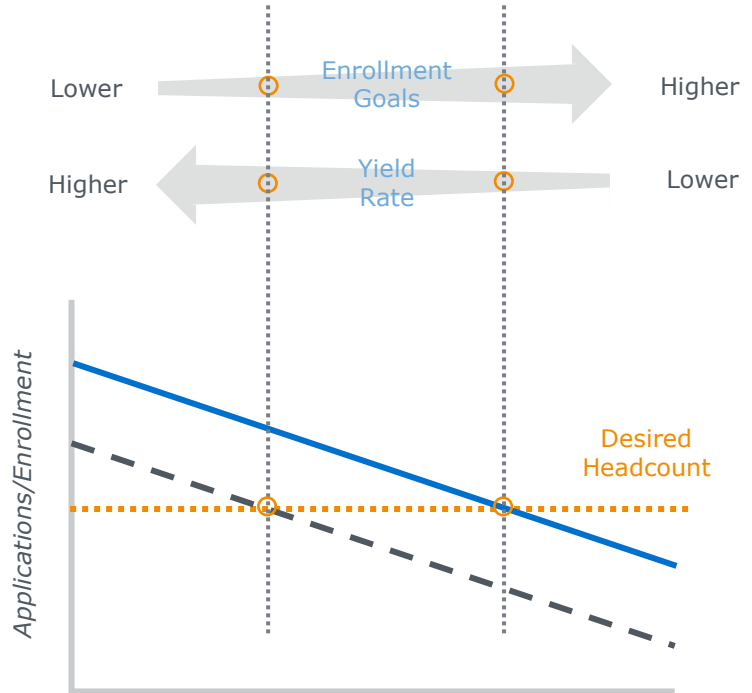


# Why Application Volume Matters

Application Volume Creates 'Altitude' for Progress on Enrollment Goals

Application Volume

- Higher ———
- Lower - - -

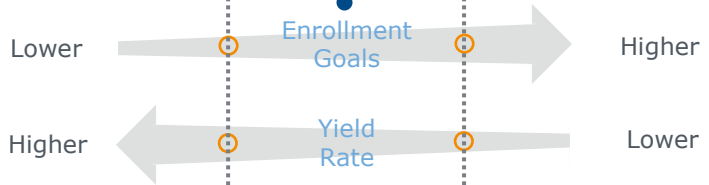




# Why Application Volume Matters

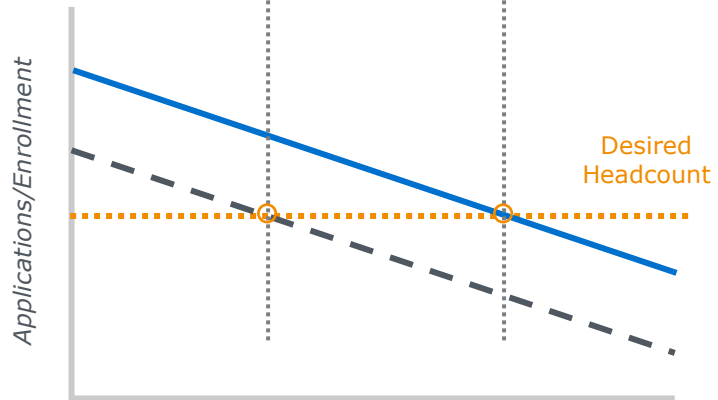
Application Volume Creates 'Altitude' for Progress on Enrollment Goals

Tuition revenue, average test score, demographic mix...



Application Volume

- Higher ———
- Lower - - -

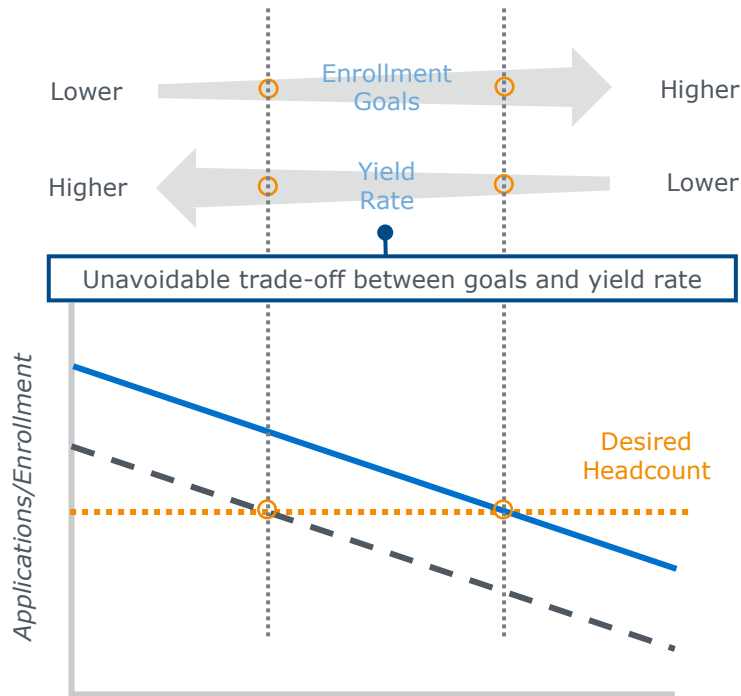


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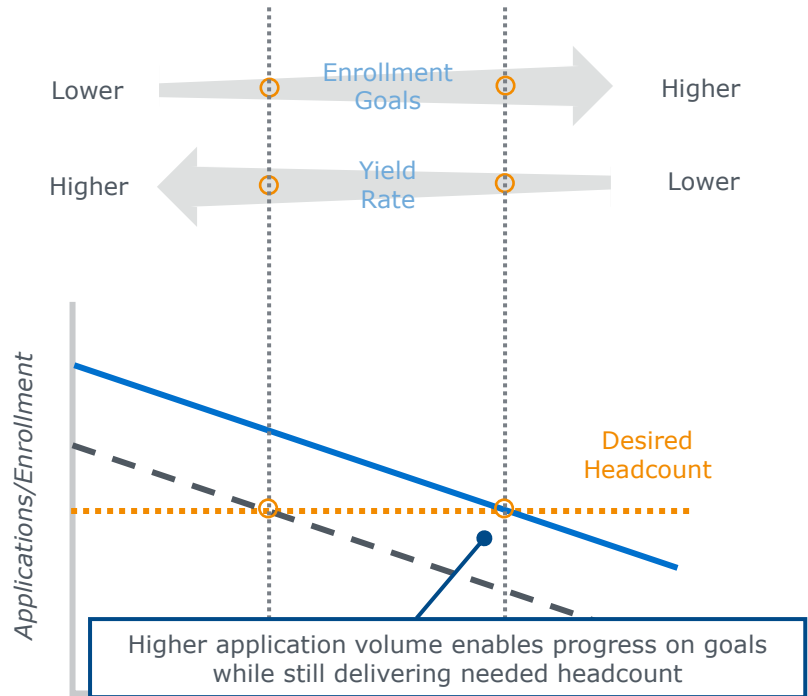
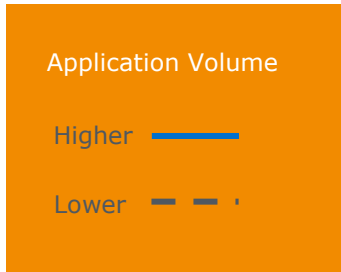
Application Volume

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# Why Application Volume Matters

Application Volume Creates 'Altitude' for Progress on Enrollment Goals



1

An Enrollment Power Formula

2

Old Dominion University's Experience

3

Abilene Christian University's Experience

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# Old Dominion University in Brief

A Large Public Institution Serving Diverse Student Segments



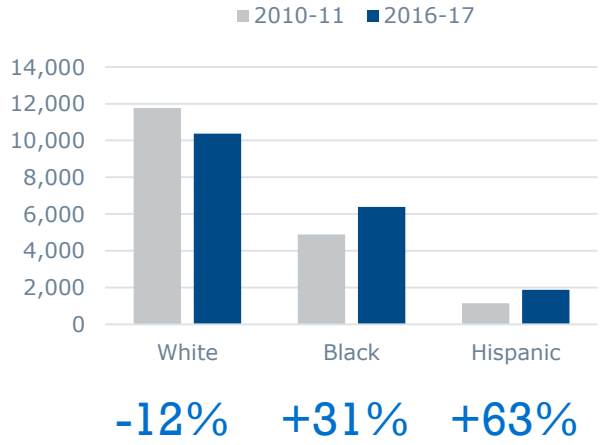
- A large public university in Virginia
- Primarily nonresidential
- Access-focused
- Large transfer population
- Extensive online enrollment
- Extensive military enrollment

# A Shifting Landscape

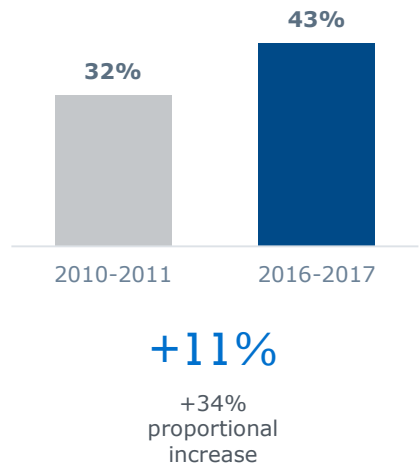
Large, Rapid Transformation in Profile of Incoming Students

## ODU Undergraduates by Ethnicity

12-Month Unduplicated Headcount



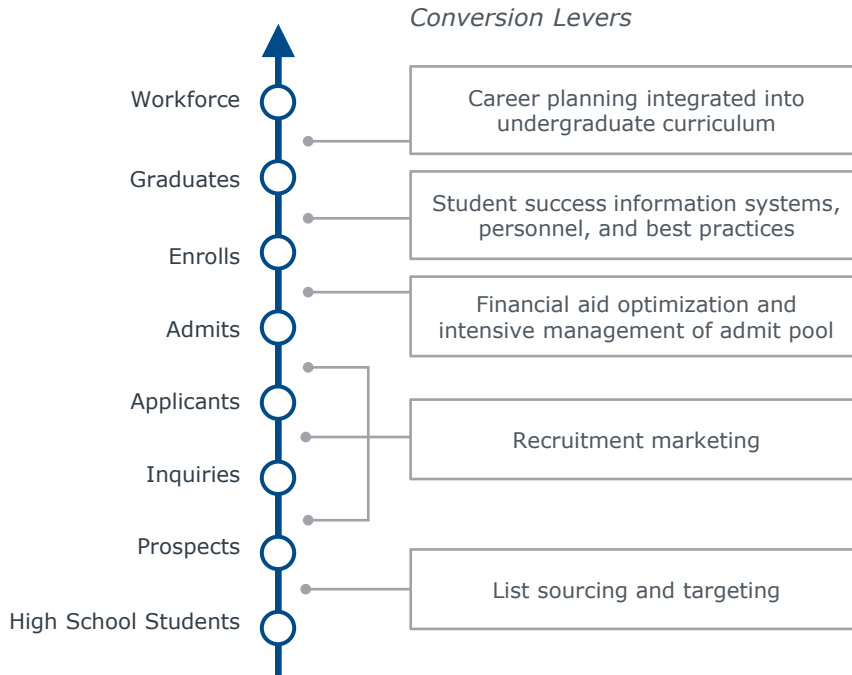
## % of ODU Students Receiving Pell Grants



# An All-Points Strategy

Ensuring Sustained Student Progress from High School to Career

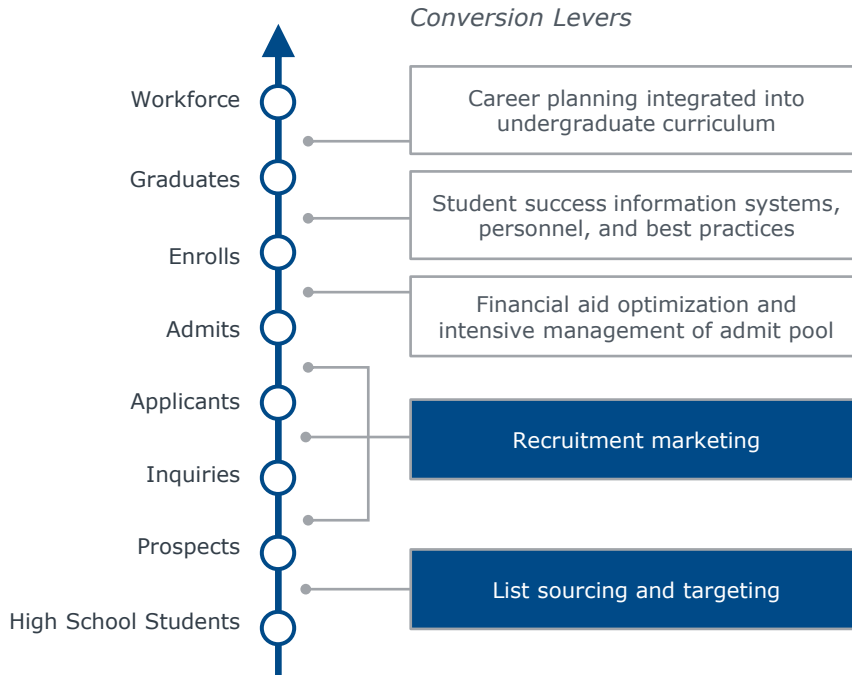
## ODU Maximizes Student Conversion at Every Step



# An All-Points Strategy

Ensuring Sustained Student Progress from High School to Career

## ODU Maximizes Student Conversion at Every Step



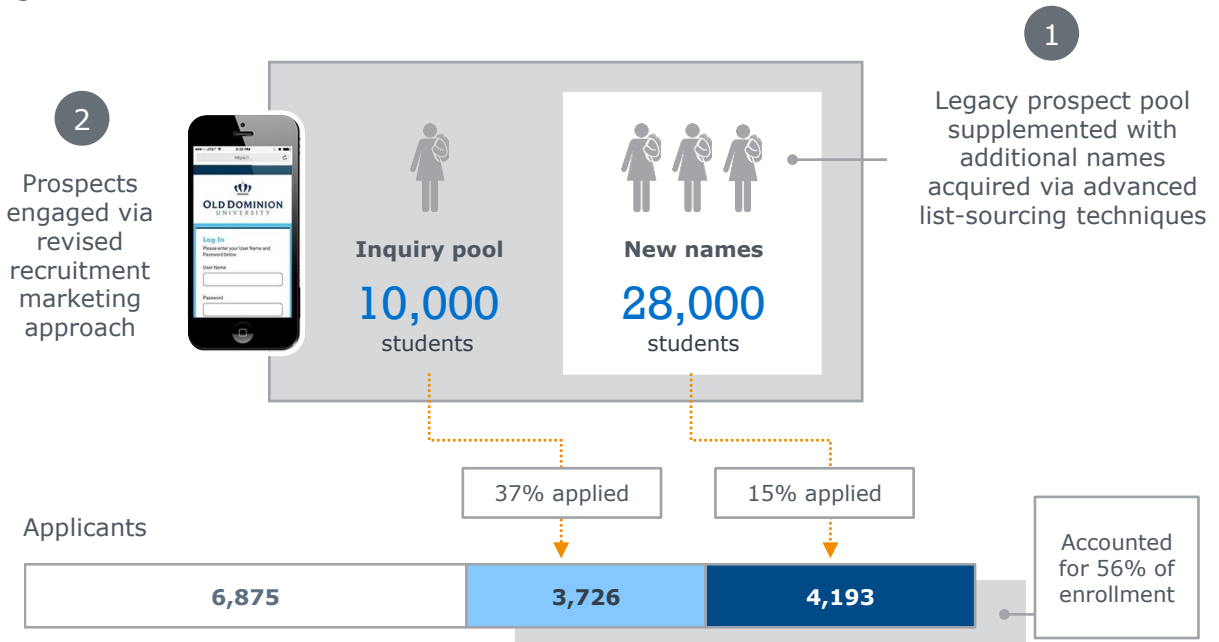


# A Two-Pronged Approach

Volume and Conversion at the Heart of ODU's Recruitment Strategy

## Prospect Pool and Downstream Funnel Metrics

High School Seniors Recruited for ODU's 2018 Freshman Class

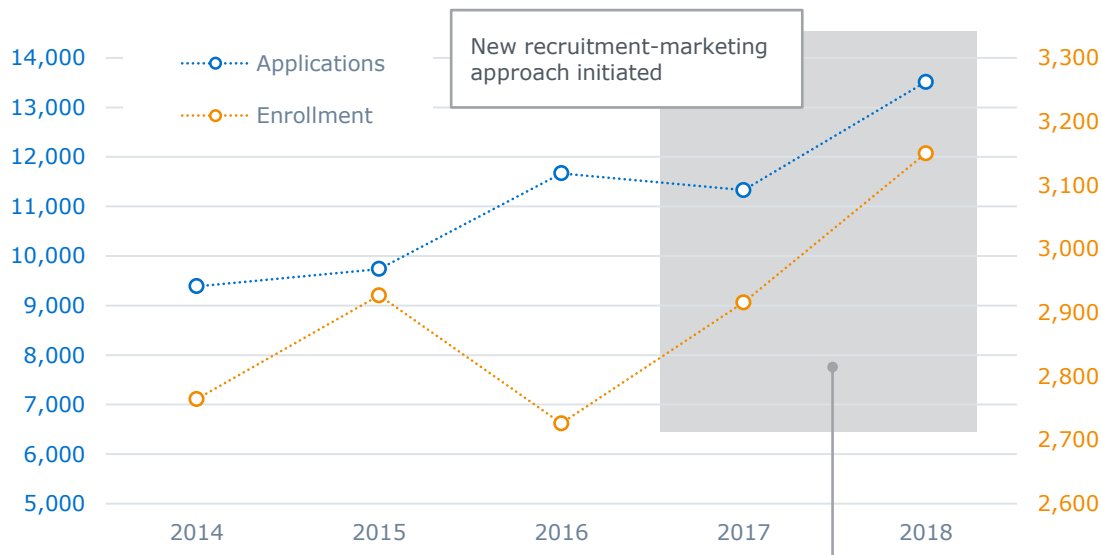


# Immediate Impact

Our Revised Recruitment Approach Delivered Results

## Applications and Full-Time, First-Time Enrollment

ODU, 2014-2018 Freshman Classes



**+19%** applications  
2017-2018

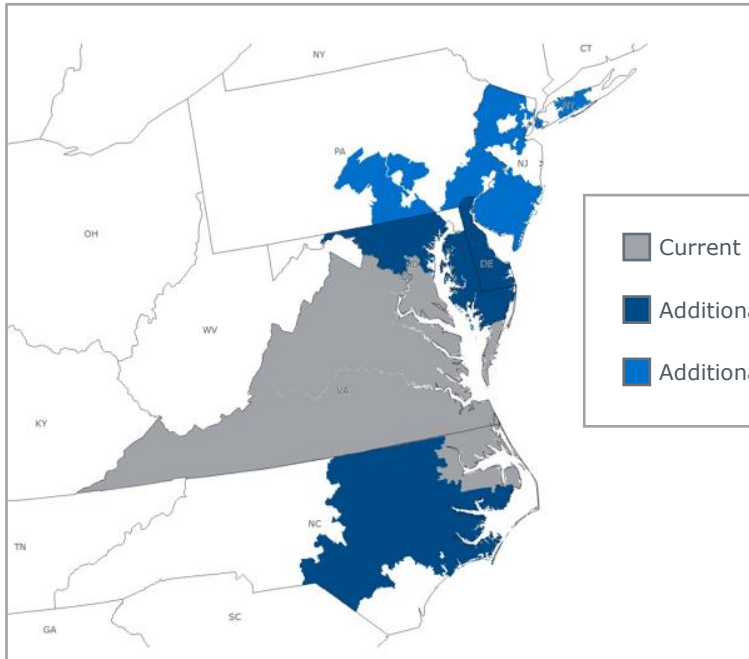
**+8%** enrollment  
2017-2018

**+11%** total net tuition revenue  
2017-2018

# Balancing In-State and Out-of-State Efforts

Flexibly Pursuing Two Complementary Objectives

## ODU's Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Markets



A **logical first priority**—students closer to home apply, enroll, and persist at higher rates

■ Current Markets

■ Additional Secondary Markets

■ Additional Tertiary Markets

Search saturation

Carefully calibrated expansion

An **unavoidable next order of business** but challenging due to lower recruitment-marketing response and persistence rates

# Unlocking Reach Markets

ODU's Capabilities Make a Broader Range of Geographies Viable

## How ODU Unlocks Out-of-State Enrollment

*Pros and Cons of  
Out-of-State Recruitment*

Higher per-  
student net  
tuition revenue



*ODU Capabilities*

Higher  
recruitment cost

Expert **audience definition** and **recruitment-marketing** outreach minimize overall recruitment cost by elevating response rate



Lower  
yield rate

**FAO** and **intensive management** of admit pool ensure maximum proportion of students enroll



Lower  
persistence

Highly developed **student success infrastructure** mitigates persistence penalty for students from remote markets



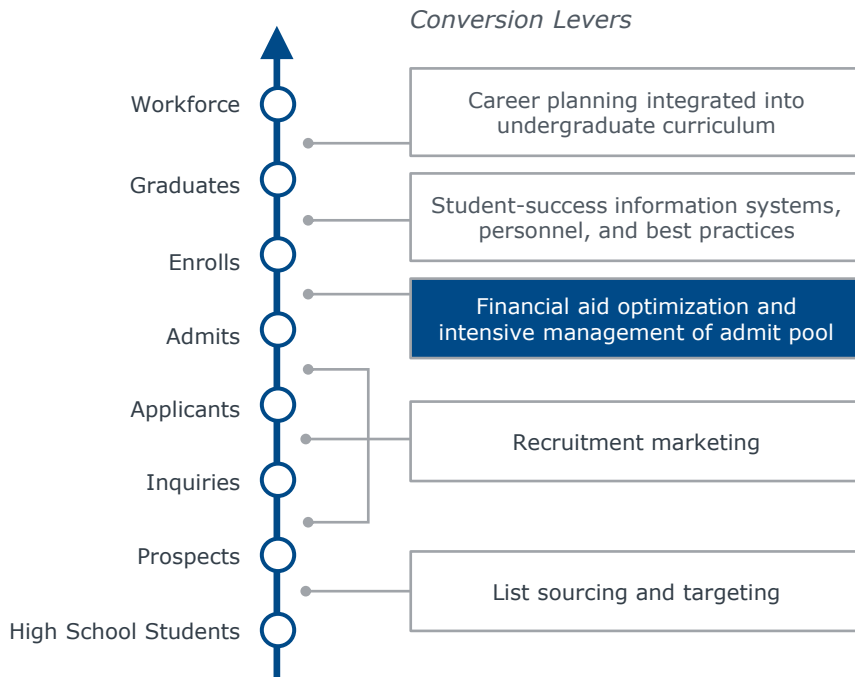
These factors  
put remote  
markets  
beyond the  
reach of many  
institutions



# An All-Points Strategy

Ensuring Sustained Student Progress from High School to Career

## ODU Maximizes Student Conversion at Every Step



# Financial Aid Optimization

## Three Core Components of Our Approach

1

### Set Enrollment Goals

Goals must be clear and specific, guide tradeoffs, and come with associated timelines

*"What enrollment outcomes do we want?"*

- Examples: headcount growth, class mix changes
- Commits to specific enrollment priorities
- Guides tradeoffs in aid allocation
- Sets time frame for realization of goals

2

### Develop Aid Policy

Aid policy must be grounded in the institution's enrollment goals and should delineate criteria for need and merit aid

*"How much aid will each student receive?"*

- Ties qualifying criteria for aid to award amounts
- Based on EFC, academic ability, and residency
- Tested against the statistical model to project hypothetical enrollment outcomes

3

### Use a Statistical Model

Statistical modeling helps the university to project enrollment outcomes for aid policies under consideration

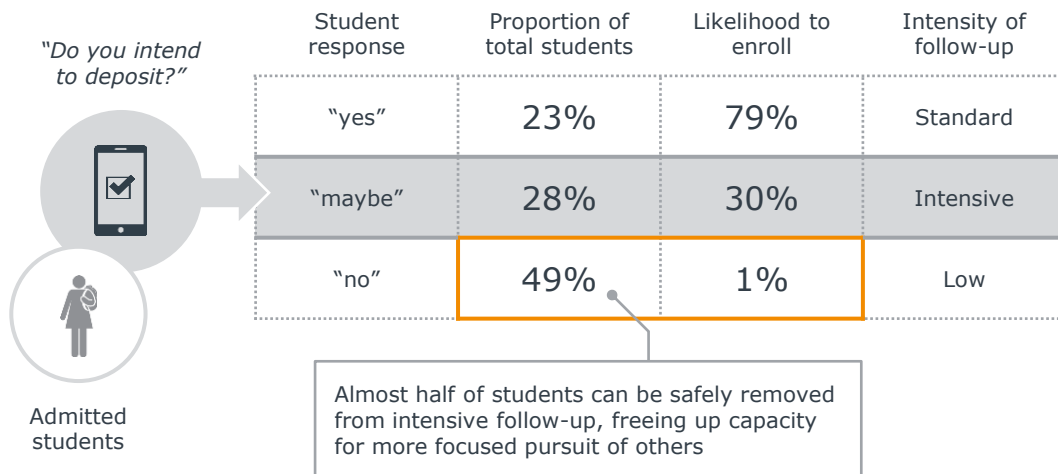
*"How will this policy shape our incoming class?"*

- Analysis of admitted-student data to predict yield
- Based on historical yield data
- Covers hundreds of variables that impact yield
- Used to project outcomes of policy, not package aid

# Focusing Yield Efforts

## Student Survey Reveals Propensity to Enroll

### Deposit Rate by Survey Response



# Yield Coaching

Ensuring Consistent Adoption of Best Practices Across the Admissions Team

## ODU Does Formal Training of Counselors in Yield Coaching



### *Representative Topics Covered*

- Your first meeting with a student
- Texting with admitted students
- Talking finances
- Engaging high-achieving students
- Roster management

### *Methods of instruction*

- Role play
- Didactic instruction
- Review of recorded interactions
- Before-and-after performance evaluation
- Live observation

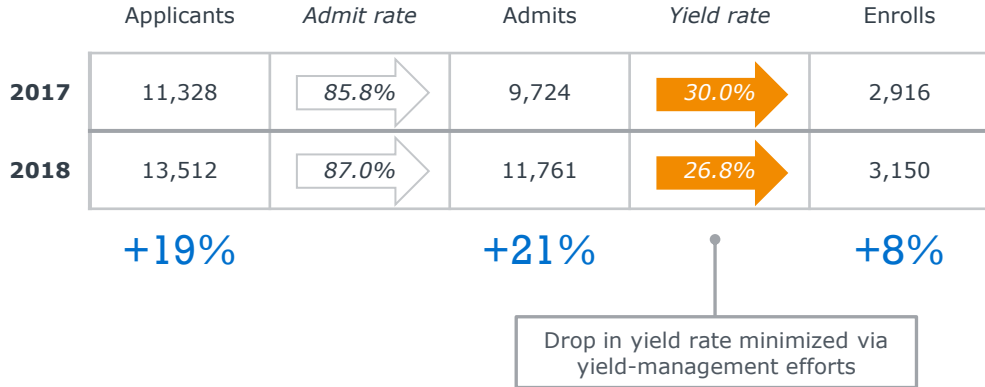


# Positive Impact

Successfully Sustaining Yield in the Face of Large Admit Growth

## Funnel Statistics

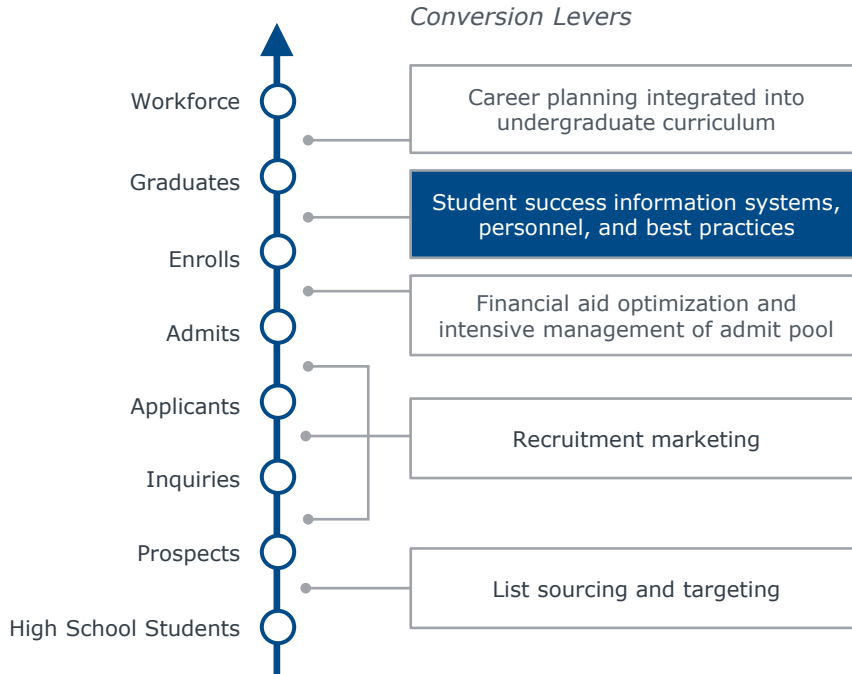
ODU, 2017 and 2018 Freshman Classes



# An All-Points Strategy

Ensuring Sustained Student Progress from High School to Career

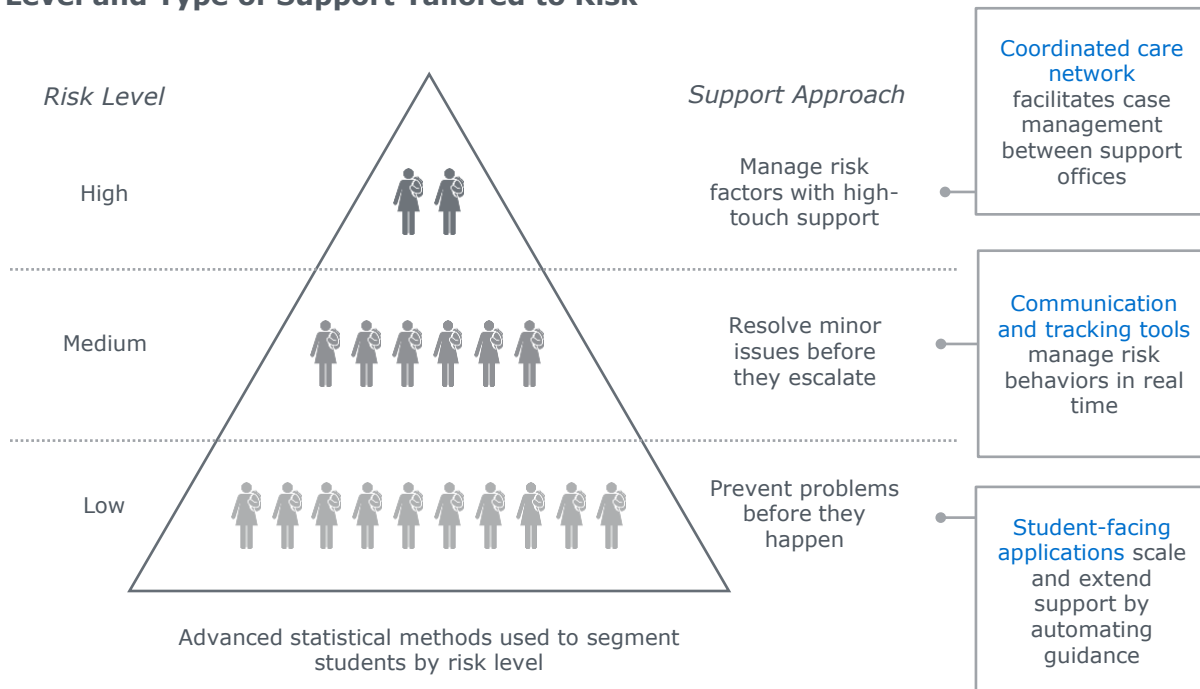
## ODU Maximizes Student Conversion at Every Step



# Boosting Persistence

## Key Aspects of Our Approach to Student Success

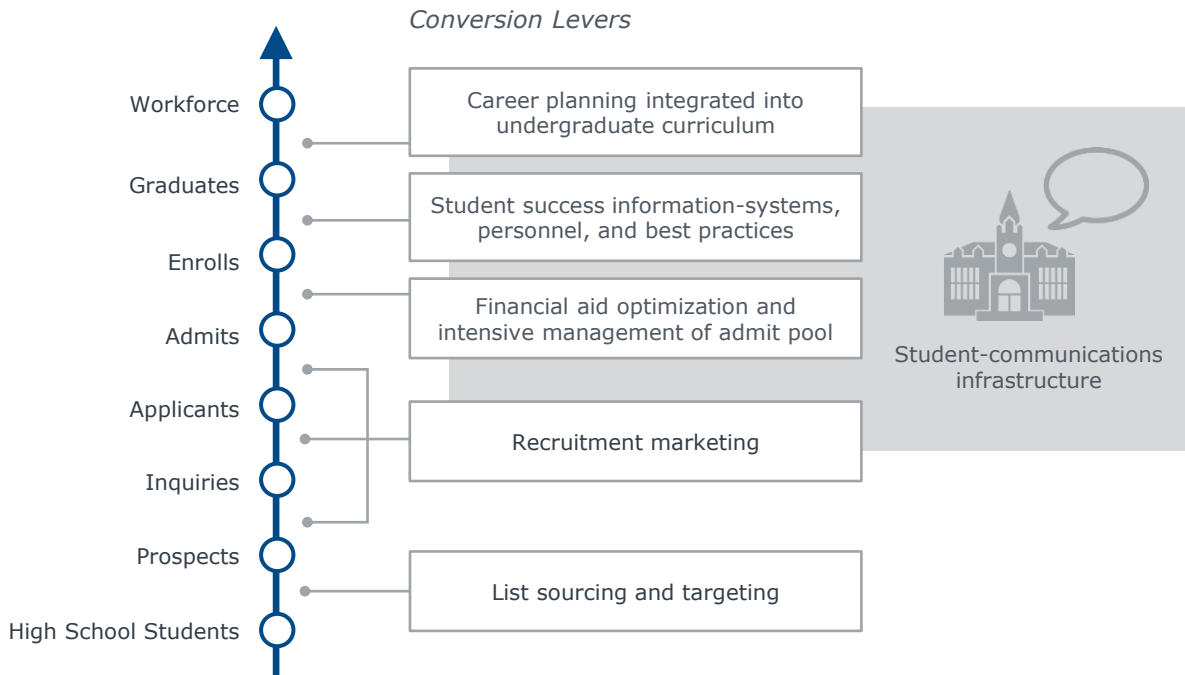
### Level and Type of Support Tailored to Risk



# A Solid Foundation

Highly Structured Communication with Students Enables the Broader Effort

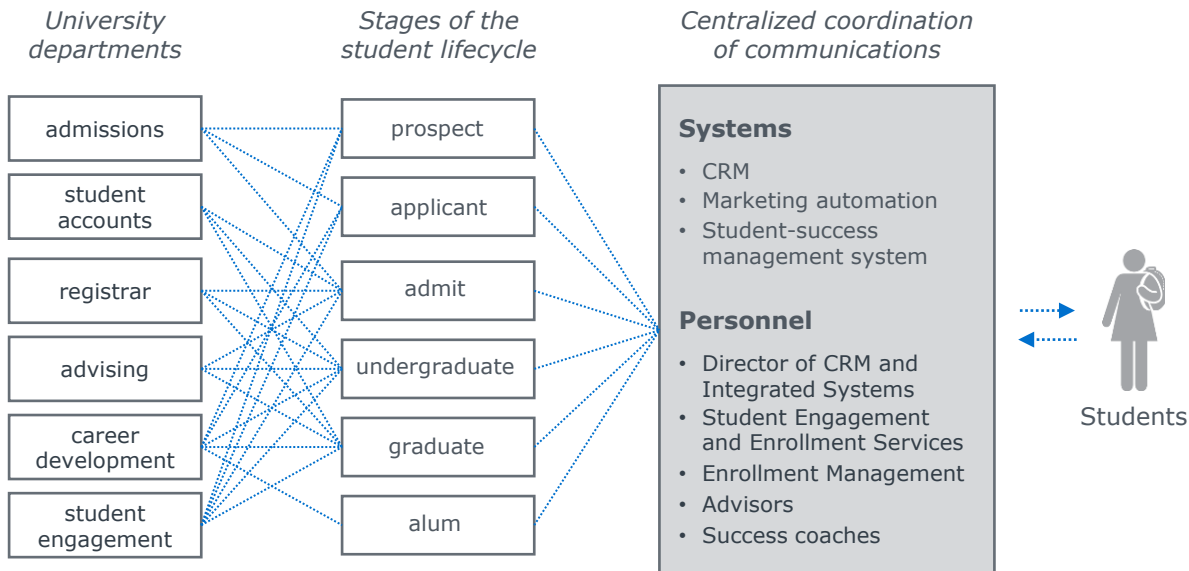
## ODU Maximizes Student Conversion at Every Step



# A Focus on Communications

Ensuring a Highly Organized Framework for Student Engagement

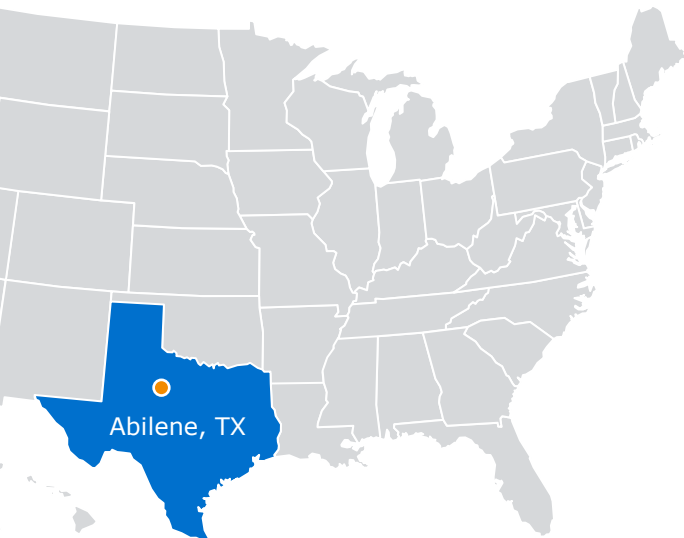
## A Unified Structure that Governs All Contact with Students from Recruitment through to Graduation and Beyond



- 1 An Enrollment Power Formula
  - 2 Old Dominion University's Experience
  - 3 **Abilene Christian University's Experience**
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# Abilene Christian University in Brief

A Beacon of Progressive Christian Education in the West



ABILENE  
CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY

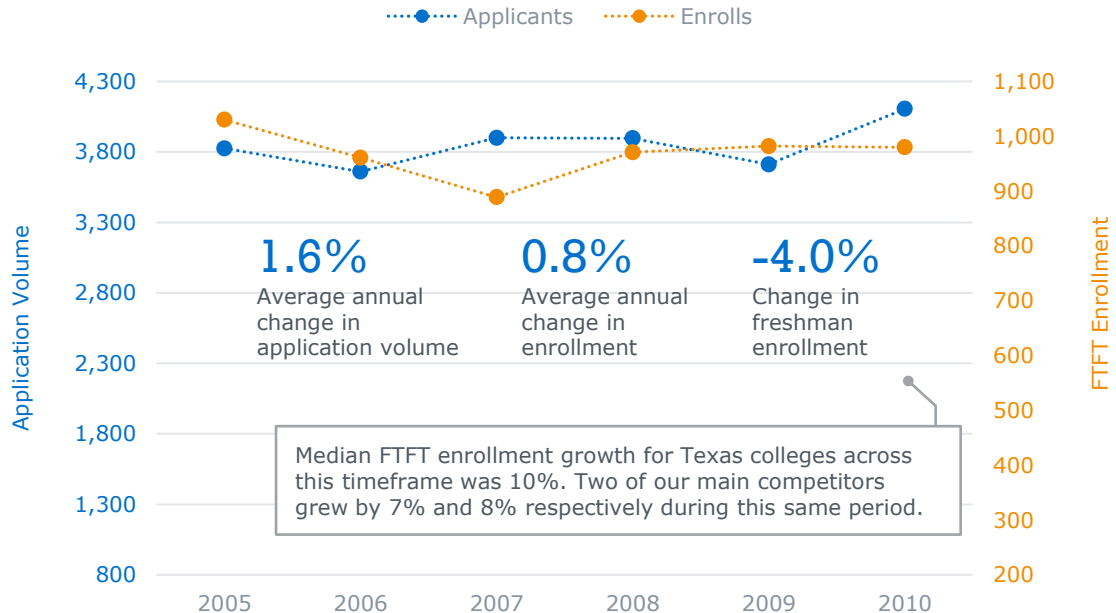
- A medium-size, private university
- Primarily residential
- High undergraduate enrollment
- Selective admissions
- Ranked 21 among regional universities in the West by *US News*
- A military-friendly school
- Member of NCAA Division I Southland conference

# Baseline Challenge

## A Persistently Flat Enrollment Trajectory

### Full-Time, First-Time Enrollment

Entering Classes 2005 to 2010





# Profile of a Performance Turnaround

How Revised Recruitment Strategy Transformed Our Enrollment Outcomes



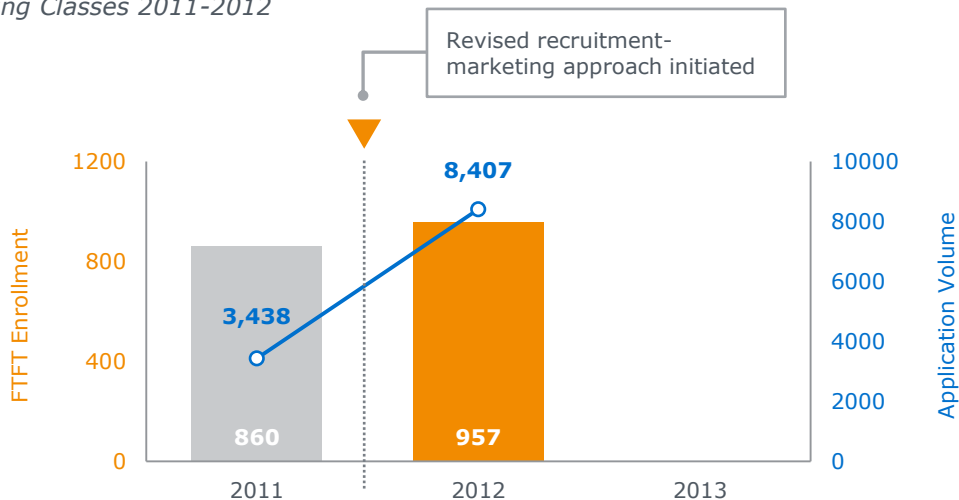
1. A Change in Approach
2. Search Strategy
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5. Post-Matriculation Strategy

# A Change in Approach

Revised Recruitment-Marketing Approach Adopted for Entering Class 2012

## Application Volume and FTFT Enrollment

Entering Classes 2011-2012



Application Volume:

+144%

FTFT Enrollment:

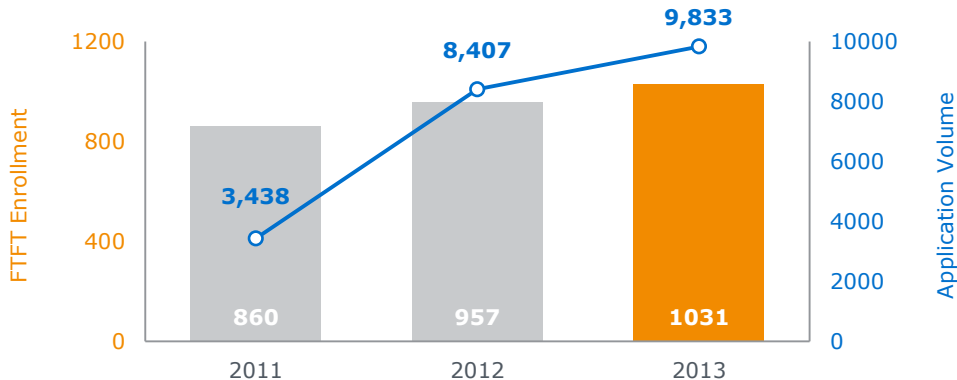
+11%

# EC 2013 Impact

Building on a Strong Baseline

## Application Volume and FTFT Enrollment

Entering Classes 2011-2013



|                            |       |      |
|----------------------------|-------|------|
| Application Volume:        | +144% | +17% |
| FTFT Enrollment:           | +11%  | +8%  |
| Average Enrolled Core GPA: | 3.39  | 3.38 |

**19%**

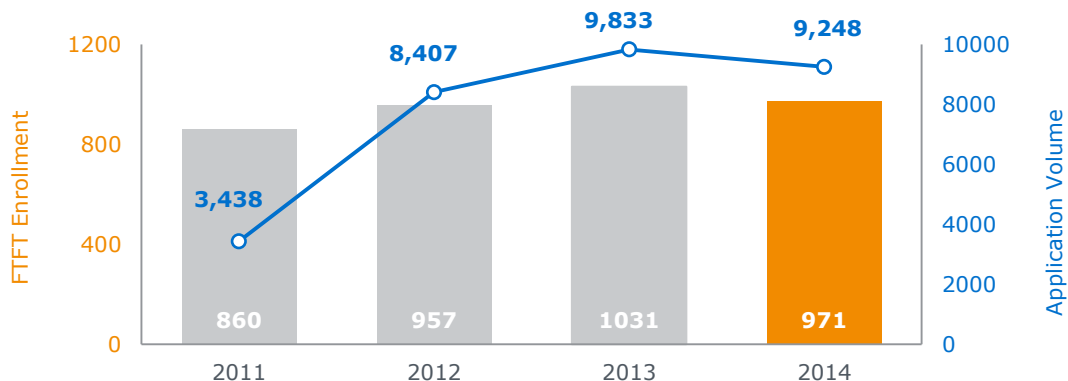
enrollment growth  
across first two years  
of revised strategy

# EC 2014 Impact

## Pivoting to Class Shaping and Discount-Rate Aims

### Application Volume and FTFT Enrollment

Entering Classes 2011-2014



|                           |         |         |         |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| NACUBO Discount Rate:     | 45.7%   | 53.2%   | 52.7%   |
| NTR:                      | \$12.3M | \$11.9M | \$11.8M |
| Average Enrolled Core GPA | 3.39    | 3.38    | 3.41    |

Increasing core GPA

# Profile of a Performance Turnaround

How Revised Recruitment Strategy Transformed Our Enrollment Outcomes



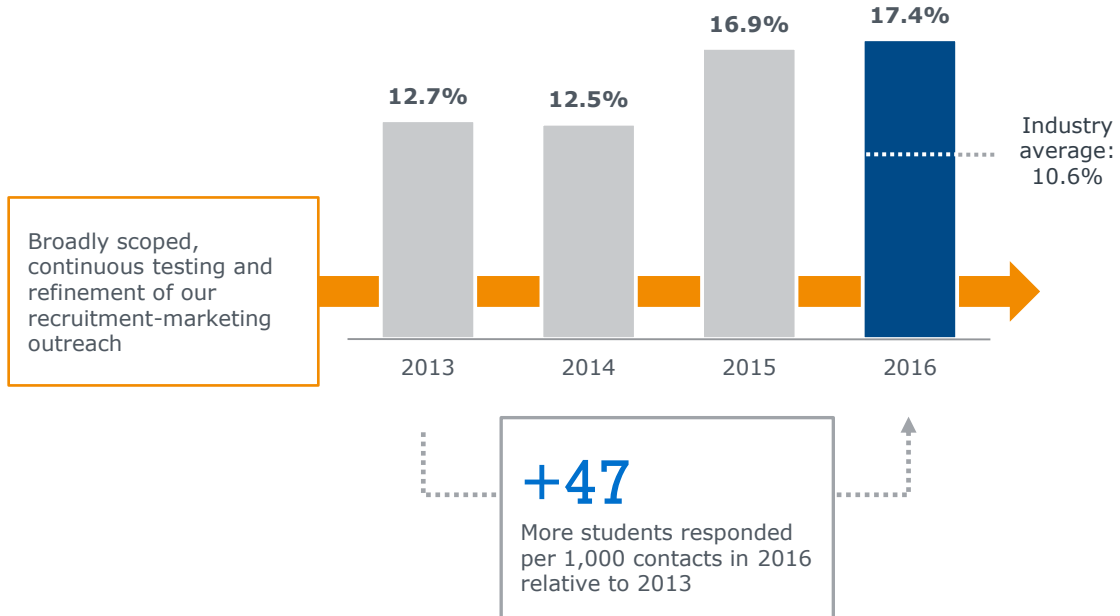
1. A Change in Approach
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# Optimized Recruitment

Evidence-Based Marketing Outreach Ensured a Steady Upward Trajectory

## Recruitment-Marketing Response Rate

*Percentage of Contacted Students, 2013-2016*

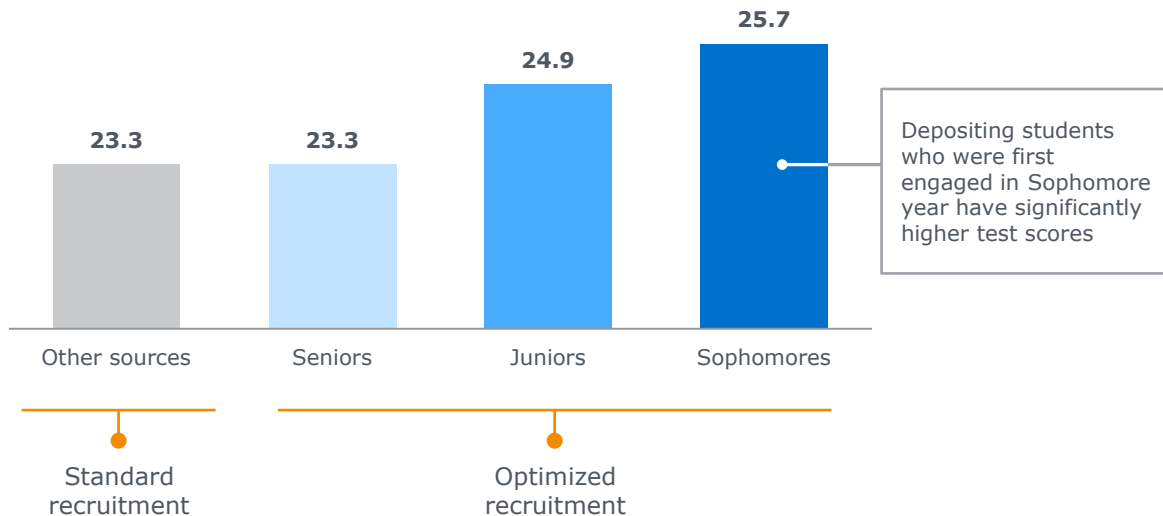


# A Class-Shaping Tool

Early Outreach Engages Especially Capable Prospects

## Average Depositing-Student ACT Score

*By Recruitment Channel and High School Year of First Contact, ACU Entering Class 2014*



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How Revised Recruitment Strategy Transformed Our Enrollment Outcomes



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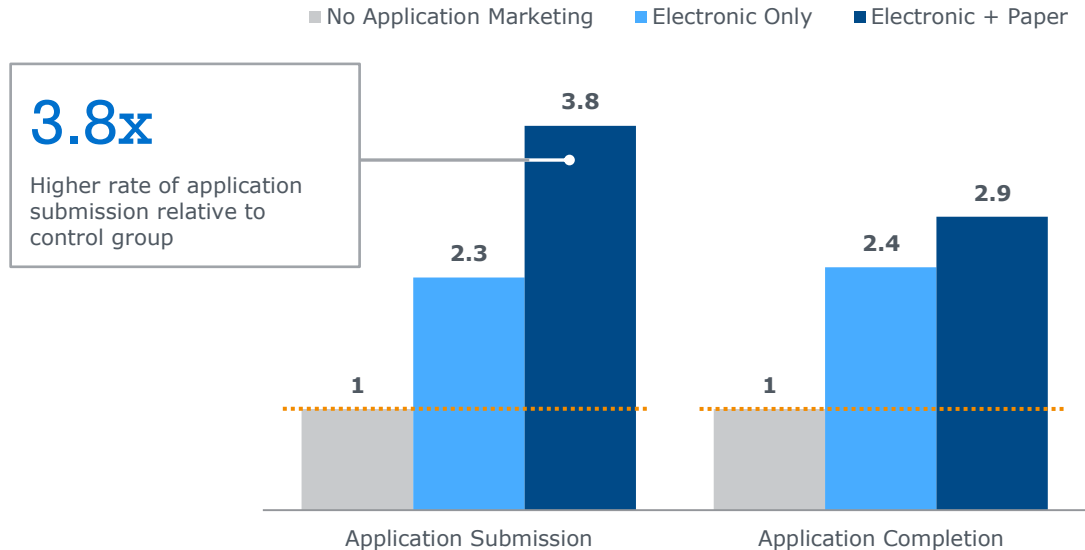


# Application Marketing

Optimized Communication with Prospects Boosts Application Rate

## Case in Point: Application Rate by Recruitment-Marketing Channel Mix

*Indexed to Control (No Application Marketing), Entering Class 2014*



# Maximizing Application Completion

## We Enabled Students to Self-Report Key Credentials

**Self-reporting** means that admit decisions are made on the basis of students' self-reported high school transcript and/or test score information



### Benefits

1. Eliminates the most common drivers of non-completion
2. Expedites application processing
3. Minimizes completion follow-up
4. **Gets aid offers in front of students ASAP**



### Challenges

1. **Stakeholder resistance**
2. Technical challenges

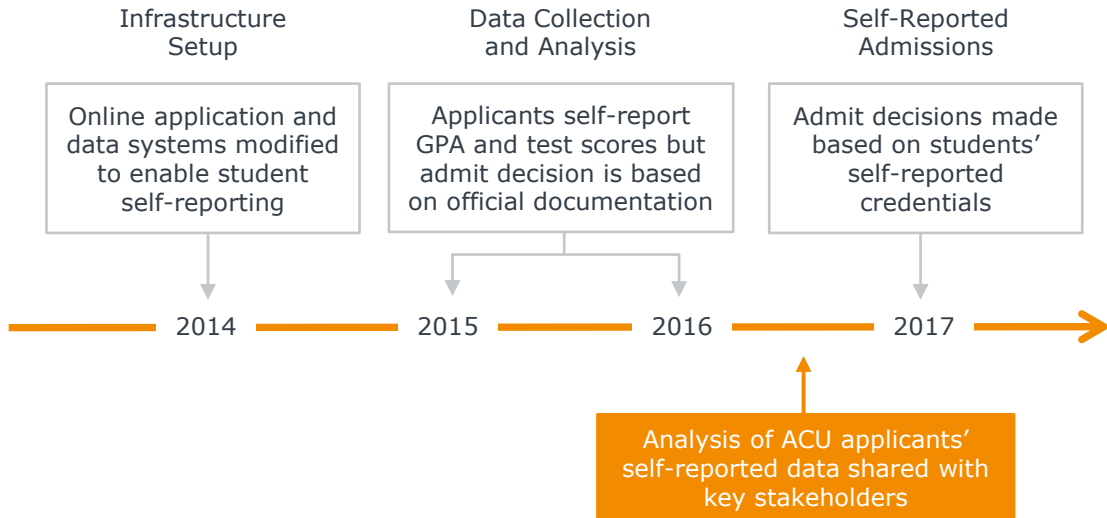
Despite ample research demonstrating reliability of self-reporting, faculty and administration sometimes resist adoption of self-reporting because they're worried that applicants will misrepresent credentials.

# Creating Local Validation

Self-Reported Student Data Collected and Analyzed Prior to Official Rollout

## Self-Reporting Project Phases, by Entering-Class Year

*Abilene Christian University*



# Demonstrated Accuracy

## Analysis Shows Reliability of ACU Applicants' Self-Reporting

### Results from Local Validation Study of Self-Reported Student Credentials

*Abilene Christian University*

**0.98**

correlation between  
self-reported ACT score  
and official score

**0.99**

correlation between  
self-reported SAT score  
and official score

**0.84**

correlation between  
self-reported GPA  
and transcript GPA

**0**

admit offers rescinded  
due to self-reporting  
inaccuracies (EC 2017)

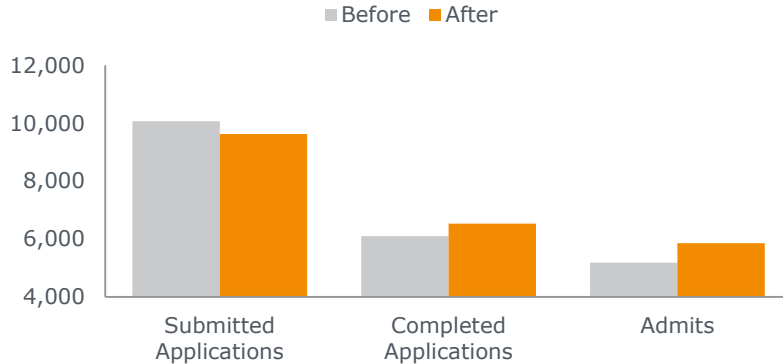
Exactly in line with national norms and more than sufficient for accurate admit decisions

# A Completion Boost

Noticeable Improvement in First Year of Self-Reported Admissions

## Core Recruitment Metrics

*Abilene Christian University, Before and After Adoption of Self-Reporting*



|          |     |     |      |
|----------|-----|-----|------|
| % Change | -4% | +7% | +13% |
|----------|-----|-----|------|

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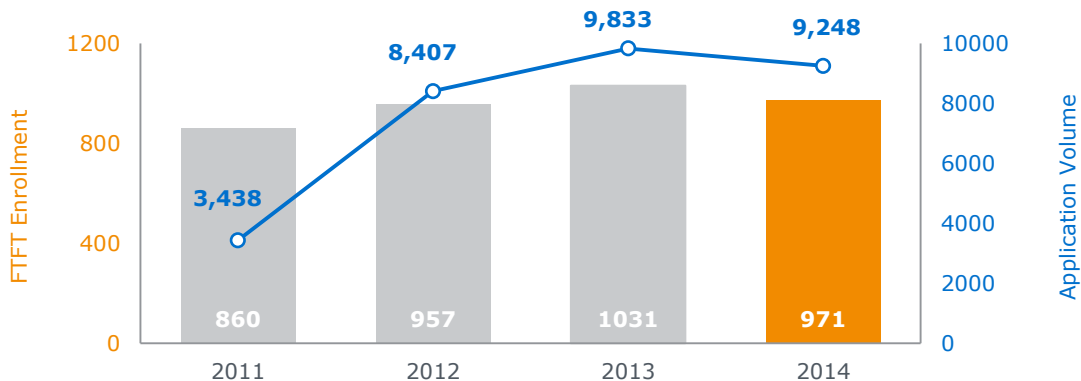


# Rethinking Aid Optimization

We Suspected We Could Do Better on Revenue Performance

## Application Volume and FTFT Enrollment

Entering Classes 2011-2014



|                       |         |         |         |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
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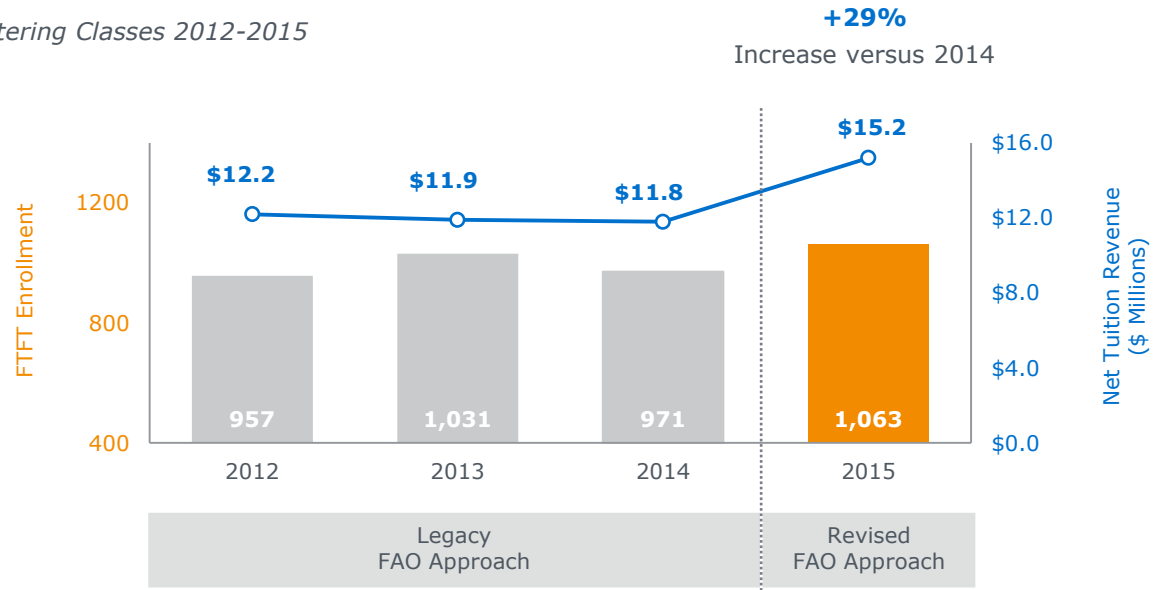
Room for improvement?

# Boosting Aid Dollar Impact

## Revised FAO Approach Delivers Large, Immediate Benefit

### Enrollment Volume and Net Tuition Revenue

Entering Classes 2012-2015



More sophisticated statistical methods, real-time scenario modeling of aid policy, closer integration of enrollment and analytics experts, continuous monitoring of outcomes during yield season



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# Broad-Spectrum Analytics

ACU's Application-to-Success Model Creates More-Equitable Admissions

## Acting on Our Improved Ability to Predict Which Applicants Will Thrive



New predictive model built

Model predicts first-term retention and likelihood to persist

### Variables evaluated

- Recalculated HS GPA
- HS class rank
- Strength of HS
- HS activities
- Faith-based activities
- Interview score
- HS coursework rigor
- Application timing
- Test scores



Key predictors of student success identified

Predictors differ from those previously believed to be most important

### Strongest predictors

- Recalculated HS GPA
- HS class rank
- Strength of HS
- HS activities
- Faith-based activities
- Interview score
- HS coursework rigor
- Application timing
- Test scores



Financial aid and admissions policy modified

Decisions now based on newly identified success drivers

### Impact on admissions

Students divided into six groups by success score, each group assigned a default admission status

### Impact on financial aid

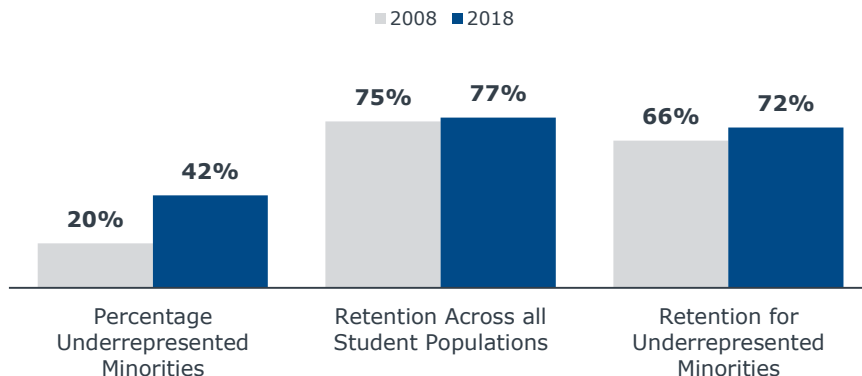
Merit aid index revised to give more weight to strongest predictors of persistence

# Measurable Impact

## Modified Admissions and Aid Approach Boosted Diversity and Retention

### Core Measures of Diversity and Persistence

*Entering Class 2008 versus 2018*



Percentage-point increase

22%

2%

6%

Proportional increase

110%

3%

9%

# Recap

## Four Takeaways on the Recruitment-Marketing Power Formula

- 1 Enrollment is built, not found**

Given the demographic challenges facing higher education, schools that continue to thrive will be those that succeed in building demand across an expanded prospect pool.
- 2 Ability to convert prospects more crucial than ever**

Merely growing the top of your funnel is not enough; success depends on converting prospects into inquiries and applications, an undertaking that depends on effective recruitment marketing.
- 3 Equip yourself with a comprehensive yield-management toolkit**

Enrollment leaders have access to a growing and increasingly sophisticated set of tools for managing yield rate; moving forward, enrollment success will depend on mastery of those tools.
- 4 Look beyond matriculation**

Recent developments in data, analytics, and digital communications have created unprecedented opportunities for enrollment leaders to inflect student success—an effort that helps students and schools in equal measure.