

Higher Education Marketing Benchmarks Shows Opportunity for Schools

Competition for online students continues to escalate, overall enrollment is declining, and savvy students question the value relative to the cost of an education. With higher education undergoing so much simultaneous change, it can be difficult for schools to know what to focus on.

In our fourth annual Benchmarks, in addition to marketing and enrollment trends, we take a deep dive into occupational and employment activity to show how institutions should prioritize marketing and develop programs for the best return. Here are some of our key takeaways.

Think Content and Mobile First

Students are seeking education and training that will help them get jobs. Content continues to be king and schools need to provide information students are searching for. They want to see value for their investment, which means schools need to show outcomes in their website and social content. This includes job placement statistics, testimonials and program rankings.

This desire for relevant content, coupled with continued growth in mobile search, makes digital and social critical components of your marketing strategy. For the first time, mobile search will surpass desktop this year so make sure students can find you and navigate your site on their phones.

Investments continue to increase in paid social and content marketing so prioritize creating and posting robust material. In particular, invest in video to drive website traffic and enhance the visitor experience. It's all about building connections so give prospective students ways to envision themselves attending your school.

People continue to move away from traditional television while moving toward streaming and subscription services. Having a highly focused and precise strategy to target your ideal audience will ensure you don't waste advertising dollars.

Align Students for Occupation and Employment Potential

We're at an exciting juncture where career preparation and job attainment, along with employer's needs are converging. Thruline's assessment shows that students aren't clear about what education, certification or credentials they need to obtain jobs that suit them, and educators have room for improvement in preparing them for the real work world. Occupations requiring more education and training are on the rise, meaning that workers will need to continually be trained and evolve their skills. This means there is great opportunity for institutions to provide solutions for prospective students. Schools need to create and market programs that prepare students with the skills they need to meet the demands of the workplace.

Many of the jobs our youth will be hired for haven't even been invented yet. While we can't predict the future, we can equip people for these jobs by preparing them to be lifelong learners.



People need to understand what different jobs look like aligned with their potential, and educators need to tailor their training to meet rising demand. Employers will need to have a stronger involvement in skill development of their workers and help them maintain those skills by fully utilizing them. Schools have an opportunity to narrow these gaps and better prepare future workers for what is to come.

Adapt to Thrive

The higher education landscape is undergoing immense change, but the schools that know how to navigate it will be successful. By being focused and informed, school marketers and leaders can take advantage of opportunities to grow enrollments and strengthen brand. To surge ahead of the pack, you'll need to be highly targeted and apply dollars where you'll receive the strongest results. Schools must put students up front and center, think mobile-first, and be adaptive to changes in technology. Understanding when, how and where prospective students search for your institution is key to making the most of your marketing dollars. The good news is that, while there are challenges in higher education right now, there are also great opportunities for schools that can adapt.

About ThruLine Marketing

ThruLine, previously known as PlattForm, has been helping schools stay in front of trends for almost 30 years. Their long-standing experience focused solely in the education realm provides extensive data and unique insight into student behavior. Their annual Benchmarks is their most requested resource. To download your copy of the **2018 Higher Education Benchmarks**, and learn about what it means for your institution, visit thru-line.com/lp-2018-higher-education-benchmarks