CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

Mitigating the Impact of the 2026-2027 Enrollment Cliff

Strategic Marketing Solutions for Community Colleges

October | 2024

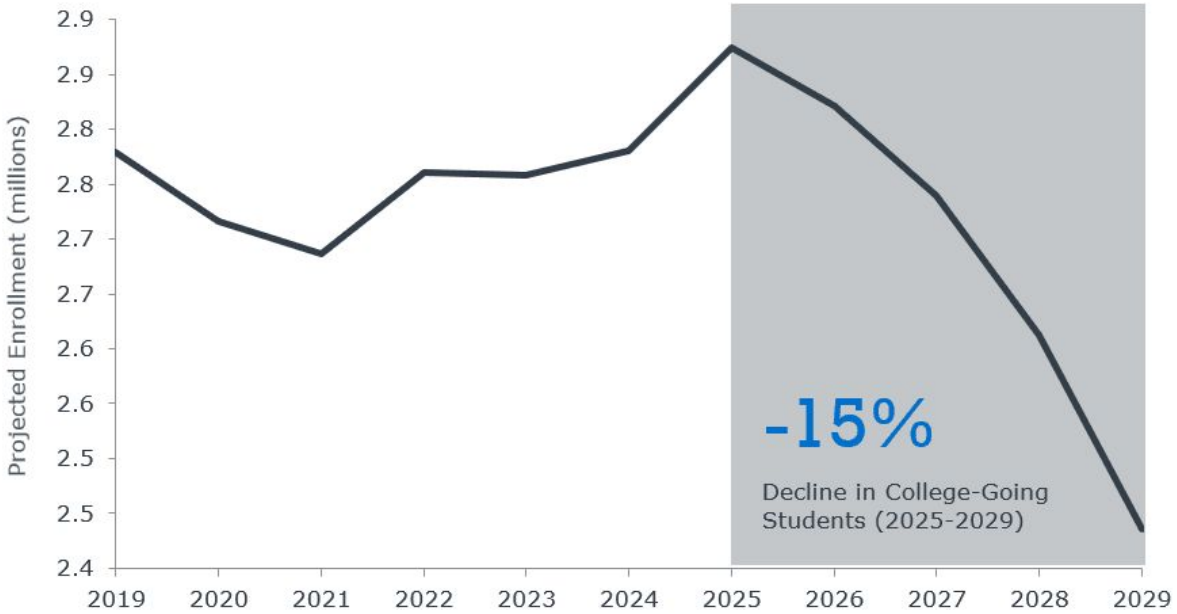
Presenter

Kristy Phillips, Ed.D.
Senior Director, Client Success
kphillips@claruscorporation.com

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

Enrollment Projected to Drop Sharply After 2025

Forecasted Number of College-Going Students in the U.S. (millions), by Year of High School Graduation

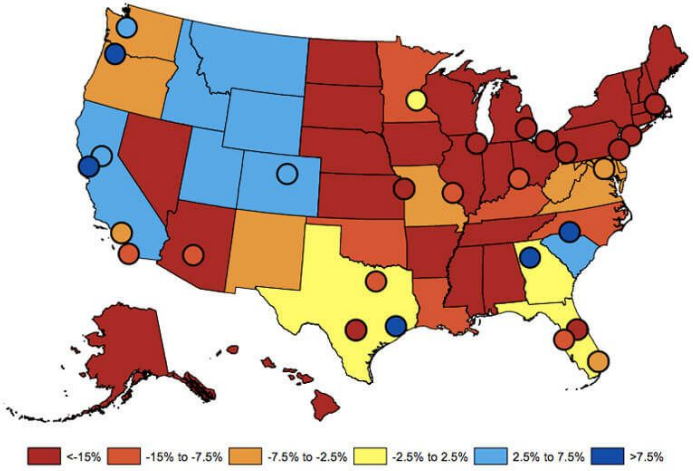


~3.5M

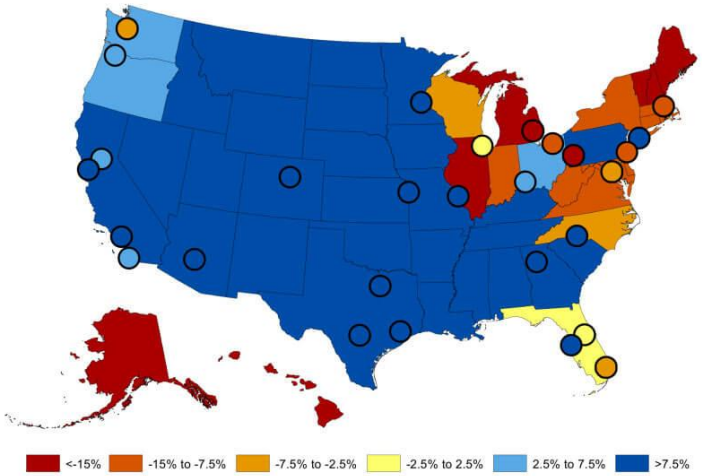
Peak of high-school graduates sometime near 2025.

(The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2024)

Regional four-year college enrollment between 2012 and 2029



Elite four-year college enrollment between 2012 and 2029



Today

- Successfully targeting non-traditional students and new target markets
- Expanding online program enrollment
- Expanding community and employer relationships
- Enhancing dual enrollment conversion
- Capitalizing on existing student data

Successfully targeting non-traditional students and new target markets

~37M

18-64 year olds with Some College, No Credential (SCNC).

(NSC, 2024)

+9%

SCNC student re-enrollment increase in the 2023 academic year.

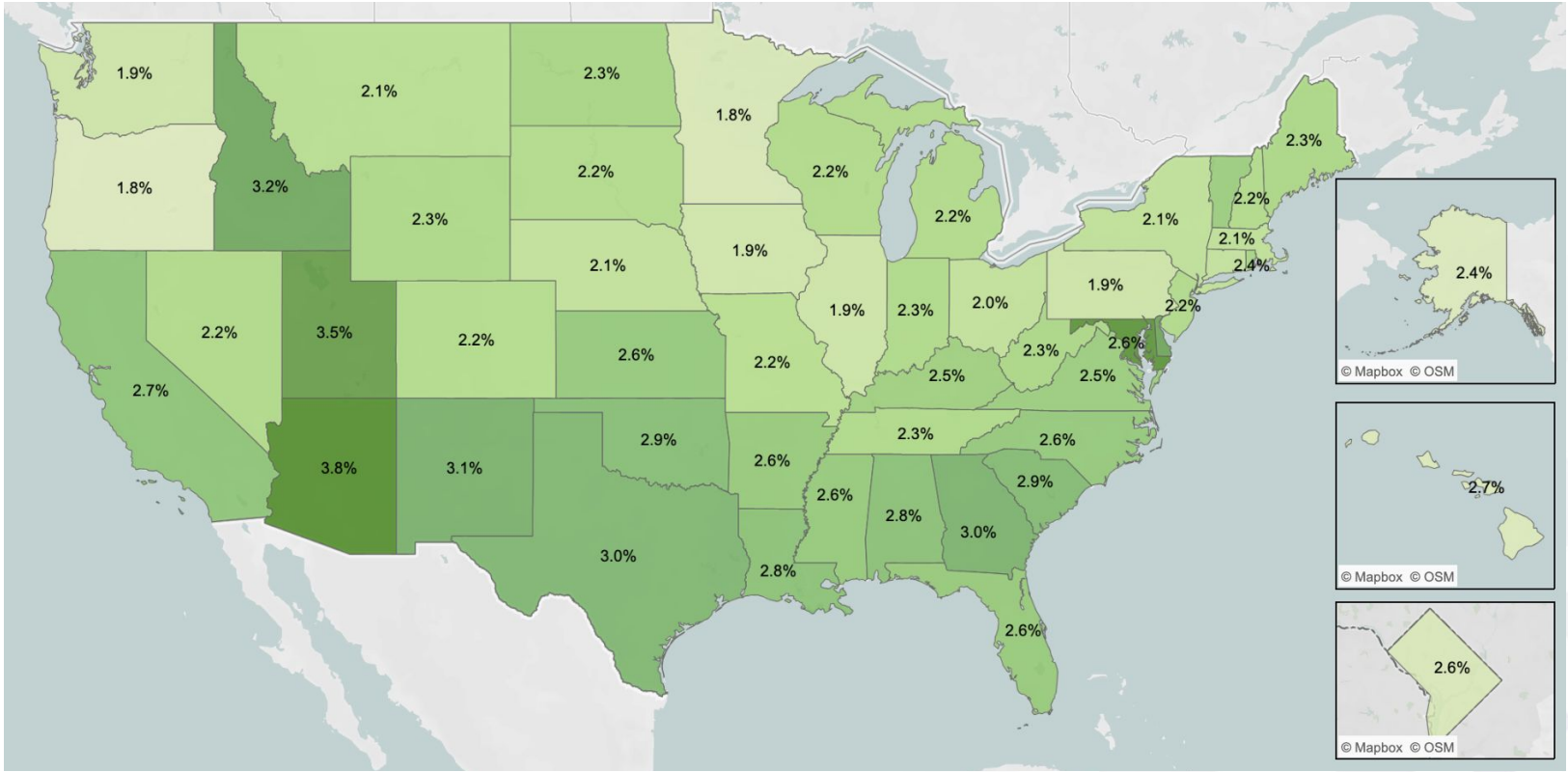
(NSC, 2024)

52.6%

SCNC re-enrollees returned to the same school.

(NSC, 2024)

Re-Enrollment Rates by State



Audience Development & Targeting

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

- ★ Audience-centric approach
- ★ Persona building
- ★ Your Data

Traits of an Adult Learner

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Typically 25-54 years old
- Working, looking for career advancement or skill enhancement
- SCNC
- Have a degree but are seeking additional qualifications

MOTIVATIONS

- Improving job prospects
- Career changers
- Complete unfinished education
- Increase earning potential
- Job market changes

BEHAVIORAL TRAITS

- Desire flexible learning
- Often need additional student support to help them navigate their college journey
- The decision to enroll is often influenced by cost, time commitment, and return on investment (ROI)

Audience Development & Targeting

Your Data

- Your Historical Student Enrollment Data
- Defining Your Audience and Its Characteristics (working with faculty)
- Your Google Analytics and Google Search Console

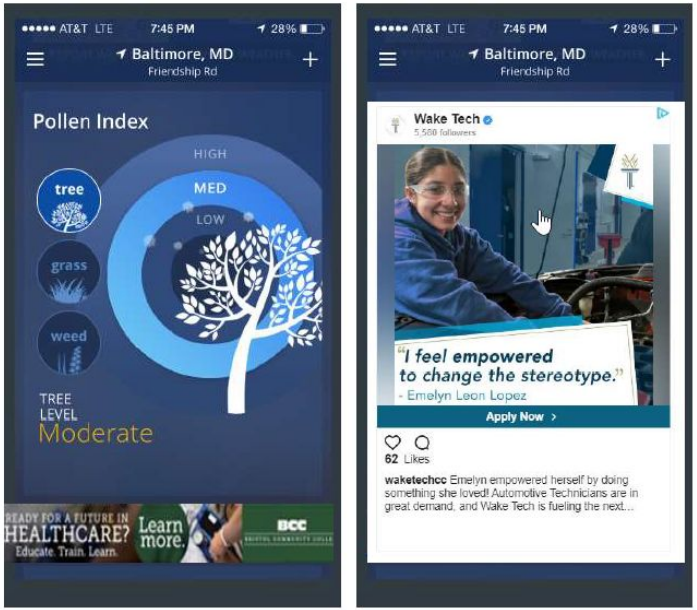
Channel/External Data

- DV360 signals/audience building
- Google Keyword Planner
- LinkedIn and Meta's audience builders
- AudioGo and Spotify audience data
- SEMRush, Screaming Frog, Answer the Public

Partner Data

- CollegeAPP
- AudienceDesigner by Semcasting (ADS)
- Simpli.fi Audience Builder
- WebID Audience Development
- Carnegie Clarity Audience Development

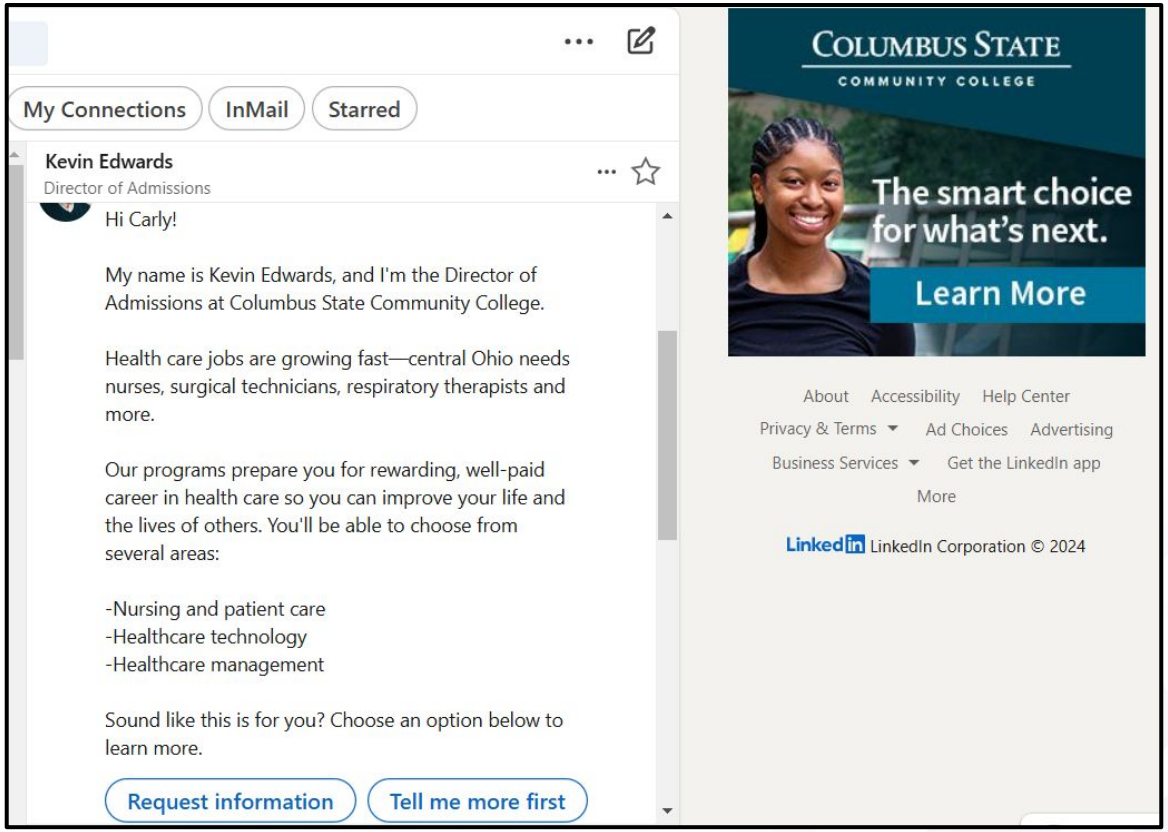
The Power of Programmatic



- Provides the broadest access to your audience.
- Go beyond demographic data:
  - Thousands of lifestyle categories (e.g., sports, pets, food & drink, parenting, hobbies).
- Real Time Bidding (RTB) allows us to target an individual when and where they have an interest.
  - Ads appear in apps and websites that accept advertising.
- Ad placement across digital devices (e.g., desktops, laptops, tablets, mobile devices, Connected TV).

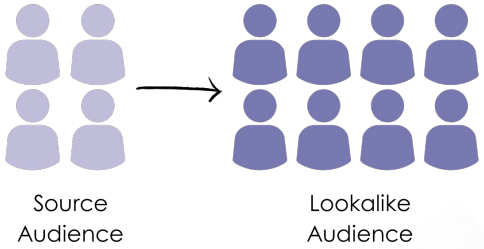
Meta's Advanced Targeting Options

LinkedIn Conversation Ads



Lookalike Audiences

- **Target Efficiency**: Reach prospective students similar to current enrollees
- **Cost Savings**: Focus budget on likely-to-convert audiences
- **Higher Conversions**: Boost engagement and application rates
- **Regional Scalability**: Expand outreach within your service area
- **Enhanced Personalization**: Tailor content to resonate with target demographics
- **Data-Driven Insights**: Leverage existing student data to optimize campaigns



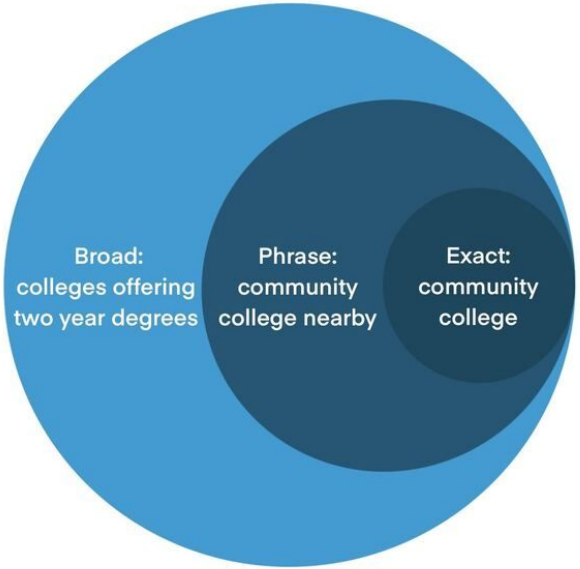
Key Messages in Lookalike Audience Campaigns

- **Student Success Stories**: Showcase how current students have succeeded in completing stackable credentials, transitioning to jobs, or advancing in their careers.
- **Career-Relevant Education**: Emphasize programs that align with in-demand industries, showing that the current student population has seen success in these fields.
- **Flexible Learning Options**: Highlight online, hybrid, or flexible class formats to attract adult learners or working professionals.
- **Financial Aid and Support**: Promote the availability of financial aid and scholarships for stackable credentials, reducing perceived financial barriers for potential students.

Keywords: The Backbone of PPC

Keywords are relevant words or phrases added to a campaign that capture the intent and meaning of your prospective students' searches.

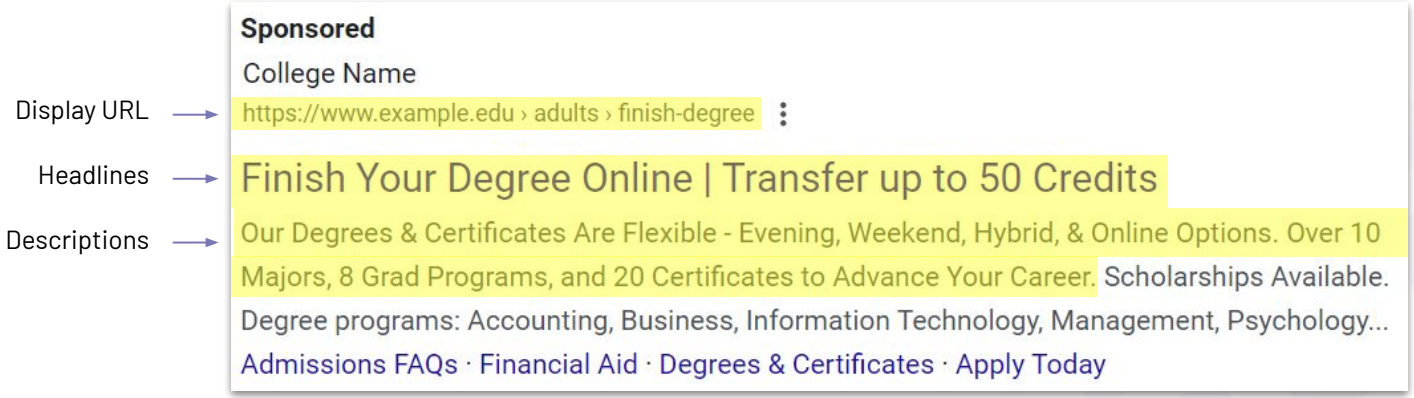
- Google's **Keyword Planner** provides historical and forecasted data to identify relevant keywords.
- Different **match types** give you control over how closely a search must match your keywords.
- **Negative keywords** ensure that your ads don't show on irrelevant searches.



Matching search terms for the keyword *community college*

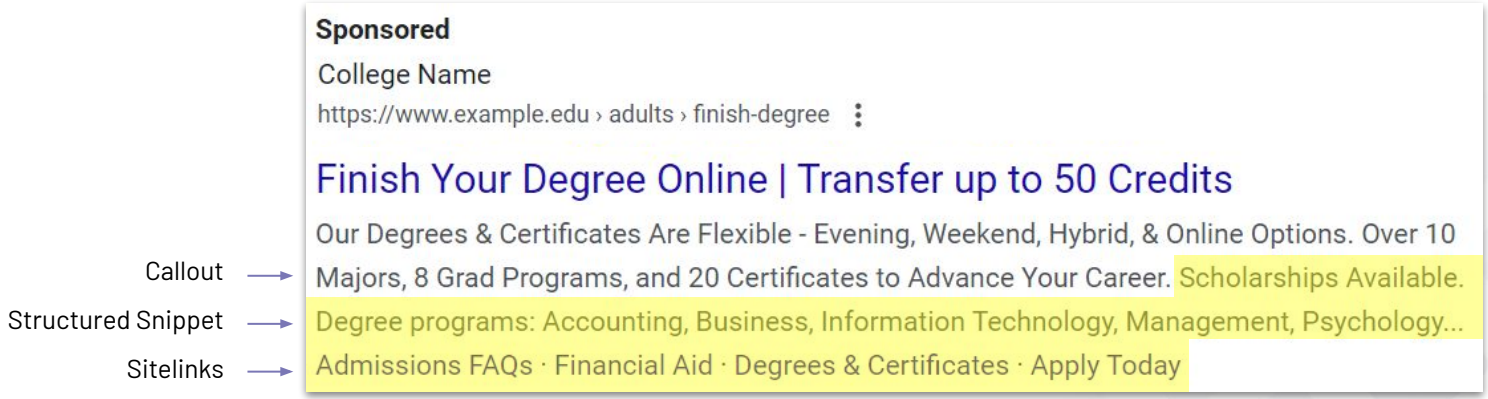
PPC - Responsive Search Ads

Responsive search ads allow you to provide multiple headlines and descriptions, which Google will dynamically combine to best match copy to each user.



PPC Ads - Ad Extensions

Ad extensions provide supplemental information to help users make informed decisions and allow you to maximize your presence on the search engine results page.



Expanding online program enrollment

- Primarily online institutions (POIs) are increasingly a sector for Some College, No Credential re-enrollees.

- In 2020, only 25% of continuing students and 19% of new students thought online courses were better quality, but now those numbers have risen to 37% and 29%, respectively.

Highlight Online Offerings

- Many community colleges are continuing to offer at least half of their courses online in response to student demand.

UPCEA®

UPCEA 2022 Marketing Survey

For paid social media advertising, marketing departments most commonly utilize:

- Facebook (94%)
- LinkedIn (78%)
- Instagram (74%)
- Twitter (38%)
- YouTube (38%)
- TikTok (10%)

The most effective marketing channel:

- Paid search (24%)
- Google (24%)
- Email marketing (11%)
- Organic search (11%)

Expanding community and employer relationships

Expanding community and employer relationships

- **Offer Continuing Education and Professional Development Programs:** Upskilling Opportunities; Credentialing and Micro-Credentials
- **Increase Flexibility in Program Delivery:** Hybrid and Online Programs; Stackable Credentials
- **Develop Targeted Partnerships with Local Employers:** Tailored Training Programs; Employer Advisory Boards; Internships and Apprenticeships
- **Use Data to Identify Key Sectors and Employers:** Labor Market Analysis; Student and Employer Feedback

Applied Bachelor's Degrees & Hireability

- **High Job Placement:** 80-90% of graduates secure employment in their field within 6 months (CCBA).
- **Increased Earnings:** Graduates earn 30% more than those with an associate degree in the same field (AACC).
- **Employer Demand:** 60% of employers value practical skills from applied bachelor's programs (NACE).
- **Program Growth:** 200% increase in community colleges offering applied bachelor's degrees in the last decade.

Jim Fong
Chief Research Officer
at UPCEA

"I am doing some research on the adult learner economics and seeing less and less disposable income which I think impacts whether or not a person seeks a degree in the future. They may however consider stackable credit certificates on their way to a master's degree. Ditto on undergraduate as well. What can further enhance this is noncredit to credit pathways."

LinkedIn

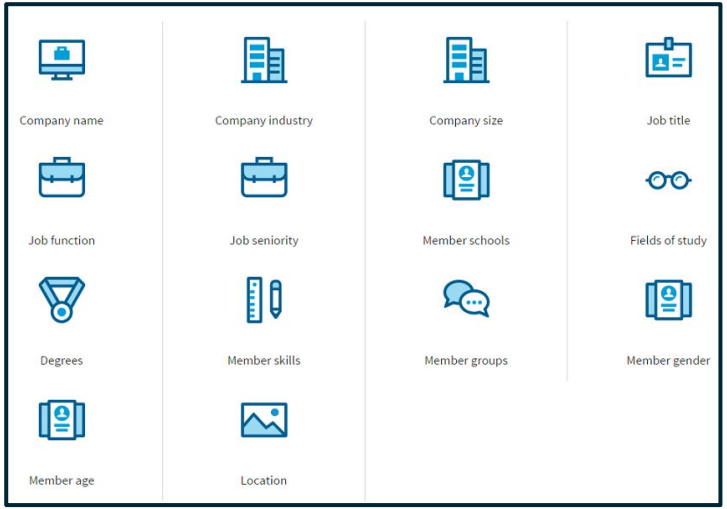
CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

- Precise targeting to reach execs who are key decision makers in their organizations.
- Segment by Industry, Company Name or Size, or use your own data to model audiences.
- Rich reporting to help you gauge how your efforts are engaging your target audience.

LinkedIn's Advanced Targeting Options

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

LinkedIn



Who is your target audience?

Include people who have **ANY** of the following attributes:

Job Functions
Accounting, Administrative, Business Development, Purchasing, Consulting, Entrepreneurship, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Healthcare Services, Marketing, Operations, Media and Communication, Product Management, Quality Assurance, Sales, Support

AND also have **ANY** of the following attributes:

Degrees
Bachelor's Degree, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Business Administration

Who is your target audience?

Include people who have **ANY** of the following attributes:

Company (Current Jobs)
Microsoft, Intel Corporation, Cisco, Meta, Goldman Sachs, Google, Tesla, Amazon, Netflix, Spotify, Salesforce, HP, Twitter

OR Job Functions
Information Technology

AND also have **ANY** of the following attributes:

Member Traits
Job Seekers, Open to Education, Career Changers

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

Enhancing dual enrollment conversion

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

87%

Average High School Graduation Rate in the U.S.

(NCES, 2024)

1/3

Community college dual enrollment students returning for at least one term to the same community college in the first year after high school.

(CCRC, 2024)

While **36%** of dual enrollment students who enrolled in college within the first year after high school completed a bachelor's in four-years, only **28%** of low-income, **29%** of Black, and **25%** of Hispanic dual enrollees did so.

(CCRC, 2024)

Enhance Marketing and Outreach

Campaigns aimed at high school students, parents, and influencers.

Showcase the benefits of dual enrollment (cost savings, exposure to college-level coursework, accelerated degree completion).

Utilize addressable geofencing, geolocation targeting, social media, email newsletters, and local community events to reach potential dual enrollment students and their families.

Snapchat

TikTok

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

Capitalizing on existing student data

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

5-25x

Industry cost estimates of attracting a new student verses retaining an existing one.

Audience Targeting

Utilize your student data and analytics to understand who is most likely to be interested in stackable credentials.

Age: Mid-Career Professionals

Industry: Healthcare, IT, Manufacturing

Geographic Location: Target industry areas with high demand for particular industries

Implementation Timeline

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

Your Marketing Plan Checklist

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

- [x] Enrollment, ROI, Campaign Goal Alignment
- [x] Data Gathering and Research Execution
- [x] Media Plan with Forecasted Performance Metrics
- [x] Lead Gen and Conversion Focused Channel Strategy
- [x] Campaign and Program Specific Landing Page or Microsite Development
- [x] Creative, Messaging, and Ad Development
- [x] Direct Integrations with Your CRM
- [x] Custom Website Interactions Setup
- [x] Pacing & Performance Reporting and Optimization

CLARUS
A CARNEGIE COMPANY

Questions?

Thank you!

claruscorporation.com
carnegiehighered.com