



# **Developing and Implementing Student **Personas** into Marketing and Recruitment Plans**

**FOURTH**  
DIMENSION PARTNERS

# Our Agenda



Define what a **Persona** is, and explain how it can be applied.



Look at **3** example Personas



**Build** out a Persona



Use our Persona to identify appropriate **ads & media** channels.



Use our Persona to build communication content.



Answer questions and **post evaluation**.

## What is a Persona?



Semi-fictional representations of your ideal students. They are based on real data about student demographics and online behavior, along with an educated understanding of their personal histories, motivations, and concerns.

## How do I use a Persona?



Personas are used to develop the content and to select the media channels used to connect and engage the best prospects for your programs and institutions.

## Why are Personas important?



Higher education enrollment cycles, like consumer purchasing habits, have changed. We now have technology like texting, emails, portals and online applications, but our content has not changed.



Personas force us to flip our strategy – to customize what we say, how we say it and when we say it – all based on a prospective student's persona.

# A case study

## **Albright College: 2007-2008**

Enrollment: 440 adult students

Annual Applications: 280

Inquiries: 560

## **Albright College: 2008-2009**

Enrollment: 478 adult students **(9%)**

Annual Applications: 293 **(5%)**

Inquiries: 646 **(15%)**

## **Albright College: 2009-2010**

Enrollment: 545 adult students **(14%)**

Annual Applications: 357 **(22%)**

Inquiries: 908 **(41%)**

## **New Strategy: The 5 Buckets**

Created 5 buckets – the reasons students enrolled with us.

Selected 1 student or alum per bucket to represent the bucket. Created all new advertising and email marketing based on those students' stories. Redesigned the website, based on the buckets.

## **Albright College: 2013**

Enrollment: 820+ adult students

## Points of Clarification



Personas must be created based on research; **NOT** on assumptions.



Do not simply weave facts together. Use the information to understand the persona as a real person.

# What might be some information we need to build a persona?

Age  
Major  
Gender  
Activities/Sports  
(Trad Students)  
Location  
Motivations  
Hurdles/Objections  
Family status  
Educational History  
Job/Employment Status (Adult Students)

## Which of these is most important?

**Motivations**

Always focus on the 'why'.





## Sample Traditional Student Persona: **Ambitious Amber**



Amber is a 16 year-old, rising junior. She is the middle child of three children, and has an older sister attending a private, relatively prestigious regional college and a younger brother beginning his freshman year of high school.

Amber is interested in earning her undergrad in biology, with plans to enroll in medical school. She is an all-A student, ranks third in her class of 420 students, and is beginning to narrow her field of potential colleges.

She wants to know about the types of academic scholarships available for students because her goal is to attend the most prestigious school that offers the best academic scholarship.

Amber isn't as involved as some of her peers, but she has carefully selected a few areas to give time, all in an effort to prepare her for a career in medicine. She volunteers at a local health clinic and has shadowed her uncle at his family practice.

## Sample Adult Student Persona: **Ambitious Amber**



Amber is a 42 year-old, married mother of two children, ages 13 and 10. She has worked for the same company for 18 years, and currently serves as the manager of a call center for a large, local company.

Amber is interested in earning her MBA because she can't advance any further in her career at the company without it.

She wants to know about the types of loans available for graduate students because the funding her employer provides to support her education will not cover the full cost.

She is also concerned about the time it takes to finish the degree. She knows a promotion may be available to her in two years, but she must have earned the degree prior in order to be eligible.

## Sample Student Persona: **Ambitious Amber**



What is Amber's 'why'?

Here is the rub with this persona:

- What do we know when she inquires?
- How much can we reasonably ask her when she inquires?

So we will broaden (and shorten) the persona description for the initial inquiry capture.

- What is the one category we most need to begin the persona?
- How many of you capture this information at the inquiry stage?

# Example Traditional Student Personas

Which best describes your reasons for earning a degree with us?



You have a strong academic program in a discipline that will help prepare me for graduate work.

**Ambitious Amber**



I'm looking to remain local to help keep my education costs low and help me and my family afford college.

**Family Falecia**



At this point, I'm simply unsure what I want in a college. I know others that have enrolled here and enjoyed it.

**Changing Cedric**

# Example Adult Student Personas

Which best describes your reasons for earning a degree with us?



I've hit a ceiling at work and cannot advance further without the degree.

**Ambitious Amber**



I'm trying to set an example for my children to show the value of an education.

**Family Falecia**



I want to change careers, and need a degree to help get my foot in the door.

**Changing Cedric**

## Communicating with Ambitious Amber



**Primary motivation is to advance in her career/work – or to become a doctor.**



**How might Amber's initial email from the program, or her recruitment person, differ from the email sent to Cedric?**



**What information might we send to Amber first? Second? How will we provide the information?**

## Common Emails Colleges Send



Amber,

Thank you again for inquiring with Fast-Track MBA University. I wanted to write today to introduce myself. My name is Mickey and I will be your enrollment counselor.

It's not too late to apply for the fall semester. If you RSVP for our upcoming [Open House on August 2](#), we can review the requirements and help get you started. Click on the link to the right to get registered.

In the meantime, here are a few links you can check out on our website:

[Financial Aid Office](#)

[Class Schedule](#)

[Online Application](#)

[Campus Map](#)

If you would like to make an appointment to meet in person or over the phone, just email to let me know

Sincerely,  
Mickey

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**RSVP for  
the Open  
House**

**FOURTH**  
DIMENSION PARTNERS

## Communicating with Ambitious Amber



Amber,

Thank you again for inquiring with Fast-Track MBA University. I just wanted to send a quick email to let you know a couple of points about FTU.

Our graduates complete their MBA, on average, in less than 24 months. Once completed, many come back to tell us about the new leadership positions they find themselves in at their companies.

We want that for you too. Please take note of our [application deadlines](#). The faster we can help get you started, the faster you can come back and tell me about your new role.

Sincerely,  
Mickey

**Click for  
our MBA  
Application  
Deadlines**



## Communicating with Ambitious Amber



*(3 days later)*

Amber,

Have you considered how you will afford your MBA? FTU offers a few options to help our students continue advancing in their career.

One of our most popular resources is our [scholarship alert emails](#). We send announcements of new scholarships, along with upcoming deadlines for on-going scholarships to our students. Once you sign-up, you'll be included in the list.

Heck, if you're really interested, we can send those alerts to you in the form of a text!

Sincerely,  
Mickey

**Sign-up for  
our  
Scholarship  
Alerts**

## Sample Ad Content for Ambitious Amber



Primary motivation is to advance in her career/work.

Ads ⓘ

### West Chester Univ. MBA

[www.wcumba.org/](http://www.wcumba.org/) ▼

Are you ready for that promotion at work?  
We're committed to help. Are you?

### La Salle University

[www.lasalle.edu/OneYearMBA](http://www.lasalle.edu/OneYearMBA) ▼

Learn about the NEW one-year MBA  
program at La Salle. Apply now!

### UMUC: Accredited MBA

[www.umuc.edu/AccreditedMBAPrograms](http://www.umuc.edu/AccreditedMBAPrograms) ▼

Help Boost Your Career to the Next  
Level. Learn From Home. Get Info!

## Sample Ad Content for Ambitious Amber



Primary motivation is to advance in her career/work.

**Breakthrough  
your glass  
ceiling.**

LEARN WHAT AN MBA CAN  
DO FOR YOU  
JULY 24 AT 6:30 PM

[www.school.edu/rsvp](http://www.school.edu/rsvp)

A hand breaking through a glass ceiling, symbolizing breakthrough and achievement.

# How to Create Your Persona



Identify the types of information you  
**NEED**



Identify which of that information you  
**HAVE**



Determine when and how you will collect  
any missing pieces of information.

# How to Create Your Persona



**Anchor Personas on Motivations**



**Conduct Research to identify – Don't ASSUME**



**Create Communication Campaigns and Ads around Personas**



**Assess Performance**

# How to Launch Your Persona



When launching personas for the first time – Add an “OTHER” option with your motivations.



The more specific your personas are, the more likely prospects don't fit it perfectly. That's Okay.



Start BASIC. Then add more once you've succeeded.

# Elements of Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Campaigns



**BASIC:** Short Persona with broad application, used in up to a few lead nurturing campaigns, and some advertising.



**INTERMEDIATE:** Includes all above, and a couple of additional persona-focused offers/triggers for leads to further provide more information, giving you more depth.

## Communicating with Ambitious Amber



*(3 days later)*

Amber,

Have you considered how you will afford your MBA? FTU offers a few options to help our students continue advancing in their career.

One of our most popular resources is our [scholarship alert emails](#). We send announcements of new scholarships, along with upcoming deadlines for on-going scholarships to our students. Once you sign-up, you'll be included in the list.

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Mickey

Sign-up for  
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# Elements of Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Campaigns



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**INTERMEDIATE:** Includes all above, and additional persona-focused offers/triggers for leads to further provide more information, giving you more depth.



**ADVANCED:** Multiple offers, email nurturing campaigns and even **social monitoring**.

# Next Steps

Take 20 minutes to think about your Personas.

- How can you develop a set of your own?
- Can you take **current emails** you use and adjust for personas?
- Understand how your competitors engage students, and ensure your messages don't blend in the crowd.
- Create and implement a small, persona-based campaign for an emerging target group.

# Thank you for attending.

Feel free to reach out directly: [www.fourthdimensionpartners.com](http://www.fourthdimensionpartners.com)

Reach Mickey: [mickey@fourthdimensionpartners.com](mailto:mickey@fourthdimensionpartners.com); 484.525.0550

## What's next for Fourth Dimension Partners:

- Understand the data in our Secret Shopper Study:  
December 4
- A webinar on *Getting Buy-In for Strategic Goals* in  
January, 2015