



# EMPOWER Your Recruitment Cycle

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Across the country, colleges and universities continue to spend vast amounts of time and resources strategically evaluating the admission phase of their enrollment management lifecycle. At the same time, institutions often overlook similar evaluation of the recruitment phase that begins months and years before students are admitted. This is a missed opportunity because the quality and volume of an applicant pool and the subsequent enrolling class are contingent upon *effective* early cultivation practices (e.g., efficient list purchasing and targeted mailings).

While institutions diligently work to maximize net revenue during the admission phase, experience shows that many of these same institutions are sacrificing desirable applicants and much-needed revenue by inefficiently allocating resources at the “inquiry-to-application” conversion point. Do you know how much you are spending to recruit your applicant pool? Are you satisfied with the results of your recruitment tactics? Do you have the information you need to achieve your best outcomes?

## The Elephant in the Room

Net Tuition Revenue (NTR) is a widely employed metric used to gauge the financial success of a first-year class. However, it only tells part of the story. Focusing solely on net revenue at the point of enrollment is frequently misleading because it does not take into account the substantial expenditures that occur during the *entire* duration of the recruitment process. As institutions concentrate on discount rate and variations in tuition revenue, there remains a very expensive “elephant in the room”: *Prior to admitting a single student, a significant amount of money has already been spent to recruit the class, and those costs are constantly rising amid increasing competitive pressures.*

There is often little or no return on a large portion of an institution’s recruitment investment, resulting in tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars lost each and every year. Institutions often focus on minute changes in their discount rate without giving the same scrutiny to large-scale, costly recruitment tactics that routinely fail to directly result in quantifiable improvements in application volume and profile. In a stressful enrollment cycle, it’s all too easy to accept a “business-as-usual” approach. Unfortunately, regardless of discount rate, *any* money spent to recruit a class has the effect of reducing net revenue to the institution.

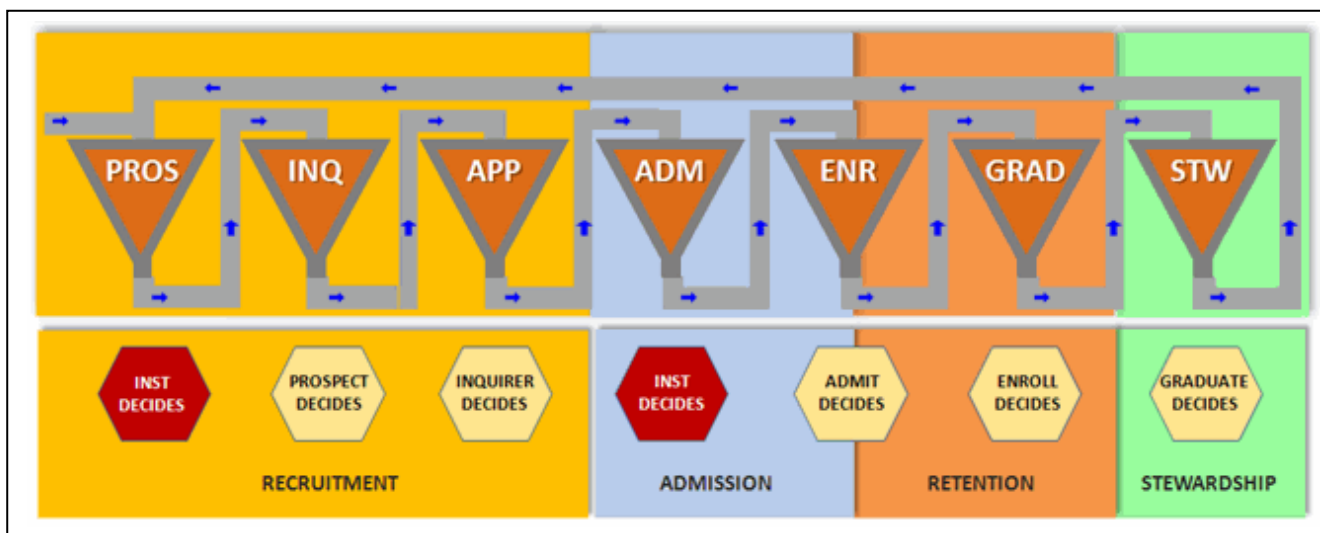
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Taking an in-depth examination at an institution’s actual recruitment results, through the lens of quantitative analysis, is a critical first step in optimizing recruitment processes. Without systematic analysis of recruitment tactics and expenditures, admissions professionals are greatly restricted in how effectively they can produce desired results for the institution. To borrow the old adage, “It’s time to work smarter rather than harder.”

## EMPOWER Your Enrollment Management Lifecycle

The concept of enrollment management, coined and developed over 30 years ago by Jack Maguire, founder and chairman of Maguire Associates, seeks to quantify and optimize the relationship between an institution and a student from the time the student surfaces as a prospect, through the years as an enrolled student, and finally as a graduate of the institution.

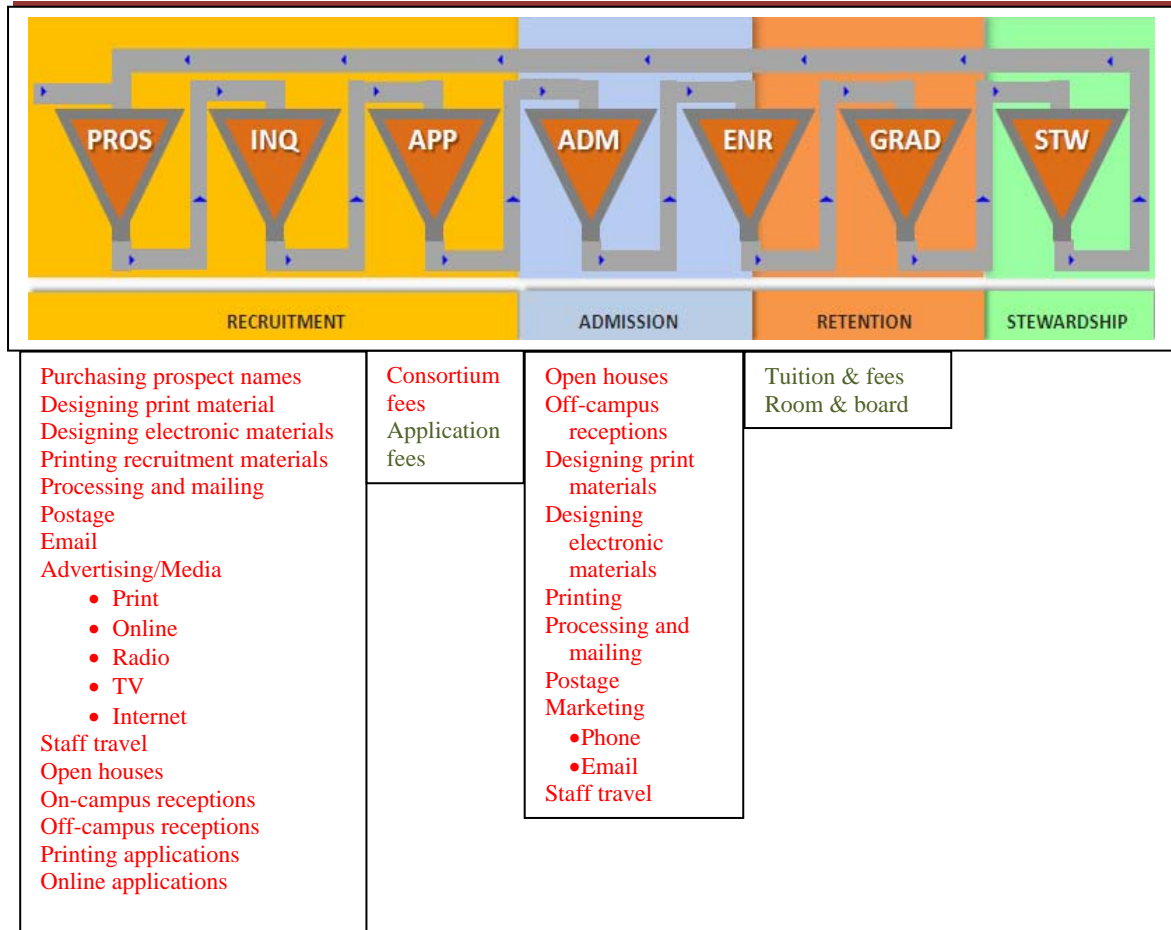
The diagram below represents our most current thinking in the evolution of enrollment management. In contrast with the conventional enrollment funnel, the decision points are depicted as a series of funnels that encompass a student's entire educational lifespan. Most will start at the very beginning as prospects. Some prospects will then choose to become inquirers. Some inquirers will choose to become applicants. A vast majority will choose not to pass through the very first funnel. Others will introduce themselves into the system without being part of a preceding funnel, such as a student who applies for admission without any previous contact or a generous donor never before associated with the institution. At other points in the cycle, it is impossible to appear without being present in a previous funnel. For instance, students cannot be admitted to the institution without applying first and cannot enroll without being admitted.



The recruitment process begins at the time an institution acquires prospective student names and contacts them through a search campaign or when prospective students express interest in the institution as inquirers, and ends after students apply to the institution, at which time the admission phase commences. Throughout the course of the relationship, the student controls nearly all of the process. Of the seven major decision points, the institution only controls two, and any student who chooses can skip the first or second funnel, initiate the relationship as an inquirer or applicant, and eliminate the first institutionally-controlled decision.

Institutions focus ample resources on analysis and strategy for the admission phase (admitting and yielding students), but study the recruitment phase, which directly impacts the quality and volume of the applicant pool, considerably less. Without this analysis, recruitment results are often far from optimal and expenses can grow unchecked.

Consider putting a price tag on each of the decision points within the enrollment management system. In the figure below, we identify common revenue outflows in red and incoming revenue sources in green. Significant investments are made to recruit students in advance of the application stage.



How much does it cost to buy prospect names and send marketing materials to each one? How much of the admissions budget is allocated to travel expenses for recruiters to visit high schools and attend college fairs? How many marketing campaigns are created and sent to the Inquiry base? What is your return on all these investments? What is the cost per application generated from each of these recruitment efforts? *All expenditures that do not demonstrably increase applications decrease net revenue.*

To attain your optimal results, it's essential to identify the right groups of students, reach out with efficient efforts, share effective messages, and evaluate the outcomes of each of these facets of strategic student recruitment.

## EMPOWER Your Recruitment Process

Pressure is increasing to produce more and higher quality applications with fewer resources. The reality is that with shifting student demographics and increased competition, doing “what’s always been done” is no longer a viable option in terms of recruitment tactics. Either an institution actively makes the decision to infuse recruitment strategies with data-based insights or risks being pushed aside by competitors who covet the same prospective students.

Unfortunately, every page in the traditional admissions playbook for augmenting recruitment results can be very expensive. Acquiring more prospect names, expanding marketing communications, and increasing recruitment travel are all time-intensive and potentially inefficient tactics, often producing mediocre returns on investment. Blanketing primary, secondary, and tertiary markets with costly recruitment materials without evaluating the results of such efforts amounts to little more than throwing money into the proverbial black hole of the conventional enrollment funnel.

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Many less-than-ideal methods have been employed to improve return-on-investment for application conversion strategies. Some institutions have created systems of subjective counselor “grades” that admissions staff members code and track. The downside is that these grading systems can be inconsistent, and data creation and maintenance are difficult to manage during the busy season.

Some institutions expand institutional research staff assigned to enrollment analysis. But, even with expanded resources, it can be a daunting challenge to find qualified persons with both research and enrollment management expertise who can synthesize the data into usable information and actionable recommendations.

Many institutions have implemented specialized software systems to aid recruitment, only to experience the difficulties associated with staff buy-in and training. New software systems are expensive and often result in more work for the recruitment staff which increases the risk of failure. In the end, larger institutional needs remain unmet because full value is rarely extracted from prepackaged software.

Numerous institutions appear to be adding tactics on a yearly basis, regardless of demonstrated value. By the time staff members are trained, the window for in-depth analysis, developing recommendations, and implementing changes has closed or other priorities have taken precedence. In college admissions, the “tyranny of the urgent” (data entry, travel, application evaluation, etc.) often dictates staff priorities and relegates important strategic thinking and planning to the sidelines.

The truth is that the recruitment budget is a six-, seven-, or even eight-figure sum of money. Where else in the institutional budget would that much money be spent without verifying a positive return on all parts of the investment? Institutions have begun to ask if they are spending only what is truly needed to achieve their established recruitment objectives.

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## EMPOWR Your Decisions

Many institutions are awash in data, but starving for *information*. In the current environment, the value of information (not “data,” but data transformed into usable *information and knowledge*) has increased exponentially. Utilizing information generated from research and analysis is no longer a luxury; it is a necessary best practice for all.

The challenge is that creating information that is timely and useful for decision making is a complicated and time-consuming task. So, during the recruitment cycle, a great deal of valuable data inevitably lies dormant.

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The good news is that with a modest commitment to research and analysis, institutions can extract significant additional value from the hundreds of thousands of recruiting dollars already being spent. When this work is done well through the use of multivariate analytical techniques, coupled with extensive enrollment experience and expertise, institutions achieve increased efficiencies that result in reduced costs, greater return on investment, and more knowledge about their students and student markets. And these same institutions can also discover numerous ways to apply their own expertise even more effectively.

Institutions can achieve the recruitment results they desire by developing a plan that includes the following:

- A comprehensive analytical program for improving student recruitment from the first moment of contact;
- Experienced enrollment research, analysis, evaluation, and multivariate statistical modeling on application likelihood;
- Research and information on student markets, characteristics, and application conversion tendencies;
- Analytical support to better inform targeted list purchases;
- In-depth experience with both research techniques and admissions processes needed to effectively combine the results of complex analyses with institutional needs and goals;
- Information to differentiate between students who are unlikely to apply, those who may be on the fence, and those who are likely applicants;
- Expert enrollment research and analysis in a timely fashion without the need for new systems or additional staff; and
- Practical recommendations for ensuring that results can be applied in meaningful and valuable ways, avoiding the familiar sequence where research is performed, findings are presented, and a report then gathers dust in a drawer because it was never made clear precisely how that research is applicable to daily operations.

We are introducing *EMPOWR*<sup>™</sup> to provide institutions the information needed to enhance their control of the recruitment process. With *EMPOWR*, we collaborate with you as a true *partner*, not a report delivery service, a mere tagging service, or a software provider that requires institutional staff to learn new systems and do much of the work internally.

## *EMPOWER Yourself, EMPOWER Your Institution*

Researching student attributes, profiles, and tendencies allows institutions to broaden their scope and locate more of the valuable students for whom the institution is a good match. Doing so also produces significant financial savings by reducing focus on students who are unlikely to apply or enroll. By analyzing list purchase criteria and results and inquirer-to-applicant conversion rates, *EMPOWER* can help you maximize efficiencies, so you and your staff can concentrate recruitment resources on students who are most likely to respond to your messages. *EMPOWER* also uncovers new student markets so you can successfully expand beyond your primary markets.

Our process includes:

- Application conversion evaluation;
- Multivariate statistical application likelihood scoring;
- Analysis of the characteristics of your applicants and enrolled students;
- Detailed maps identifying areas where your students originate;
- Recommendations for increasing the efficiency of your recruitment strategies;
- Additional customized enrollment management innovations; and
- Maguire Associates' long-standing commitment to exceptional service and true collaboration.

Maguire Associates' analytical techniques and cutting-edge methodology can optimize your resources (both in staff time and recruitment costs), improve return on investment, enhance application conversion, and provide competitive intelligence on your students and markets. Greater intelligence about the students who are interested in and will thrive at your institution allows you to target those types of students and attract more of them.

Recruitment drives your revenue, your student body, and your success. Neither unfocused momentum nor business-as-usual practices should be allowed to knock your student recruitment off course.

### About Maguire Associates:

Founded in 1983, Maguire Associates is a research-based consulting firm exclusively serving educational clients. We have been a leader in the evolution of enrollment management since its inception. We have served over 350 clients, applying innovations in market research, analysis, and predictive modeling to help our clients understand the dynamics of past performance, apply insightful knowledge to sound decision-making in the present, and attain critical outcomes in the future.

We have a strong track record of supporting efforts across an institution – from strengthening the admissions process and helping deliver more robust, balanced incoming classes; to strategic pricing and ensuring the most effective use of financial resources; to image/brand development, target marketing, and competitive positioning; to improving student retention; to marshalling the talents of faculty and staff; to engaging alumni in all facets of institutional life.

For more information about *EMPOWER*<sup>™</sup>, Please contact Maguire Associates at: 978-371-1775 or email us at [empowr@maguireassoc.com](mailto:empowr@maguireassoc.com). A full description of *EMPOWER* can also be found on our web site at [www.maguireassoc.com](http://www.maguireassoc.com) under Services/Student Recruitment Optimization.