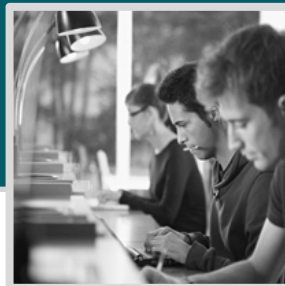


Best Practices in Graduate Student Recruitment

August 2014



In the following report, Hanover Research examines best practices in graduate student recruitment. In addition, this report profiles marketing and recruiting practices at a number of large public universities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This report presents best practices in graduate student recruitment and marketing and provides case studies to illustrate best practices in action. The report is organized according to the following two sections:

- **Section I: Best Practices in Graduate Student Recruitment** provides an overview of outreach and marketing strategies for graduate student recruitment based on qualitative and quantitative studies, as well as expert insight and commentary. In addition to a broad review of graduate recruitment practices, the section examines specific emerging strategies, including strategic enrollment management, social media marketing, and e-marketing.
- **Section II: Institutional Profiles** includes profiles of graduate student recruiting strategies at four large graduate institutions:
 - University of Texas at Austin
 - University of Georgia
 - University of Alabama
 - University of Oklahoma

KEY FINDINGS

- **Findings from studies across the last decade indicate that the majority of institutions regard recruitment, admissions and enrollment management as a pressing issue and technology is a frequently acknowledged solution.** A 2012 survey revealed that assistantships, phone contacts, and search engine optimization are thought to be highly effective strategies among graduate student recruiters at public institutions. Many of these studies capture impressions from university deans, admissions professionals, or faculty, and a small number capture opinions from prospective students.

- **Experts recommend reforming current recruitment structures and approaches at graduate schools to reflect operations found within undergraduate admissions departments and the business world.** A 2012 article stated that, unlike undergraduate admissions, graduate recruitment is often not handled with an optimal level of direction, efficiency, and precision, resulting in a much more irregular and unpredictable process. Brian Niles, the CEO of TargetX stated that the best tools to increase engagement of “best-fit prospects” are technology and student data. Niles promotes “a change in culture where Higher Ed realizes that 'sales' is not a dirty word and admissions offices need to be run like a business.”¹
- **The use of social media is an increasingly popular strategy of graduate student marketing.** Many sources including news reports and university recruiting toolkits indicate the engaging and influential potential of a deliberate and thoughtful social media campaign for increasing graduate student enrollment. Although social media use is high, one recent survey indicated that graduate schools remain skeptical of its effectiveness: social media was ranked as the third-least effective marketing practice among public graduate institutions.
- **Institutions profiled in this report generally follow best practice recommendations for graduate student recruitment.** For example, each profiled institution appears to take advantage of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, though the impact of these strategies on student recruitment is unclear. Furthermore, in response to declining enrollments, the University of Alabama has restructured its graduate recruitment efforts to include a renewed focus on the effective use of technology in recruitment processes.

¹ “Nation's Grad School Recruiters Told to Adopt Sales Skills and Marketing Mentality.” TargetX, May 6, 2013. http://online.wsj.com/article/PR-CO-20130506-901363.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

SECTION I: BEST PRACTICES IN GRADUATE STUDENT RECRUITMENT

This section highlights best practices in marketing and recruitment for graduate students, with a secondary focus on Strategic Enrollment Management, social media and e-marketing, and online program recruitment.

OUTREACH AND MARKETING

In 2012, Noel-Levitz and The National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) developed a web-based survey of the recruitment practices of American public master's institutions, baccalaureate colleges, and special focus institutions. Respondents were asked to rate approximately 80 different recruitment tactics as either "very effective," "somewhat effective," "minimally effective," or "not used."² Figure 1.1 shows the top 10 most effective practices as specified by public master's institutions and Figure 1.2 shows the percentage of these respondents who use each of the 10 tactics. A comparison of Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.2 indicates inconsistency between these institutions' perceived effectiveness of graduate recruiting tactics and the degree to which they are being implemented.

- Many of the top 10 practices (at least three of the 10 for each sector examined) were not being used by a significant portion of the poll respondents, sometimes more than half.
- A significant percentage of respondents across institution types, up to 75 percent, reported using practices that most respondents of their type judged to be "minimally effective."³

² [1] "Preferred Recruitment Strategies of US graduate Schools." ICEF Monitor, August 2, 2012.

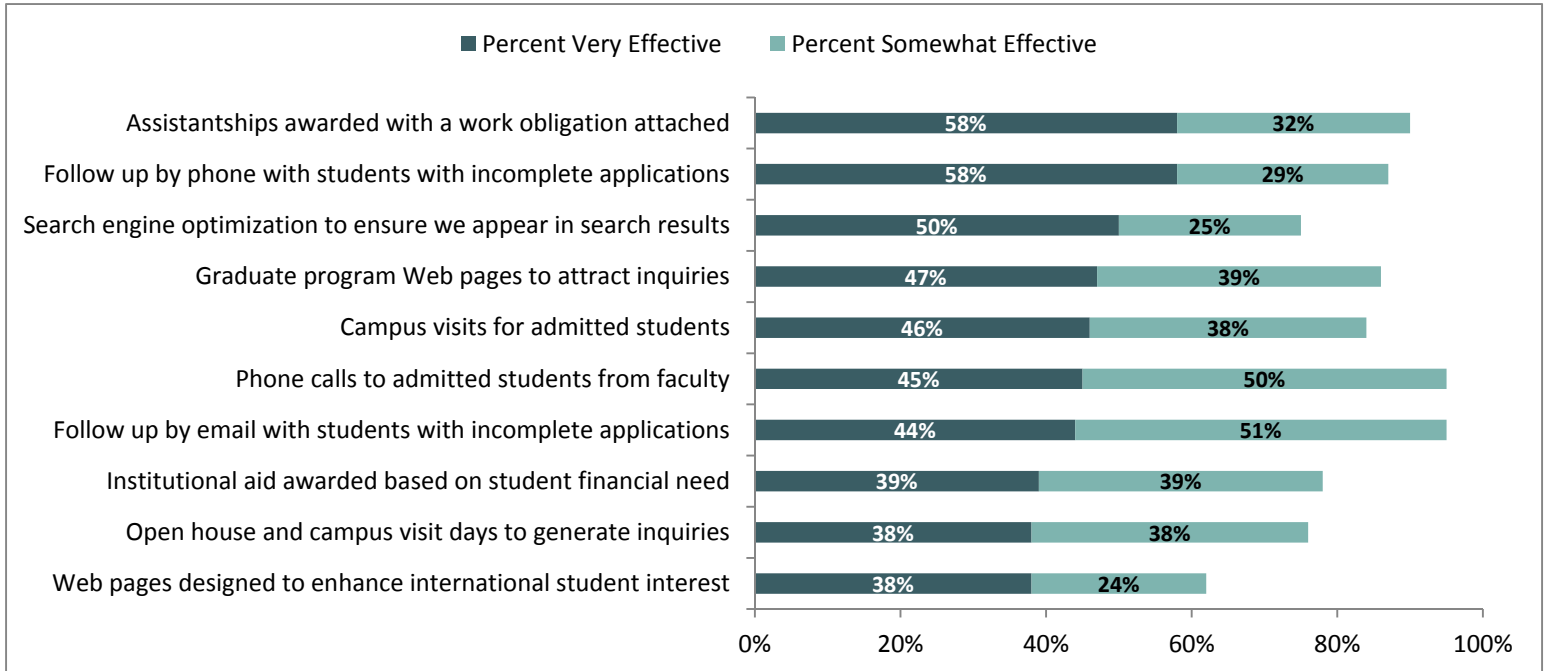
<http://monitor.icef.com/2012/08/preferred-recruitment-strategies-of-us-graduate-schools/>

[2] "2012 Marketing and Student Recruitment Practices for Master's-Level Graduate Programs." Noel-Levitz, 2012, p. 3.

https://www.noellevitz.com/documents/shared/Papers_and_Research/2012/2012%20Marketing%20and%20Student%20Recruitment%20Practices%20Report%20for%20Master's-Level%20Graduate%20Programs.pdf

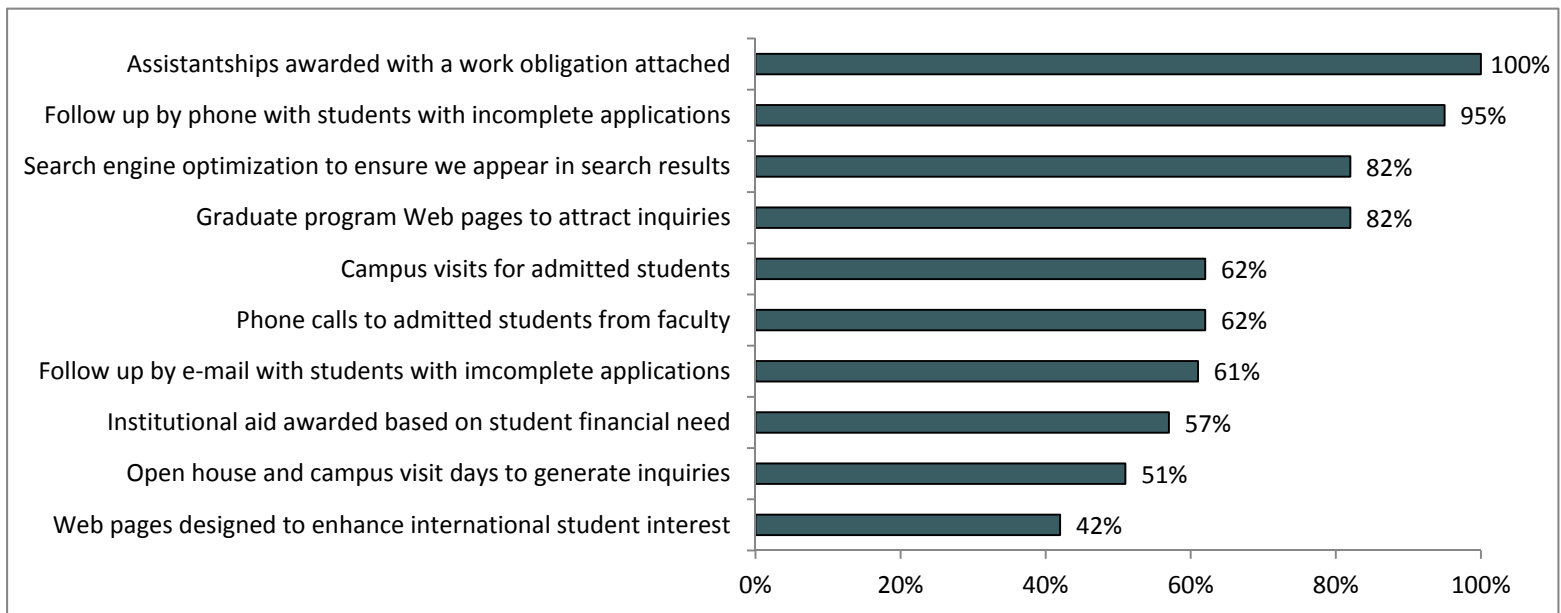
³ Bulleted items taken verbatim from: "2012 Marketing and Student Recruitment Practices for Master's-Level Graduate Programs," Op. cit., p. 1.

Figure 1.1: Most Effective Practices at Public Institutions



Source: Noel-Levitz⁴

Figure 1.2: Percent of Respondents Using Top 10 Recruiting Tactics

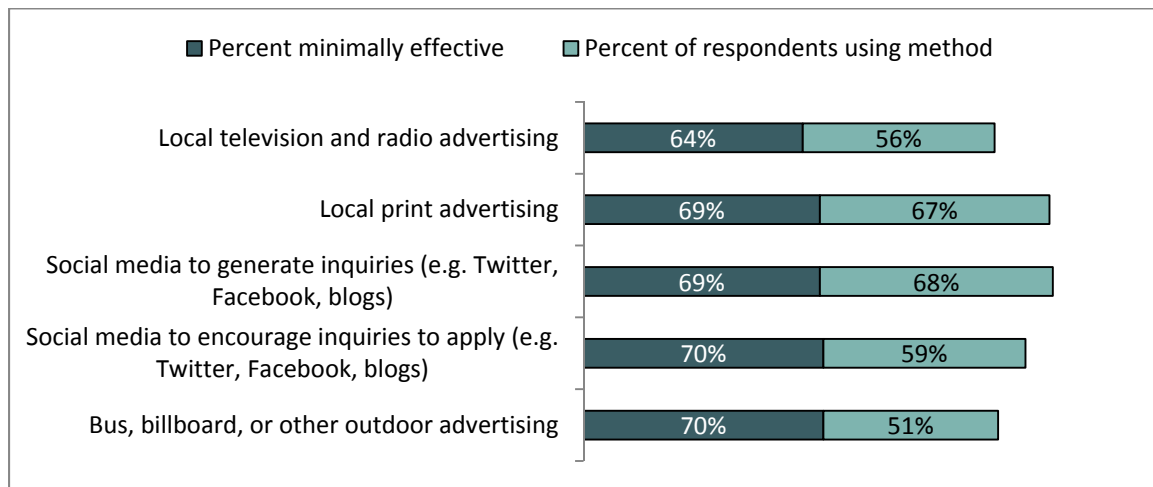


Source: Noel-Levitz⁵

⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

Figure 1.3. Least-Effective Practices at Public Master’s Institutions, Baccalaureate Colleges, And Special Focus Institutions



Source: Noel-Levitz⁶

In order to examine how concerns about student recruitment rank relative to other issues graduate schools contemplate, we turn to the 2012 Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) Board annual Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees.⁷ This survey is distributed to deans of graduate programs at member institutions and asks respondents to pinpoint three of their departments’ most significant or “pressing” issues or challenges. The survey had a response rate of 48 percent or 242 institutions. Figure 1.4 shows survey responses from public graduate institutions.

The majority (58 percent) of institutions identified “recruitment, admissions, and enrollment management,”⁸ as a pressing issue. Within this general category, the following more specific themes were mentioned in open-ended responses: “managing declining or growing enrollments, competition for prospective graduate students, challenges in attracting a diverse applicant pool, challenges in recruiting international students, and recruiting quality graduate students.”⁹ Based on responses, masters-focused institutions and specialized programs, as well as private universities were more likely to experience stresses related to recruitment, admissions, and enrollment management than doctoral and public institutions.¹⁰

The second most frequently mentioned issue was graduate student financial support, with 50 percent of respondents indicating this area of concern. This category incorporated health

⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷ Gonzales, L., J. Allum, and R. Sowell. “Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2002 to 2012.” The Council of Graduate Schools and the Graduate Record Examinations Board, 2013.
http://www.cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/GEDReport_2012.pdf

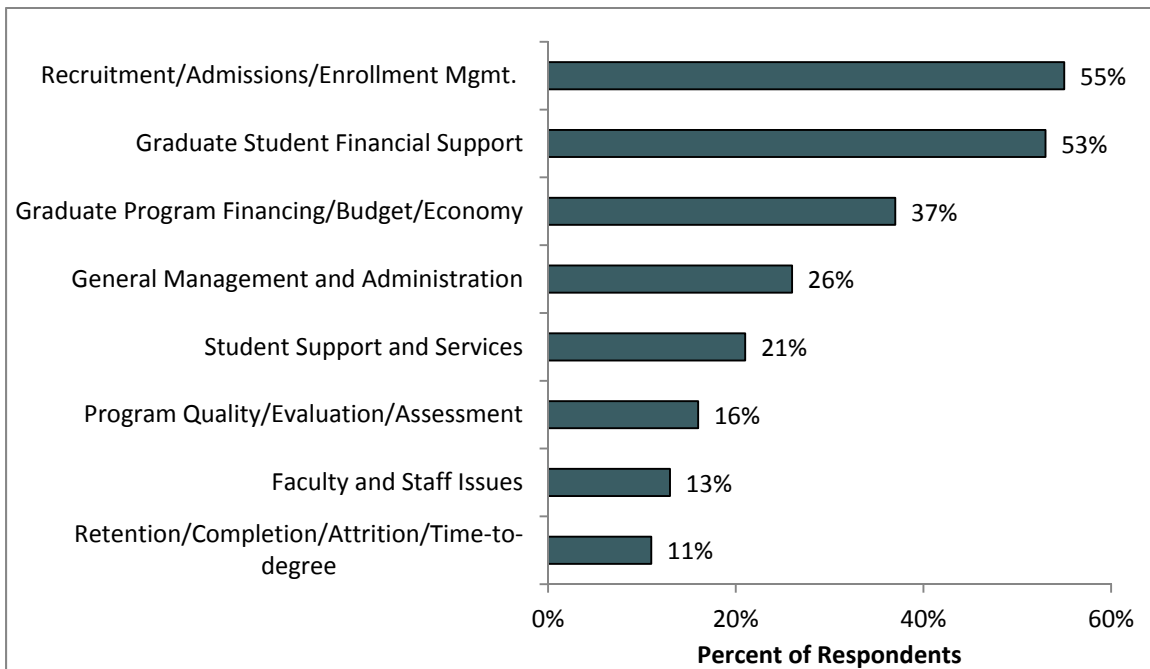
⁸ “Data Sources: Results from the 2012 CGS Pressing Issues Survey.” Council of Graduate Schools.
<http://www.cgsnet.org/data-sources-results-2012-cgs-pressing-issues-survey-0>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

insurance for graduate students, as well as direct student funding through assistantships and fellowships. Unsurprisingly, respondents from public institutions noted this issue more frequently than their counterparts at private institutions (53 percent versus 45 percent). The third most pressing issue was the general financing of graduate programs, with 37 percent. Program management and administration concerns comprised the fourth most pressing issue with 28 percent of respondents indicating. Within this general theme, respondents cited: “implementing new technology systems, changes to policies and procedures, and changes to the structure of the graduate school, among other concerns.”¹¹

Figure 1.4: Results From the 2012 Pressing Issues Survey, Public Institutions



Source: Council of Graduate Schools¹²

Noel-Levitz has published several important articles that analyze these survey results and the general state of graduate student recruiting. In a 2012 article, Noel-Levitz examined the findings of the 2011 version of the Pressing Issues survey and developed the following framework of recruiting recommendations for graduate institutions as, according to this 2011 report, they faced the second consecutive year of decline in new graduate students after almost a decade of steady growth (Figure 1.5). Although applications may be increasing, this growth may not translate to increase in yield as many graduate programs report “prospective students are not enrolling as predictably as in the recent past.”¹³

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Table taken verbatim from: Ibid.

¹³ Mahan, S. “Navigating new challenges in graduate student recruitment.” Noel-Levitz, 2012. <http://blog.noellelitz.com/2012/11/06/navigating-challenges-graduate-recruitment/>

Figure 1.5 Noel-Levitz's Five Recommendations for Action

AREA OF RECOMMENDATION	EXPLANATION
Develop strategies for the full recruitment funnel.	Many institutions still wait until the application stage to begin recruiting graduate students. By investing in efforts to attract inquiries and grow and shape the applicant pool, graduate programs can better manage their enrollment. Consider traditional strategies such as fairs, feeder institution travel, and GRE/GMAT name buys. Be sure you are also using e-recruitment strategies such as Web pages, pay-per-click advertising, and even social media. Most important is to build a sustained communication flow to your inquiry, applicant, and admit pools.
Address graduate students' priorities in recruitment materials.	Our surveys of prospective graduate students consistently show three key priorities—the quality of the program, the cost/affordability, and the pathway or career available. Recruitment materials, including Web pages, should address these motivators and communicate about the strengths and benefits of the degree.
Invest time and effort in strategies that work.	Noel-Levitz, in partnership with NAGAP (the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals), surveyed graduate admissions professionals earlier this year on a range of recruitment strategies. There are clear “best practices”—from campus visits for prospective students to Web pages for international candidates to phone calls placed to admitted students—that contribute to enrollment success. We compiled these findings in the 2012 Marketing and Student Recruitment Practices Report for Master’s-Level Graduate Programs.
Make financing a part of the recruitment picture.	Anecdotal reports suggest students are more wary about making an investment in graduate programs, or are just too strapped financially to consider graduate study. Recruitment materials should be clear about program cost, but should also focus on the return on the investment in terms of a future job/career. In addition, scholarships and assistantship funds, if available, should be leveraged to recruit new students, which might mean working more closely with faculty committees.
Be strategic as well as tactical.	Recognize that factors beyond the control of your college or university are contributing to the decline in interest in certain fields right now. Adjust goals and budgets accordingly, and focus recruitment efforts on programs with potential to grow in today’s economy and market. Also, it can be helpful to work with faculty to ensure that program offerings match emerging student demand.

Source: Noel-Levitz¹⁴

In 2011, the senior vice president of Noel-Levitz, Craig Engle, published an article reflecting on his experiences working with graduate institutions to increase the effectiveness of their enrollment management programs. His primary observation concerns the large degree of variance between graduate and undergraduate admissions operations: graduate recruitment is often not handled with an optimal level of direction, efficiency, and precision, making it a much more irregular and unpredictable process.¹⁵ “To enroll graduate and professional students more effectively and efficiently, institutions must adopt measures that have worked for undergraduate enrollment.”¹⁶ Engle’s complete framework of ten predominant issues is summarized in Figure 1.6.

¹⁴ Mahan, S. “Navigating new challenges in graduate student recruitment.” Noel-Levitz, 2012. <http://blog.noellelitz.com/2012/11/06/navigating-challenges-graduate-recruitment/>

¹⁵ “Ten Enrollment Roadblocks for Graduate and Professional Programs: Part One.” Noel-Levitz, October 25, 2011. <http://blog.noellelitz.com/2011/10/25/ten-enrollment-roadblocks-graduate-professional-programs-part/>

¹⁶ Engle, C. “Ten Enrollment Roadblocks for Graduate and Professional Programs. Neil-Levitz., pp. 1-4. <http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/faculty/recruiting/TenRoadblocks.pdf>

Figure 1.6: An Overview of 10 Common Challenges To Recruiting Graduate Students

ISSUE	DESCRIPTION
Issue 1: There is little influence from “the top”	Graduate recruitment is often seen as the territory of individual academic programs and their faculty members. Without the active involvement and strong support of executive leaders in graduate recruitment, it is difficult to secure the level of resources needed to build a strong graduate recruitment program.
Issue 2: Graduate recruitment is decentralized	Graduate program directors tend to have no training or experience in the fundamentals of recruitment. As a result, follow-up and faculty commitments are inconsistent, communications and Web content are uneven, and database management virtually non-existent.
Issue 3: A desire to shape the class, not grow it—creating a disconnect between the two	Shaping is sometimes seen as a separate or more desirable goal than growing enrollment. The two do not have to be mutually exclusive. Growth can bring significant benefits to graduate programs such as more qualified and diverse students and increased revenue.
Issue 4: Ignoring the top end of the funnel	Most graduate recruitment efforts do not focus as much as they should on prospects and inquiries, instead starting the process at the applicant stage. Graduate and professional programs need to take a lesson from undergraduate admissions and proactively build their inquiry pools through travel, solicitation, referral, and self-initiated avenues.
Issue 5: An inadequate database to track all funnel activities	Having a robust, organized data process is crucial. This includes four points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A centralized database that is accessible to all relevant parties • Training for staff on proper data entry and tracking, • The ability to account for different program start dates, data fields, and other items that may vary from program to program; and • Creation of management reports that allow the program directors to compare and project new student enrollment.
Issue 6: Lack of a strong annual plan	A graduate recruitment plan needs to have these elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A situation analysis • Goal setting • Strategies for goal achievement • Action plans
Issue 7: Little personal relationship building with prospective students	To get the graduate and professional students you want, you have to let them know they are wanted. Building relationships early is the best way to engage prospective students and move them toward applying and enrolling.
Issue 8: Communication management	Build a communication flow that provides students with information that is most relevant to each stage—resist the temptation to overwhelm students with everything all at once.
Issue 9: Scholarships and financial aid	As employer benefits decline, institutions will need to discuss providing more merit and need-based assistance. Graduate and professional students have different needs and expectations than undergraduates, requiring a different level of expertise and sensitivity by the financial aid office.
Issue 10: Not enough coordination among faculty/graduate directors	Graduate directors and faculty need to come together to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop individual and a master graduate recruitment plan; • Identify the admissions office and department responsibilities; • Create print and online communication flows and establish standards; • Commit to using data so that efforts can be tracked and evaluated; • Support and coordinate campus visit efforts.

Source: Noel-Levitz¹⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Graduate schools across the country are facing pressure from consultants to adopt a corporate-minded approach to sales and marketing.¹⁸ Brian Niles, a former graduate school admissions officer and current CEO of TargetX (a higher education technology and consulting company), spoke at the 2012 NAGAP conference about this issue. Niles believes that the appropriate response to these demands (to increase the institution’s revenue without the necessary resources) is to follow the lead of the business world and increase efficiency. Niles promoted “a change in culture where Higher Ed realizes that 'sales' is not a dirty word and admissions offices need to be run like a business.”¹⁹ He stated that the best tools to increase engagement of “best-fit prospects” are technology and student data: “Today, it’s essential that you and your team have access anytime and from anywhere to student data and the technology that allows you to make full use of that data. To do that effectively, though, you have to have the right people in place and they have to have the right training, including sales skills.”²⁰

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is one approach that is a key example of the ways in which the business world has influenced higher education as its institutions face a troubling combination of demands: to increase their results with reduced resources and funding. SEM applies the concept of strategic planning specifically to enrollment management. Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, a semiannual academic journal, defines SEM in the following way: “a comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain optimum enrollment, where optimum is defined within the academic context of the institution. It is a concept and process that enables the fulfillment of institutional mission and students’ educational goals.”²¹ Figure 1.7 outlines the purposes and components of an SEM plan.

Figure 1.7: Strategic Enrollment Management

THE PURPOSES OF SEM ARE ACHIEVED BY..	MAJOR SEM COMPONENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing clear goals for the number and types of students needed to fulfil the institutional mission • Promoting student academic success by improving access, transition, retention, and graduation • Promoting institutional success by enabling effective strategic and financial planning • Creating a data-rich environment to inform decisions and evaluate strategies • Improving process, organizational and financial efficiency, and outcomes • Establishing top quality student-centered service • Strengthening communications and collaboration among departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEM Organization • Data Mining & Analysis • SEM Plan • Marketing • Recruitment • Admissions • Financial Aid • Student Services • Retention

Source: Wiley Online Library²²

¹⁸ “Nation’s Grad School Recruiters Told to Adopt Sales Skills and Marketing Mentality.” TargetX, May 6, 2013.

http://online.wsj.com/article/PR-CO-20130506-901363.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly.” *Wiley Online Library*.

[http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/\(ISSN\)2325-4750](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)2325-4750)

²² Table contents taken verbatim from: Ibid.

In 2007, The Education Policy Institute (EPI) published a guide for higher education institutions to aid in the design phase of SEM planning.²³ Authors state that SEM is in the “Age of the Academic Context,” an age sparked by a 2005 article by Stan Anderson, “Refocusing Enrollment Management: Losing Structure and Finding the Academic Context.” This era of SEM is defined by the consolidation of SEM models into a refined organizational structure that implements recruiting models and leverages financial aid, however, it also increasingly interacts in partnership with academic divisions of the university. Academics have been acknowledged as vital to the success of SEM plans.²⁴ The definitions promoted by these researchers largely reflect that of the *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*: “Strategic Enrollment Management is a comprehensive approach to integrating all of the University’s programs, practices, policies, and planning related to achieving the optimal recruitment, retention, and graduation of students with “optimal” defined by the mission, academic vision, and strategic plan of the institution.”²⁵ Although these plans typically encompass both graduate and undergraduate enrollment strategies and goals, many institutions in this study emphasized their graduate programs as distinct operations.

Institutions are increasingly adopting institution-wide SEM plans that apply to undergraduate and graduate enrollment. However the following example SEM plans are specific to graduate schools and colleges:

- **The Graduate School at the University of Scranton** established the following set of objectives for its SEM process:
 - Develop and implement a targeted regional and national recruitment program supported by on-going assessment of current and potential program offerings.
 - Develop and implement strategies to increase the proportion of graduate students who are employer-supported.Reach an enrollment goal of 850 students.²⁶

²³ Wilkinson, R. et al. “A Practical Guide to Strategic Enrollment Management Planning.” Education Policy Institute, 2007. <http://www.educationalpolicy.org/pdf/SEM%20Guide.pdf>

²⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁵ “Morehead State University Strategic Enrollment Management Plan 2006-2010.” Morehead State University, 2006, p. 1. <http://www.moreheadstate.edu/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=14905>

²⁶ Wilkinson et al, Op. cit., p. 55.

- **Central Michigan University’s 2013-2015 SEM Plan for On-Campus Graduate Studies** Recruitment aligns itself with the Universities’ strategic priorities:
 - Transition to more traditional, full-time target audiences
 - Promotion of CMU as a destination university
 - Program-specific marketing and enrollment plans
 - New and improved informational materials and channels of communication
 - Partnership development with international institutions
 - Enhanced CRM and integrated marketing and communications planning
 - Greater presence in print and online directories and educational search engine resources
 - New program launch procedures with cross-campus support
 - Specialized local, regional, national, and international awareness initiatives²⁷
 - Increased cooperation with counselors, agents, consultants, and government agencies
- **The University of North Carolina – Charlotte** developed a Graduate Enrollment Management (GEM) plan, which is designed in a collaborative process by an academically diverse group of representatives. Their decisions are “informed by data collection and analysis in an effort to produce measurable improvements in areas such as recruitment, admissions, retention, funding, and graduation.”²⁸ The committee has developed extensive longitudinal data regarding graduate student enrollment and retention, as well as a list of peer institutions.²⁹

SOCIAL MEDIA

One prevalent strategy of graduate student marketing is the use of social media. Many sources including news reports and university toolkits indicate the engaging and influential potential of a deliberate and thoughtful social media campaign for increasing graduate student enrollment. Social media is another strategy graduate schools are implementing to creatively address resource limitations combined with increased enrollment and revenue generating expectations.³⁰ According to an article in the *Journal Sentinel*, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin newspaper, The University of Wisconsin-Madison experienced a 90 percent growth in Twitter followers, 57 percent increase in Facebook "likes," and 38 percent increase YouTube viewership between 2012 and 2013.³¹

²⁷ Bulleted items taken verbatim from: “Strategic Enrollment Management Plan 2013-2015.” Central Michigan University, 2013, p. 19. <https://www.cmich.edu/ess/Documents/2013-15%20Strategic%20Enrollment%20Management%20Plan%20Final%2008-30-13.pdf>

²⁸ “Graduate Enrollment Management.” UNC Charlotte. <http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/faculty-and-staff/admissions-and-recruitment/graduate-enrollment-management>

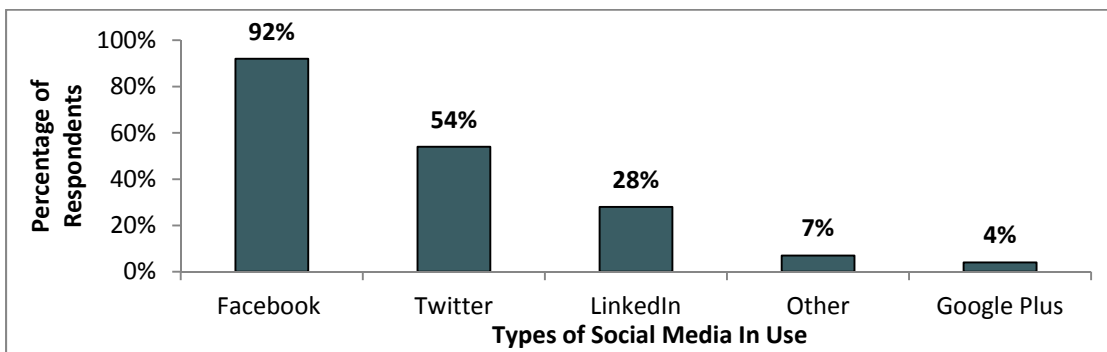
²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “Graduate Programs Plan To Invest More In Social Media Recruitment Efforts,” Op. cit.

³¹ Herzog, K. “Colleges deploy social media in scramble to recruit best students.” *Journal Sentinel*, September 29, 2013. <http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/colleges-deploy-social-media-in-scramble-to-recruit-best-students-b99109295z1-225743521.html>

In 2012, the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) conducted a survey on its member institutions about social media usage.³² Of the 265 total respondents, 39 percent were public universities and 58 percent were private, non-profit universities. Eight percent of institutions had greater than 10,000 enrolled students.³³ A large majority (80 percent) of graduate admission offices reported using social media in their recruiting efforts.³⁴ The survey then asked these social media active universities to indicate which specific platforms they use and their target audiences for each. Figure 1.8 presents the responses indicated by institutions as they target prospective graduate students. Facebook and Twitter are the preferred platforms by a significant margin; however, researchers were stumped when they attempted to gauge the effectiveness of participants' social media usage. Only 5 percent of respondents track or profile their social networking followers, which limits insight into the impact of these efforts.³⁵

Figure 1.8: Social Media Use Among US Graduate Institutions, prospective students.



Source: The National Association for Graduate Admissions Professionals³⁶
n=213

Universities post a variety of content to their social media sites, including open messaging (64 percent), and profiles of students (48 percent) and alumni (44 percent), however, the majority of posts contain news updates (85 percent) or event postings (84 percent). Managing multiple active social media sites can be time consuming, however, only 31 percent of universities use monitoring platforms like Hootsuite, Tweetdeck, Radian6, or Sprout Social.³⁷

In 2013, Duke University School of Nursing published a presentation advising its administration and staff on the use of social media to recruit graduate students.³⁸ The report relied on a modern approach to marketing, accepting that institutions “no longer have control over [their] ‘brand’” and that success is based more on influencing ones

³² “NAGAP 2012 Social Media Survey Report.” The National Association for Graduate Admissions Professionals, 2012, <http://www.nagap.org/documents/NAGAP2012SocialMediaSurveyReport.pdf>

³³ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁸ Rushing, E. “Using Social Media to Recruit Graduate Students.” Duke University School of Nursing, 2013, p. 45. <http://apps.aacn.nche.edu/Networks/pdf/GNAP/2013/rushing.pdf>

brand.³⁹ The presentation articulates the relative assets offered by Facebook, Twitter, Paper.li, Youtube, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Foursquare, and Instagram. The author emphasizes the power of each platform to attract graduate students, yet institutions must be strategic and consider which platform best complements their goals and objectives.⁴⁰

E-MARKETING

However, sources like the 2012 Noel-Levitz/NAGAP survey indicate that social media, however salient and popular, is merely a supplementary marketing tool. The majority of institutions surveyed in this study rated social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter as “minimally effective” and **it is clear that the primary medium through which graduate programs choose to promote their programs online is the institutional website.**

In 2005, Michael Poock conducted a focus group-based survey of 25 graduate students currently enrolled in a Southeast university and asked them to reflect on their experiences navigating graduate schools’ websites as prospective students. Questions ranged across four major themes:

- The characteristics of effective graduate school web sites by focusing on prospective students
- The information they sought
- The elements that either enhanced or inhibited web navigation and appearance
- The impact of the amount of time it took to locate information on the site

Findings indicate that admissions information, faculty research interests and department contacts, financial aid, and program information, are the most essential aspects of a graduate school website. Several students sought information about programs’ durations and the graduate school's post-graduation placement rate. Participants expressed little to no interest in the institution's location, housing information, or the university's mission. The reputation and relative ranking of the graduate school or program was important to just three of the twenty-five participants.

A 2010 literature review provides insight as to how this key content should be most effectively conveyed. Janet Gifford, the director of marketing for Linfield College, examined best practices for e-marketing and digital public relations, supplementing her findings with practical applications through her professional experiences.⁴¹ Access to this marketing opportunity is made possible by an intentional process of Search Engine Optimization (SEO), building a website that is accessible, classified by search engines, and more attractive to users. Components to ensuring SEO are creation of high-quality content and the inclusion of

³⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid.,

⁴¹ Gifford, J. “Digital Public Relations: E-Marketing’s Big Secret.” *Continuing Higher Education Review*, 74, 2010, pp. 62–72. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ907250.pdf>

relevant keywords, meta-language properties and internal links.⁴² Gifford uses the example of developing press releases. She explains, “Search engines use external links that point to a site as one of the criteria for their page-ranking algorithms. When your news release appears and the links in the news release are pointing to pages on your site, this increases your own website’s search engine rankings.”⁴³

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 68.

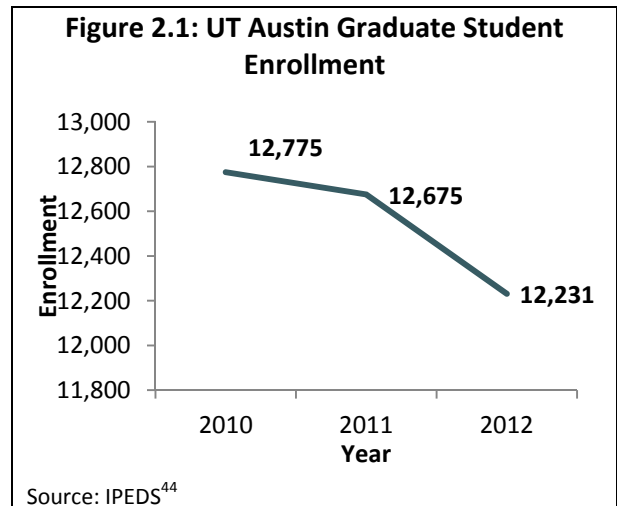
SECTION II: INSTITUTIONAL PROFILES

This section presents the marketing and recruiting strategies at four large public research universities: University of Texas at Austin, University of Georgia, University of Alabama, and University of Oklahoma. In particular, each profile addresses:

- The university's graduate student enrollment patterns between 2010 and 2012;
- Outreach and marketing strategies including department structure, event planning and travel, publications, and internal resources and best practices;
- The graduate school's social media presence, what accounts does it maintain, how are they used, and how impactful are these accounts (evident by their number of followers); and
- Other recruiting strategies, including fellowships and strategies for specific student populations.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Located in Austin, Texas, The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) is a public, four-year institution in a large urban setting. In fall 2012, UT Austin had a total graduate student enrollment of 12,231.⁴⁵ Thirteen schools and colleges within UT Austin operate degree programs at the master's level: Architecture, Liberal Arts, Business, Natural Sciences, Communication, Nursing, Education, Pharmacy, Engineering, Public Affairs, Fine Arts, Social Work, and Geosciences.⁴⁶ Between 2010 and 2012 UT Austin has experienced decline in its graduate student population, a trend that was particularly apparent between 2011 and 2012.



⁴⁴ "Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System." NCES. <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter>

⁴⁵ "The University of Texas at Austin." The National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=university+of+texas+austin&s=all&id=228778>

⁴⁶ "Graduate Programs, Contacts, & Deadlines." University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/admissions/programs.html>

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Graduate student recruitment operates through the Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC). GIAC is responsible for graduate student recruitment for all departments and processes all applications, typically 30,000 per year.⁴⁷ While the university emphasizes this cross-department, “shared process,” individual departments evaluate relevant applications. The graduate admissions department is led by the director of Graduate and International Admissions and is composed of eight other staff members, including an Assistant Dean of Recruitment and Outreach.⁴⁸ Each school and college has a designated graduate coordinator who is the primary program resource for prospective students.⁴⁹

The Graduate Assembly at UT Austin serves as the legislative body for “all matters having to do with the academic character of the graduate program.”⁵⁰ One of its primary responsibilities is supporting the admission department.⁵¹ The assembly comprises 31 elected members, six student members, and 17 ex officio members, including the president, the executive vice president and provost, and other significant and relevant administrators.⁵² Its work is delegated into three standing committees, one of which is the Admission and Enrollment Committee. Its members examine current and proposed policies and decisions before making recommendations to the general assembly for discussion and a vote. Its responsibilities include:

- Minimum standards for admission of students to the Graduate School as candidates for the master's degree and the doctoral degree, and as nondegree-seeking students
- Minimum standards for admission to the doctoral degree for continuing students admitted for a lower degree
- Management of enrollment
- Continuation of graduate students⁵³

OUTREACH AND MARKETING

The UT Austin graduate school website includes a wide array of information directed toward both prospective graduate students and a general audience.⁵⁴ These include a “Welcome from the Dean” letter, as well as news stories, research updates from the 13 graduate departments, and information about the Graduate School’s lecture series.

⁴⁷ “Graduate Admissions.” University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/admissions/>

⁴⁸ “Contact the Graduate School.” University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/about/personnel/contact.html>

⁴⁹ “Graduate Programs, Contacts, & Deadlines,” Op. cit.

⁵⁰ “Graduate Assembly.” University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/faculty/ga/>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² “Composition and Organization of the Graduate Assembly.” University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/faculty/ga/composition.html>

⁵³ Bulleted text taken verbatim from: Ibid.

⁵⁴ “About the Graduate School.” University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/about/>

According to its graduate recruiting schedule for the 2013-2014 academic year, its graduate admissions department sends representatives to graduate fairs and conferences, the majority of which are located throughout Texas in the fall; however, representatives also travel once to Georgia, Illinois, and Indiana. Additionally, UT Austin graduate admissions makes an effort to attend two forums in California which have a focus on enrollment diversity.

Figure 2.2: UT Austin Graduate Recruiting Schedule, 2013-2014

FAIR	LOCATION
Texas Tech University Graduate & Professional Fair	Lubbock, TX
University of Texas at El Paso	El Paso, TX
Huston-Tillotson University	Austin, TX
Atlanta University Center Consortium	Atlanta, GA
SACNAS National Conference	San Antonio, TX
St. Edward's University	Austin, TX
Texas A&M University	College Station, TX
University of Texas at San Antonio	San Antonio, TX
Chicago Graduate & Professional School Fair - UIC Forum	Chicago, IL
University of Houston – Downtown STEM Graduate School Fair	Houston, TX
University of Texas at Arlington	Arlington, TX
Big Ten Graduate School Expo at Purdue University	West Lafayette, IN
Texas A&M Kingsville	Kingsville, TX
Texas A&M Corpus Christi	Corpus Christi, TX
Texas A&M International	Laredo, TX
University of Texas at Pan American	Edinburg, TX
University of Texas at Brownsville	Brownsville, TX
California Forum for Diversity (Fall)	Moraga, CA
California Forum for Diversity (Spring)	Pomona, CA

Source: University of Texas at Austin⁵⁵

In addition to efforts of the GIAC, The Graduate School central staff provides recruitment materials and resources to departments and programs. Program representatives may rent the Graduate School table display and table. Additional resources include: Graduate School student folders, McNair Fellowship applications, fliers for each UT Austin institute and center, West and South Texas Fellowship publications, benefits specific to Texas residents or veterans, and promotional items (pens and luggage tags).⁵⁶ The Graduate School has delineated a specific procedure for materials requests for recruiting purposes. Representatives must fill out a pre-event request form and return the items within three business days of the event along with a post-event evaluation form.⁵⁷ This later form collects basic information about the name and date of the recruiting event, as well as descriptions of the quantity *and* quality of students met and a recommendation as to whether UT Austin should attend the event the following year.

⁵⁵ "Graduate Recruiting Schedule: 2013 – 2014." University of Texas at Austin.
<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/prospective/schedule.html>

⁵⁶ "Guidelines for Use of Graduate School Materials For Recruiting Purposes." <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/adv-coor/pdfs/materials-guidelines.pdf>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Graduate School at UT Austin maintains a blog on which posts are published approximately every two weeks. Articles typically highlight events, lectures, career planning, and accomplishments of graduate classes and individual students.⁵⁸ The school also operates Facebook and Twitter accounts, although the website does not provide links to these accounts. As of March 2014, it had 3,682 Facebook subscribers and 2,682 Twitter followers.⁵⁹ The graduate school also has a Pinterest account with 33 followers. Its seven boards range from research news, rankings, campus news, and events.⁶⁰ At the undergraduate recruiting level, the institution has fully embraced social media, as is evident by an article that captures accepted students' reactions via social media.⁶¹

OTHER RECRUITING STRATEGIES

The Graduate School at UT Austin offers a variety of fellowship opportunities including those directed toward diversity, international students, and general recruitment efforts. In 2012, award decisions underwent a process of decentralization and many academic units within the school were made responsible for awarding funding. However, the graduate school maintains the oversight of recruitment fellowships, diversity fellowships, fellowships for current students, the Graduate Dean's Prestigious Fellowship Supplement as well as several external fellowships that are administered internally. Grantors include the National Science Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Fulbright Hayes Dissertation Fellowships.⁶²

⁵⁸ "Blog." The University of Texas. <http://blogs.utexas.edu/gradnews/blog/>

⁵⁹ [1] "University of Texas at Austin." Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/utgradschool>

[2] "UT Grad School." Twitter. <https://twitter.com/utgradschool>

⁶⁰ "Graduate School at UT Austin." Pinterest. <http://www.pinterest.com/utgradschool/>

⁶¹ "'Best day of my life' – Students React to UT Acceptance." The University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.utexas.edu/know/2014/01/06/best-day-of-my-life-students-react-to-ut-acceptance/>

⁶² "Fellowships Administered by the Graduate School." The University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/funding/fellowships/>

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The University of Georgia (UGA) is located in the medium-size city of Athens, Georgia. It is a four-year, public institution with a graduate enrollment of 8,260 as of fall 2012.⁶³ UGA offers 140 programs at the master's level, throughout 17 schools and colleges.⁶⁴ Between 2010 and 2012, UGA has experienced consistent decline in its graduate student population.

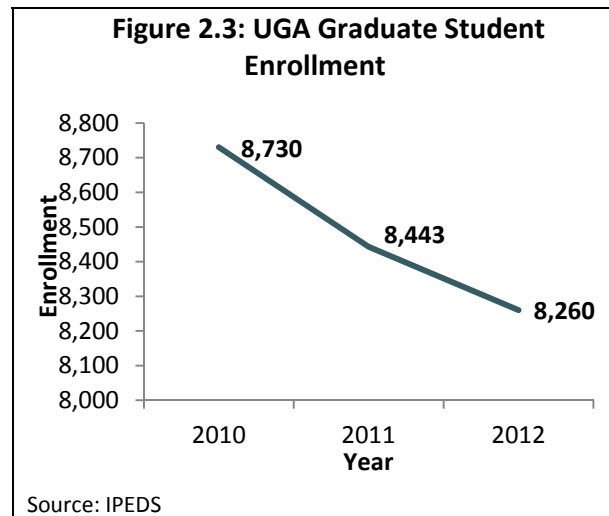
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Graduate student recruitment efforts at UGA are led by the Director of Recruitment and Diversity Initiatives. The department comprises five staff members, four of whom are graduate assistants.⁶⁵ A primary responsibility of the office is collecting and providing admissions and enrollment data to the university's many departments. The office can provide direct access to data and also recommends contacting UGA's Office of Institutional Research.⁶⁶

OUTREACH AND MARKETING

The Graduate School's approach to student recruitment is generally data-driven. Each fall, the school administers a two-question survey to all incoming students, which intends to capture influential information sources during the application process and important factors in students' decision to ultimately attend UGA.⁶⁷ The fall 2013 results indicated that email communications, websites, and interactions with faculty members were the most effective information sources during the application process. The most influential factors in students' decision to attend UGA included UGA's reputation (program and faculty), financial assistance, and faculty research interests.

Faculty members at UGA are acknowledged as the university's strongest resource in graduate student recruitment. According to a survey of UGA students, faculty were the second most frequent sources of initial contact with UGA, therefore the university empowers its faculty and colleges to recruit graduate students.⁶⁸ The university devotes a



⁶³ "The University of Georgia." The National Center for Education Statistics.

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=university+of+georgia&s=all&id=139959>

⁶⁴ "Schools and Colleges." The University of Georgia. http://president.uga.edu/index.php/office/schools_and_colleges

⁶⁵ "Meet Our Recruiting Team." The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/student/connect/recruitingteam.html>

⁶⁶ "Using your Department's Data to Drive Admissions and Enrollment Goals." The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/faculty/recruiting/DepartmentRecs.pdf>

⁶⁷ "Incoming Student Survey, Fall 2013." The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/faculty/Recruitment/resource2.html>

⁶⁸ "Recruitment Resources." The University of Georgia. <http://www.grad.uga.edu/faculty/recruitingresources.html>

section of its website to aid faculty and staff in this process.⁶⁹ Here faculty can find information about upcoming deadlines, forms, and recruitment resources including best practices, schedules, and an FAQ section. Specific resources include:

Figure 2.4: Faculty Resources for Graduate Student Recruitment

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
A graduate student recruitment handbook	Serves as a resource for faculty who are recruiting graduate students. It contains a department recruitment plan template and necessary information when recruiting graduate students, such as: quick facts, tuition and student life information, and email templates and phone scripts.
Admissions and enrollment data by college/school and department	UGA account credential necessary for access
Guide to enhancing departmental websites for graduate recruitment	Based on workshops presented at UGA by leaders in website marketing. Topics cover website design and content editing. Access limited.
Guide to developing departmental recruitment plans	The recruitment plan template guides department leadership through a series of steps: enrollment tracking and goal setting, strategies and action steps, and developing a list of prospective students.
List of the top pipeline undergraduate universities by UGA school/college	A spreadsheet that identifies the top undergraduate institutions for current UGA graduate students in each school and college.

Source: The University of Georgia⁷⁰

UGA's Graduate School advertises a list of best practices for its schools in navigating the many resources it provides for graduate student recruitment. Firstly, it urges faculty to request information and materials before giving a lecture, research presentation, or a specific recruitment trip.⁷¹ Secondly, the graduate school is able to assist departments in sponsoring webinars throughout all phases of the admission cycle. Lastly, the dean of the graduate school provides a Fund for Student Recruitment in an effort to assist department in "bringing in their best and brightest prospective students each year."⁷² This fund allows departments to provide travel and lodging arrangements for accepted students. Beyond these three overarching instructions, UGA's Graduate School also provides department-

⁶⁹ "Faculty & Staff." The University of Georgia. http://www.grad.uga.edu/faculty_grad.html

⁷⁰ [1] "Recruitment Resources," Op. cit.

[2] "Graduate Student Recruitment Handbook for Faculty." The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/faculty/FacultyHandbook.pdf>

[3] "Faculty Data Reports." The University of Georgia. <http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/restricted/>

[4] "Enhance Your Department Website for Graduate Recruitment." The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/faculty/Recruitment/resource1.html>

[5] "Recruitment Plan Template." The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/faculty/RecruitmentPlanTemplate.docx>

[6] "Pipeline_Schools." The University of Georgia.

http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/pubs/Pipelines_Schools.xls

⁷¹ "Best Practices for Recruiting Graduate Students." The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/faculty/bestpractices.html>

⁷² Ibid.

specific recommendations, a guide to using institutional data, personalized marketing guidance, and suggestions for managing graduate admissions in an undergraduate culture.⁷³

The graduate school publishes a comprehensive “Graduate Student Recruitment Handbook for Faculty,” a 30-page resource that guides faculty through all aspects of the recruitment cycle.⁷⁴ The introductory portion of the manual provides department recruitment guides and plan templates after first encouraging readers to utilize the many types of department-specific data that the graduate department collects:

- Number of inquiries
- Source of information generating inquiry
- Number and types of responses sent to each inquiry
- Number of applicants
- Number accepted
- Number and type of correspondence after acceptance
- Number enrolled⁷⁵

The manual centers largely on communication strategies, emphasizing that “Students often commit to the first university who contacts and admits them.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, “students need an average of 5-7 contacts through email or phone before making an enrollment decision.”⁷⁷ Figure 2.5 summarizes some of the best practice recommendations found in this resource:

Figure 2.5: Effective Communication Processes for Graduate Student Recruitment

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION
Overall Recommendations	
Sustain ongoing and timely communication	Ongoing multi-modal communication with potential students at each stage of the recruitment process is a must. Call and email highly qualified candidates on a set schedule and answer inquiries quickly. The communication schedule should be distributed to recruitment volunteers.
Design an effective website	A department’s website is usually the first (and sometimes only) point of contact for potential students. Effective websites should be up to date and communicate detailed information about admissions, funding, research interests, as well as faculty, alumni, and student achievements.
Involve faculty, current students, and alumni in the recruitment process	Departments can develop a recruiting handbook and PowerPoint presentation as a resource for faculty, student, and alumni volunteers. The department can disseminate these resources to recruitment volunteers to ensure that the information communicated at each information session, seminar, and university visit is accurate and consistent.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Graduate Student Recruitment Handbook for Faculty.” The University of Georgia. <http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/faculty/FacultyHandbook.pdf>

⁷⁵ Bulleted items taken verbatim from: Ibid., p. 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION
Stage 1 of Recruitment	
Use professional networks and establish new ones	Departments can establish contacts with department heads at other institutions to generate a list of prospective students and exchange student referrals, especially since high quality undergraduates consult faculty at their undergraduate institution for recommendations about where to apply for graduate school.
Keep recruitment records	Create a tracking database to determine where successful students are from, how they found out about the department, and who their undergraduate advisors were.
Maintain registries of potential students	Departments can acquire lists of prospects in order to expand their pool of prospective students. Examples are the GRE search service, Council on Undergraduate Research, McNair Scholars, and Prospect 1000.
Attend recruitment fairs	Departments are encouraged to attend discipline-specific fairs.
Recruit current UGA undergraduates	The Graduate School highlights the recruitment of current undergraduate students as one of its most successful strategies. Departments are encouraged to provide high-achieving juniors and seniors with information about graduate studies. Faculty can also offer to serve as academic or research mentors for current students.
Stage 2 of Recruitment	
Sustain ongoing communication with admitted students	Assign faculty (especially potential advisors, the graduate coordinator, and department head), current students, and successful alumni to make contact with admitted students after the original offer is made. Respond to prospective students within 24 hours of a call or email.
Host an admitted students day or weekend	Invite admitted students to campus for a department visit. Departments can provide a department and University tour, time with current students and faculty, and other activities to promote the value of a graduate degree from UGA. Graduate School staff can also attend a portion of an admitted student day.
Communicate funding options	Clearly communicate funding options and procedures to admitted students.
Connect with admitted UGA undergraduates	Make a particular effort to contact admitted UGA undergraduate students, since this group is more likely to ultimately attend than other admitted groups.
Assess your recruitment practices	Survey students who were admitted into the program but did not enroll to determine why they did not enroll at UGA and at which university they decided to enroll. Likewise, survey students who do enroll to find out why they did enroll in the department. Departments can adjust their recruitment initiatives based on these answers.

Source: The University of Georgia⁷⁸

According to the most recently published recruitment schedule from 2012-2013, the Graduate School attends fairs, conferences, and information sessions at over 30 regional institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.⁷⁹ The Graduate School's fall 2014 recruitment schedule is

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 3-6.

⁷⁹ "Recruitment Schedule 2012-2013." The University of Georgia.
<http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/pubs/rec-schedule.pdf>

not yet available.⁸⁰ Finally, “campus visit” webinars hosted by the Graduate School or individual departments allow interested students to learn about UGA in an interactive forum without having to travel to campus.⁸¹

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Graduate School at UGA operates Flickr, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube accounts and links are available to prospective students on its contact page.⁸² As of March 2014, it had 1,155 Twitter followers and 716 likes on Facebook. The UGA Graduate Studies Flickr account is not actively maintained and has not been updated since 2012. The UGA Graduate School also maintains a LinkedIn page with 421 connections.

OTHER RECRUITING STRATEGIES

The Graduate School at UGA focuses a portion of its recruiting efforts specifically on minority and underrepresented student recruitment. In particular, the Graduate School has published an excerpt from the University of Minnesota’s recruitment toolkit, which was incorporated into UGA’s Graduate School Strategic Plan: best practices for the recruitment of underrepresented students.⁸³ It provides a comprehensive action-oriented guide for goal setting, identifying funding, developing a diversity-focused marketing plan, and engaging with prospective students. More specifically, recruiters should be educated about minority student demographics including their undergraduate institutions and geographic regions.⁸⁴ Engaging in partnership building with minority-serving institutions can help inform recruitment efforts and build trust with students. Recruiters should ask questions like “What does an underrepresented student see? What is appealing about our institution? What is our brand?”⁸⁵ Developing mentorships through summer research and campus visits is an effective way to connect with underrepresented potential students. Personal contact (rather than via the phone or email) and the coaching model “demonstrates intentionality about building a community of inclusivity in graduate programs.”⁸⁶

To support the recruitment of underrepresented students, UGA hosts the Future Scholars Visitation Program (FSVP) in the fall of each year. The FSVP invites high-achieving, underrepresented students to campus for three days to meet with administrators, faculty, and current graduate students. The FSVP also features various workshops about the admissions process, research, and funding opportunities. Participating students receive partial travel expenses, free lodging, meals, and an application fee waiver.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ “Recruitment Schedule.” The University of Georgia. <http://www.grad.uga.edu/outreach&diversity/schedule.html>

⁸¹ “Graduate Student Recruitment Handbook for Faculty,” Op. cit., p. 6.

⁸² “Connect With Us.” The University of Georgia. <http://www.grad.uga.edu/?1.1>

⁸³ “Best Practices for Recruiting Underrepresented Students.” The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/faculty/recruiting/Underrepresented.pdf>

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

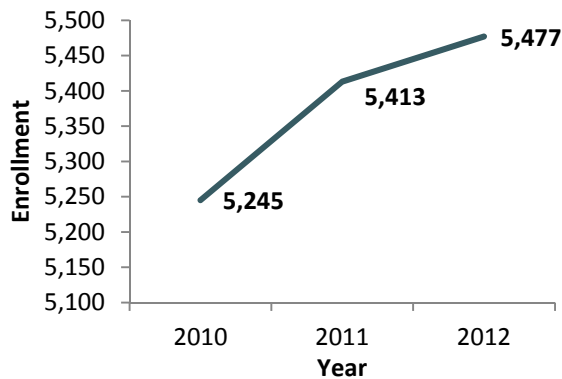
⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁷ “Graduate Student Recruitment Handbook for Faculty,” Op. cit., p. 6.

UGA also has a recruitment resource specifically tailored to increase minority STEM doctoral student enrollment.⁸⁸

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

Figure 2.6: UA Graduate Student Enrollment



Source: IPEDS

Located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the University of Alabama (UA) is a four year, public institution and in the fall of 2012, it had a graduate student enrollment of 5,477.⁸⁹ Nine colleges at UA operate master's programs: Arts & Sciences, Business, Communication, Education, Engineering, Engineering, Human Environmental Sciences, Nursing, and Social Work.⁹⁰ Unlike many of its peers, UA experienced consistent growth in its graduate student population between 2010 and 2012.

In the Graduate School Annual Report 2013, the Dean of the UA Graduate School remarks on UA's standing in the SEC and the country as a whole. Although the school was previously setting records in applications and enrollments that strongly contrasted with competitor schools, in 2013, UA experienced its first decline in graduate school applications and enrollment since 2005. The report also outlines the ways in which the Graduate School adjusted its recruiting practices in response to declining enrollment, which include new recruitment software tools and expanded funding opportunities for students.⁹¹

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The department of Graduate Admissions, Recruitment, Financial Aid, and Fellowship Awards is led by the Assistant Dean for Admissions and Recruitment, who is directly accountable to the Dean of the Graduate School. The department comprises eight staff members, including a director of enrollment management who supervises two graduate assistants.⁹²

⁸⁸ "The Program For Excellence And Equity In Research (Peer): A Vehicle To Recruit And Retain Minority STEM Doctoral Students." The University of Georgia.

<http://www.grad.uga.edu/forms&publications/faculty/recruiting/MinoritySTEM.pdf>

⁸⁹ "The University of Alabama." The National Center for Education Statistics.

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=the+university+of+alabama&s=all&id=100751#enrolmt>

⁹⁰ "Graduate School Academics." The University of Alabama. <http://graduate.ua.edu/academics/index.html>

⁹¹ "The Graduate School Annual Report 2013." The University of Alabama.

<http://graduate.ua.edu/publications/ar/2013/index.html>

⁹² "The University of Alabama Graduate School Organizational Chart." The University of Alabama.

<http://graduate.ua.edu/admin/orgchart.pdf>

OUTREACH AND MARKETING

Representatives from the UA Graduate School travel to graduate, professional, and career fairs; however, the schedule for 2014-2015 is not yet available.⁹³ In addition to off-site recruiting events, the Graduate School hosts a series of recruiting events on campus. For example, Preview Day provides prospective graduate students an opportunity to experience life as a graduate student on the UA campus.⁹⁴ After an opening address about “The Benefits of Investing in a Graduate Education,” each college presents smaller information sessions specific to their area of focus.⁹⁵ Presentations are followed by complementary practice GRE, GMAT, and LSAT exams.⁹⁶ Hosted in parallel with Preview day is McNair Visitation Day, a selective event held for McNair Scholars. The McNair Scholars Program is a federal program intended to increase the numbers of first-generation, low-income, and/or underrepresented students in graduate and PhD programs. These applicants are offered greater access to the university, through special morning and afternoon sessions as well as a campus tour, lunch with current students, and faculty and student panels on a variety of topics.⁹⁷

Beyond these events, students have continued access to the Graduate School. An academically diverse group of almost 40 current graduate students serve as Graduate Ambassadors, answering program-specific questions.⁹⁸ Each student provides a brief biography outlining their academic interests and personal background.⁹⁹ Additional graduate student profiles are available for several students of the Classes of 2000 through 2010. Prospective students are also encouraged to visit and tour campus beyond these events; however, the Graduate School does not appear to operate tours discretely from the undergraduate admissions department.¹⁰⁰

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Graduate School operates Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts. As of March 2014, it had 1,298 Facebook followers and Facebook is primarily used to publicize related news articles, university rankings, and Graduate School events.¹⁰¹ There is a noticeable student presence on the page: students occasionally use the platform to make student life related announcements and each week a student is profiled on the page. Its Twitter account has 652 followers and plays largely the same role, however with less student activity and more

⁹³ “Graduate School Recruitment Events.” The University of Alabama.

<http://gradsystem.aa.ua.edu/calendar/listitems.aspx?gid=3&dl=-1&type=2>

⁹⁴ “Graduate Events and Activities.” The University of Alabama. <http://graduate.ua.edu/events/>

⁹⁵ “Preview Day.” The University of Alabama. <http://graduate.ua.edu/events/previewday.html>

⁹⁶ Graduate Events and Activities,” Op. cit.

⁹⁷ “McNair Visitation Day.” The University of Alabama. <http://graduate.ua.edu/events/mcnairvisit.html>

⁹⁸ “List of Graduate Ambassador.” The University of Alabama.

<http://gradsystem.aa.ua.edu/admin/programs.aspx?type=ambassadors>

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ “Recruitment and Outreach.” The University of Alabama. <http://graduate.ua.edu/recruitment.html>

¹⁰¹ “University of Alabama – Graduate School.” Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/uagraduateschool?ref=br_tf

interaction with other UA organizations.¹⁰² The Graduate School's LinkedIn page has 196 followers.¹⁰³

OTHER RECRUITING STRATEGIES

As previously mentioned, the Graduate School has made recent, significant changes to its graduate recruiting efforts, implementing a "more active approach."¹⁰⁴ In 2013, these changes spanned across both recruitment and application review practices, however, most notably, the university implemented a customer relationship management (CRM) program called *Talisma*, which allows for more deliberate messaging tactics to prospective students as well as a more informed evaluation of overall recruiting effectiveness. The new program interfaces with the university's pre-existing program, which eased the transition. A new online application system increases the ability of departments to track strong applications early. Additionally, UA has subscribed to the Graduate Record Examination Search Service (GRESS) and will purchase the names of students who have taken the GRE, but have not sent their scores to UA, increasing their recruitment opportunities.¹⁰⁵

In the past, UA has compiled and published several Annual Recruitment Plans and Outcomes.¹⁰⁶ The most recent report of this kind was conducted for the 2007-2008 academic year, however, the most recent outcome report is available for the 2004-2005 year. This edition summarized the recruitment efforts across the following themes, which indicate the components of UA's recruiting strategy:

- Off-Campus Events, On-Campus Events, and Student Contacts
- Recruitment Travel and Events
- International Recruitment Activities
- Minority Recruitment
- Print Materials, Direct Mail, E-Communication, and Office Recruitment Activities
- Web and other Electronic Activities
- Collaboration Among Graduate and Undergraduate Schools
- Integration between Departmental and Graduate Schools
- The Use of Graduate Students as Recruiters
- Financial Support
- Applications and Enrollment Outcomes¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² "UA Graduate School." Twitter. <https://twitter.com/UAGradSchool>

¹⁰³ "The University of Alabama Graduate School." LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-university-of-alabama-graduate-school>

¹⁰⁴ "Significant Changes in Application Management and Recruitment Strategies." The University of Alabama. http://graduate.ua.edu/council/minutes/gc20130226_handout_2.pdf

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

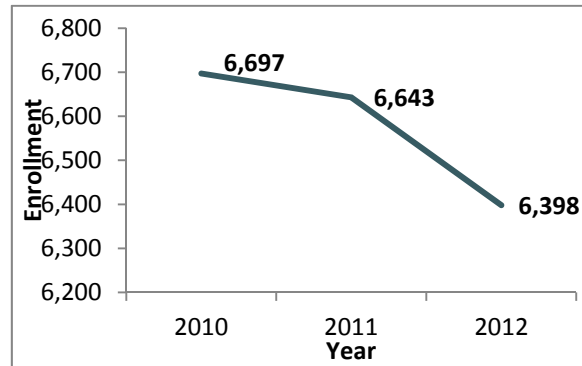
¹⁰⁶ "Graduate School Publications." The University of Alabama. <http://graduate.ua.edu/publications/index.html>

¹⁰⁷ "Recruitment Activities Report." The University of Alabama, 2005, p. 2. http://graduate.ua.edu/publications/recruit/2004_2005_activities.pdf

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

The University of Oklahoma (OU) is located in Norman, Oklahoma, a suburb of Oklahoma City. This public, four-year institution had a graduate enrollment of 6,398 in fall 2012.¹⁰⁸ Over the past three years OU has experienced declining graduate student enrollment, and this decline was most apparent between 2011 and 2012. Eleven colleges at OU operate graduate level programs: Architecture, Arts & Sciences, Atmospheric & Geographic Sciences, Business, Earth & Energy, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, Journalism, Liberal Studies, and International Studies.¹⁰⁹ Dual and accelerated degrees are also available. In addition to these programs, the Graduate College offers Interdisciplinary and Professional Master of Arts or Science degrees.

Figure 2.7 OU Graduate Student Enrollment



Source: IPEDS

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The graduate student recruitment organizational structure at OU is largely decentralized. The Graduate College is composed of 17 staff members, who primarily focus on current students, acting as academic counselors, financial coordinators, and managerial associates.¹¹⁰ One position is entitled “Project Manager & University Student Programs Specialist II.” This individual is responsible for “coordinating special projects and events designed to promote graduate student recruitment, retention, and graduation.”¹¹¹ He also manages other graduate-related projects and has no apparent support staff. Although the OU has a separate Office of Graduate Admissions, information about this office or its director is not otherwise widely publicized.¹¹² The Graduate College distributes recruitment responsibilities to department-specific liaisons and directors, by way of a contact directory for prospective students.¹¹³ The department of philosophy has a specific director of Graduate Admissions who fields inquiries from prospective students.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ “University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus.” The National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=university+of+oklahoma&s=all&id=207500>

¹⁰⁹ “Academic Programs.” The University of Oklahoma. https://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/current/programs/norman_campus.html

¹¹⁰ “Graduate College Staff.” The University of Oklahoma. <http://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/faculty/staff.html>

¹¹¹ “Clay Wesley.” The University of Oklahoma. http://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/faculty/staff/clay_wesley.html

¹¹² “The Office of Graduate Admissions.” The University of Oklahoma. <http://www.ou.edu/content/admissions/graduate.html>

¹¹³ “Department Contacts.” The University of Oklahoma. http://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/faculty/departments_contacts.html

¹¹⁴ “Graduate Programs – OU Department of Philosophy.” The University of Oklahoma. <http://www.ou.edu/ouphil/grad/info.html>

OUTREACH AND MARKETING

Similar to UA, OU also has selected a group of graduate students to act as Graduate College Student Ambassadors. In comparison to their UA counterparts, OU Ambassadors are smaller in number and come from a less diverse academic background.¹¹⁵ However it is apparently more structured as it has a logo and a mission: “to promote the highest standards in academic achievement, social communication, recruitment, retention, and quality of life for all graduate students at the University of Oklahoma.”¹¹⁶ On a day-to-day basis, Ambassadors lead tours for prospective graduate students, which can include their desired academic department.¹¹⁷

The admission site for prospective students provides limited information to prospective graduate students, when compared to other universities. The welcome page serves more as an intermediary source for admission contacts in specific departments, available funding opportunities, and frequently-asked-questions.¹¹⁸ Students may request additional information from the OU by completing an information request form.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Graduate College at OU does not appear to have either general social media accounts or those dedicated to prospective graduate student outreach. Individual organizations within the College do have a social media presence, however. The Graduate Student Life Team operates Facebook and Twitter accounts, with 1,270 likes and 360 followers, respectively. These accounts mainly promote events and campaigns organized by the Student Life Team.¹¹⁹ Additionally, The Graduate Parent Program, a networking and support organization for graduate students with children, operates a Facebook account, which has 165 likes.¹²⁰

OTHER RECRUITING STRATEGIES

There is strong support for graduate student life at OU. The Graduate Student Life Team is comprised of six staff members who “connect, equip, and encourage graduate students at the University of Oklahoma.”¹²¹ The team recently opened a facility designated to provide its graduate students a space to “unwind, work, and meet.” The Graduate Student Life Center contains recreational space, reclining chairs and couches, a large television with

¹¹⁵ “Graduate College Student Ambassadors Program.” The University of Oklahoma.

https://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/current/people_organizations/graduate_ambassadors.html

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ “Prospective Students.” The University of Oklahoma. <https://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/prospective.html>

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ [1] “OU Graduate Student Life.” Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/ougradcollege>

[2] “OU Grad Student Life.” Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ougradcollege>

¹²⁰ [1] “Graduate Parent Programs.” The University of Oklahoma.

<https://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/gsl/gpp.html>

[2] “OU Graduate Parent Programs (GPP).” Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/OUGPP>

¹²¹ “Meet the Graduate Student Life Team.” The University of Oklahoma.

https://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/gsl/gsl_team.html

cable and several of the newest entertainment technologies.¹²² There are also several study areas and a large conference room, with a portable multimedia center. The Graduate School sponsors a series of events such as Graduate Student Welcome and Appreciation Weeks as well as more creative events like an Etiquette Dinner and a couponing class.¹²³

¹²² "Graduate Student Life Center." The University of Oklahoma.
<http://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/gsl/center.html>

¹²³ <http://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/aud/gsl/programming.html>

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