



Student Personas Overview: ABC College

Prospective Undergraduate Students

Why are we doing this?

We want to better understand our prospective students in the context of how they make a college decision. By learning more about how they search for information, and what information is important to them, we can tailor our messaging (and site architecture) to facilitate the college research and decision process.

Student personas are: an example of a real student and their “buying” (decision-making) process – *how, when, and why* they make a college decision

Student personas are NOT: a bio put together from a smattering of demographic and academic profile information

[Background]

We want to better understand our prospective students at each stage of the decision making process



Prospects

These are people who are *just* starting out their college search – they are learning more about the process and whether college is right for them – but have not yet started seriously considering different schools.

These leads may...

- Research careers and majors
- Research typical costs

Inquiries

These are your “traditional” college leads – they are actively considering different schools (including ABC College) and have requested more information about specific schools

These leads may...

- Request a Viewbook
- Contact Admissions
- Visit campus

Applicants

These are leads that are in the final decision stage – they’ve applied and are ready to chose a school

These leads may...

- Apply
- Visit campus

Matriculants

These are current students who will still have to decide term-to-term if they want to continue at ABC College

These leads may...

- Speak to an advisor if they are having any troubles
- Refer ABC College to others

[Background]

To determine the student personas and how they interact with ABC College at each stage in the college decision process, we focused on 5 major areas:

Triggers

What **triggers** this person to start researching colleges such as yours?

Desired Results

What are the **results** they expect from going to college? How would they define a “**successful**” choice?

Decision Criteria

What features will they use as **decision criteria** to evaluate/compare their options?

Perceived Barriers

What are the **perceived barriers** of going to college in general, and against going to ABC College specifically?

The “Admissions Journey”

What is the decision process like and what is this prospective student’s role in that process?

How did we do this?

We spoke with 8 recently enrolled undergraduate students in separate 30 min phone interviews. We also spoke with key members of the undergraduate admissions team:

- John Smith, Director of Undergraduate Admissions
- Jane Doe, Director of Transfer Admissions
- Chris Harvey, International Recruitment Manager

What did we find?

From our interviews, we identified several different personas for College ABC's undergraduate applicants:



**“Transfer
Tom”**



**“Athlete
Amanda”**



**“International
Isa”**



**“Traditional
Tim”**

[Transfer Tom]



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► Triggers

► Desired Results

► Decision Criteria

► Perceived Barriers

► The “Admissions Journey”

► Key Takeaways

Persona Overview: **Transfer Tom**

- **Who am I?**
 - 18-21YO current college student
 - I’m currently going to college in the New England area, but am not happy at my school
- **My top concerns when choosing colleges**
 - Transfer credits
 - Cost
- **Information resources I trust**
 - Referrals from friends and family
 - Internet/Websites
 - [Collegeboard.com](https://collegeboard.com)
 - [The Princeton Review](https://www.princetonreview.com)
 - College’s websites

[Transfer Tom]



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What triggers this person to start looking at colleges?

- I’ve been at my current college for a year or two, but I’m really not happy here
- It might be too big, too small, or too far from home – something about the “student life” isn’t what I had expected and I think I’d be happier (and more successful) somewhere else
- I’ve been taking classes for over a year now, but realized my major/area of study isn’t something I’m interested in
- I’ve talked to my advisor and realized It’s too difficult to change at my current school (or it would set back my graduation date longer than I’m willing to)
- It’s become too hard for me financially to continue to study here, so I’m looking for more affordable options
- I’ve talked to my advisor and realized there is no other solution at my current school

[Transfer Tom]



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What are their **desired results** for going to college?

- I want a degree that will help me get a job in my field of interest
- I want to have the traditional “college experience”
- Academics and long-term value are important, but I do want to have fun while I’m in school
- I want to have a social life while at school – I expect to be able to find at least one club that I’m interested in joining

[Transfer Tom]



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What features will they use as **decision criteria** to evaluate/compare their options?

- **Cost** and **transfer credits** are my top two concerns
- My new school still has to fit in my budget, especially if I’ve already “wasted” tuition at my current school
- I want to go somewhere that will accept as many as my transfer credits as possible – I don’t want to have to start over
- I will apply to a handful of different schools and wait and see how many credits they will accept before I seriously try and compare my options
- Student life is still important, because I want to know that I’ll be happier at my new school
- What’s there to do at the school (and in the area?)
- What sort of clubs are there?
- I’ve already gone through this process once before – now I know the ropes and know what’s important to me – I’m looking for very specific information

[Transfer Tom]



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What are the **perceived barriers** of going to college in general, and against going to ABC College specifically?

- Aside from cost, not taking enough of my transfer credits is my biggest pushback
- I still want to try and graduate on-time, if they won't take enough of my credits they're out
- But even if a school takes all my credits, if I can't afford it I can't go
- Size – “It's too small” – I'm not looking for a college the size of my high school
- College ABC is a pretty small school, it wouldn't be a good fit if I'm craving that Big School experience
- Doesn't have the same reputation as other schools for certain programs
- “College XYZ has a better business program”
- “College XYZ has a better communications program”

[Transfer Tom]



What is the **decision process** like and what is this prospective student's role in that process?

- First I'll check out the website to see what they have to say about my major, then I'll see what they have for student life like clubs, dorms, living there, etc.
- I'll take the virtual tour before deciding to actually come and visit campus
- I'll apply to a handful of schools so that I can get transfer credit evaluations
 - I'm not going to seriously consider a school if they won't take enough credits
- I may be on a time crunch to choose a new school and transfer ASAP so that I am not set back another semester
- I'm more likely to be driving the process than my parents, but in the end I still will need to convince them to let me go where I want

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Additional Important Takeaways + Recommendations

- Highlight more transfer-student-specific content on the website. Students all mentioned some significant transfer perks offered by ABC College, but none of these are currently advertised on the Transfer Admissions page:
 - Transfer student scholarships available
 - Include some high-level statistics on how “On average, ABC College accepts X% of incoming students’ transfer credits” – all students mentioned ABC College gave them the most transfer credits out of all of the schools they applied to
 - More information about “transfer student success” (it sounds like a lot of the students come in “average” and leave with a much higher GPA)
 - “All these things [being in the Golden Key Society, being on the Dean’s List] I never thought possible after my first semester at XYZ University, were totally possible here”
- Build out automated email nurturing specifically for this segment, focusing on the key benefits offered by ABC College, as well as walking them through the application and transfer credit evaluation process

[Athlete Amanda]



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Persona Overview: **Athlete Amanda**

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IMR’s student persona research
for education clients

[International Isa]



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Persona Overview: **International Isa**

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[Traditional Tim]



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Persona Overview: **Traditional Tim**

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Who is Innovative Marketing Resources?

At Innovative Marketing Resources (IMR), our team of marketing strategists, content experts, designers, and developers is 100 percent focused on one thing:

Helping private schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher education achieve their enrollment goals.

We build and execute custom inbound marketing strategies designed to generate more prospects, inquiries, and applicants for your school

To learn more about working with us, read [The IMR Story: Our Unique Approach to Inbound Marketing for Higher Education](#)