Online Program Experience (OPX)

The Unbundled, End-to-End Solution to Amplify University Capabilities

April 2025

CARNEGIE

A Few Starting Details

+ 45-minute sessions, including time for questions and conversation at the end

+ Session recordings shared with attendees via email at later this week

+ Use the Zoom Chat and Q+A panels to engage with attendees and submit questions

+ Need help? Use Whova's "Ask Organizers Anything" section in the Community Board or email us at **conferences@carnegiehighered.com**

Presenter

Dean Gething

EVP of Online Program Experience (OPX)

Archetype Persona

The Decisive and Humorous Dynamo

17 years in higher ed marketing and enrollment strategy

2007 - Deltak > Wiley > AP > Risepoint

2015 - Founding Partner Sextant Marketing

2024 - Carnegie

> **"No institution today can be without an online strategy, and all institutions need flexible service models fine-tuned to their particular needs and focused on the success of their students."**

Dr. Paul LeBlanc
Former President of Southern New Hampshire University and Carnegie Board Member

Agenda

Challenges Facing Higher Ed Marketers

1

A Therapy Session

Who Can Relate?

" We have been forced to cut back significantly in our spending, but we are constantly asked to do more— and criticized for not being more visible. There is a lack of understanding of how marketing can positively impact enrollment and visibility.

— ANONYMOUS CMO FROM A SMALL SIZED INSTITUTION

Who Can Relate?

If there's a single area of alignment in this year's data, it's this: nearly every higher ed CMO in the US feels a pronounced degree of pressure from leadership, with inadequate budget and staffing resources to meet those very same demands.

And while budgets are increasing incrementally, the general feeling from many CMOs is that these gains are slowly correcting a long history of underfunding, rather than serving as strategic funding that matches existing or forward-facing leadership expectations.
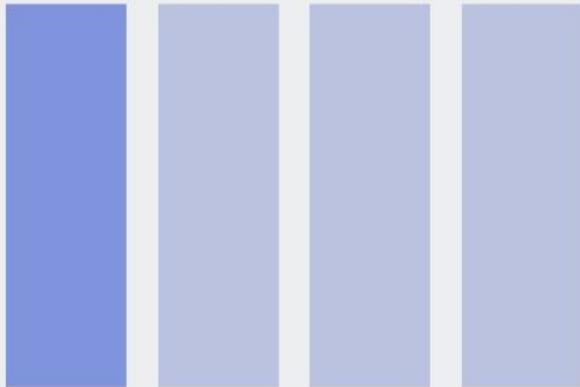
LARGE SCHOOL

"While our budget has grown under new leadership, it was really underfunded prior to that. We are making up for those gaps. The institutional goals are aspirational and will require a larger budget for marketing and communications to accomplish those goals."

— ANONYMOUS CMO

SMALL SCHOOL

"Wanting a super yacht for the price of a canoe."

— ANONYMOUS CMO

LARGE SCHOOL

"While we have seen significant increase in marketing budgets year over year for the last three years, we still need significant investment to reach the appropriate threshold of percentage of annual revenue."
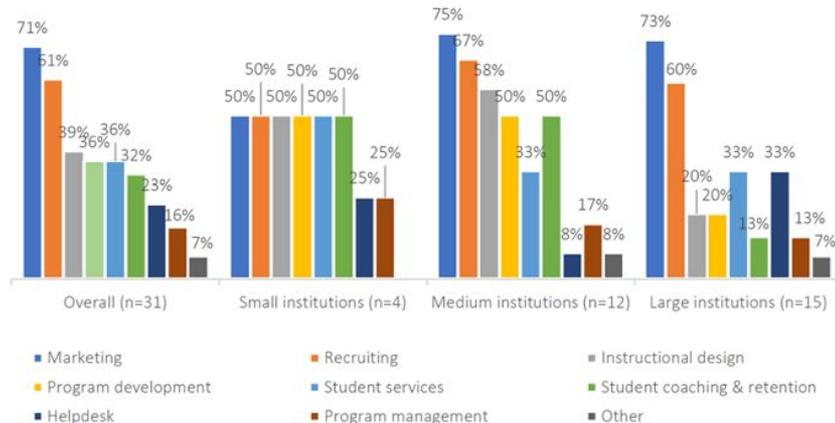
— ANONYMOUS CMO

1 in 4 CMOs

say their institution's investment in marketing is appropriate given the expectations of the marketing department and has the budget/staff needed to meet the expectations of leadership.

Questions

+ What is your in-house vs outsource model?
  - Completely in-house team
  - 1-2 Outsource partners (brand agency, media agency etc)
  - More than 2 partners
  - We work with an OPM
+ How many of you are dealing with flat or declining budgets vs last year?
+ How many of you are executing with the same or smaller staff vs last year?

Marketing Plan

Marketing Budget

Expected ROI

Figure 51: Which of the following is your online education unit using outside vendors for? Please select all that apply. By Institution Size

Legend:
- Marketing
- Recruiting
- Instructional design
- Program development
- Student services
- Student coaching & retention
- Helpdesk
- Program management
- Other

Questions

Who feels Marketing and Enrollment are on the same page?

+ Both know and agree on the enrollment goal?

+ Both understand and agree on the budget, lead goals and conversion rate expectations to achieve the enrollment goal?

+ There is a holistic, shared marketing and enrollment plan we are working from?

+ We have the right metrics and reporting to measure success?

Macro Industry Trends

+ Keeping up with rapidly advancing technology

+ Population Trends & the dreaded enrollment cliff

+ Ultra competitive online market
  - Large Nationals WGU, SNHU, ASU
  - Over 300 OPM or similar partnerships (Holon IQ 2022)

+ Increasing savvy and stealthy consumer

+ Apathy towards the value of higher education

+ Political environment is uncertain
  - DOE restructure/elimination
  - Future of Incentive Compensation Ban / NegReg / TCPA
  - Looming recession (higher ed is typically counter-cyclical but will that be the case this time)

AI IN DIGITAL MARKETING...

What is OPX?

Online Program Experience

+ Considers marketing and enrollment as an integrated system with shared responsibility for achieving enrollment growth
+ Media performance with greater accountability to enrollment outcomes
+ Designed to give institutions greater transparency and ownership vs OPM's
+ Strategic partnership focus on long-term, measurable growth

What is OPX?

A holistic and data driven approach to growing online programs through an optimized system of **interconnected services** that are designed to enhance operational efficiency, elevate the learner's experience, and optimize institutional outcomes. These services span across **critical domains**, such as data insights, strategic planning, branding, creative strategy, systems automation, integrated media, and student recruitment and retention.

We help institutions succeed online by building **internal capacity and expertise** through best-in class **unbundled solutions** wrapped around your current capabilities, processes and technology. This includes a team of **performance focused** OPX enrollment experts and functional specialists operating as an extension of your team in true partnership.

Solutions are flexible, scalable and operate with full transparency.

Data Insights

Strategic Planning

Systems + Automation

Online Education Experience

Branding + Creative

Student Recruitment + Retention

Integrated Media

Customized Flexible Solutions

Start anywhere and scale services as needs arises

+ Digital Dashboards
+ Campaign Performance Reporting
+ Media Attribution
+ Enrollment and Revenue Analysis

+ CRM Implementation & Optimization
+ Analytics
+ SIS/LLM Integration

+ Admissions Support
+ Email & Automation
+ Coaching & Retention

Data Insights

Strategic Planning

Systems + Automation

Your U

Branding + Creative

Student Recruitment + Retention

Integrated Media

+ Strategic Enrollment Planning
+ Staff & Resource Planning
+ Market Research & Competitive Analysis
+ Program Analysis
+ Financial Pro Forma

+ Brand Strategy
+ Brand Research/Personas
+ Brand Creative

+ Omni-channel media strategy
+ Audience Segmentation
+ Content Marketing & Personalization
+ Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
+ Website UX/UI

Strategic Planning

# Key Concept:
The Flipped Funnel Approach

Begin at the end, with the enrollment goal. Utilize historic data to forecast the required media investment and lead volume required to achieve the goal. Then, strategize and model opportunities to improve funnel performance such as:

+ Optimized media mix
+ Website engagement and SEO
+ Audit/optimize nurturing and automation
+ Admissions staffing, process, and technology
+ Creative and content

The final product is a roadmap of nimble strategies

And KPI's to ensure you reach your enrollment goal

as cost efficiently as possible.

Students
$ Cost Per Student

Internal Performance Metrics

Optimized Marketing Mix

Strategic Planning
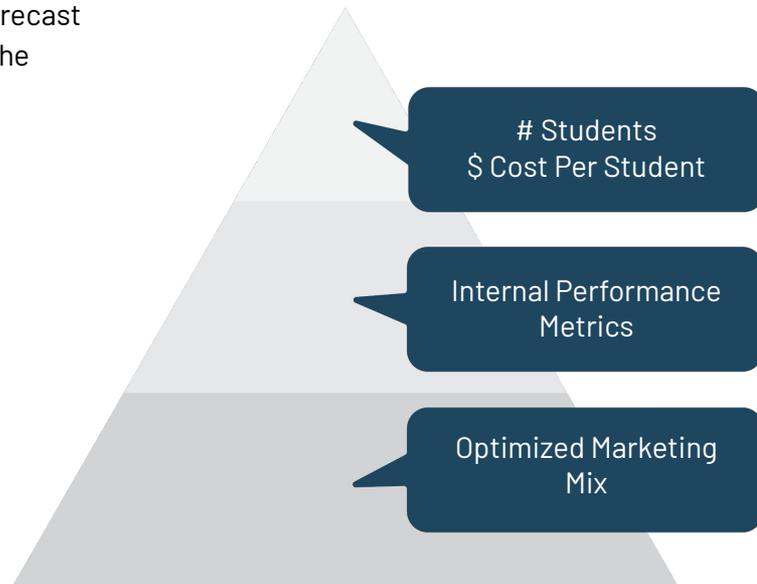
The Flipped Funnel in Action

1 This flipped funnel table represents an analysis and enrollment plan developed for new client onboarding. This was for 2 related online programs with 2+ years of history.

2 Through our discovery and planning process we developed an enrollment growth plan combined media optimization strategies and increased media spend. (Forecast)

3 We then identified how modest improvements in the enrollment funnel would increase efficiency (Lead to Enroll) and reduce the forecasted media spend and lead volume (Applied Funnel Economics).

Estimated Performance	Historical 2023 -2024		Forecast		Applied Funnel Economics	
	Program A	Program B	Program A	Program B	Program A	Program B
Leads	2,287	2,384	2,957	2,980	2,720	2,708
Apps	473	368	612	460	590	444
Apps Complete	265	205	343	256	336	252
Admit	140	111	181	139	181	139
Enroll	58	60	75	75	75	75
Leads to Apps	20.7%	15.4%	20.7%	15.4%	21.7%	16.4%
Apps to Apps Complete	56.0%	55.7%	56.0%	55.7%	57.0%	56.7%
Apps Complete to Admit	52.8%	54.1%	52.8%	54.1%	53.8%	55.1%
Admit to Enroll	41.4%	54.1%	41.4%	54.1%	41.4%	54.1%
App Complete to Enroll	12.3%	16.3%	12.3%	16.3%	12.7%	16.9%
Lead to Enrolled	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.8%	2.8%
Media Budget	$ 385,000	$ 385,000	$ 443,599	$ 447,000	$ 408,071	$ 406,205
TOTAL COST	$ 385,000	$ 385,000	$443,599	$447,000	$408,071	$406,205
Total Cost per Lead (CPL)	$168	$161	$ 150	$ 150	$ 150	$ 150
Total Cost per App Comp (CPA)	$2,750	$3,468	$ 2,450	$ 3,222	$ 2,254	$ 2,928
Total Cost per Start (CPS)	$6,638	$6,417	$ 5,915	$ 5,960	$ 5,441	$ 5,416

3

How Do I Get Started?

Key considerations for Online Program success

Getting Started

+ **Data First**

Ensure your CRM data and reporting is accurate, timely and informative. At a minimum last click UTM data is passing and enrollment progress can be attributed to lead source, campaign and keyword. Admissions progress (app started, app complete, admit, enroll) are updated in real-time.

+ **Set Expectations**

As we've discussed the online market is competitive and enrollment goals need to be realistic, attainable and data-driven. Success will require resources and more importantly university-wide buyin. Growth will take time.

+ **Do the Research**

Spend time getting to know your students, competitors, and programs. Adult learners differ from traditional learners in terms of motivations, blockers, needs and behaviors. Who are your key competitors both locally and national players. Are your key value propositions discernible from theirs? Examine programs, admissions processes/requirements and pricing (tuition, credit prior learning, scholarships)

+ **Get Started**

Regardless of the size of your institution, budget and team or whether you are just getting started or been online for years now is the time to get started. Identify 3

ALL RIGHT. LET'S GET STARTED.

Institutional Readiness Assessment

This proven methodology seeks to audit and identify the value chain for delivering quality online programs at significant scale. The purpose of this audit is to provide an independent evaluation of the full lifecycle of the institution's marketing and enrollment process in order to assess alignment with business needs and enrollment objectives. The audit reviews the entire student life cycle from marketing through other key departments within the organization (Enrollment Advisors, Financial Aid, IT and Academic units) in order to understand and seek to maximize the workflows between these separate units. The audit allows us valuable insight into Whitworth's culture and processes while at the same time allowing us to develop a comprehensive view of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that form part of the foundation upon which all of our strategies will be based.

You will gain:

+ An independent operational analysis and implementation road map aligned directly to enrollment objectives
+ Realistic expectation setting with leadership based on the competitive market and level of effort and resource required to grow and sustain online programs
+ Realized cost saving based on efficiency (time, money) gains in go-to-market planning and in-market execution

The Institutional Readiness Assessment includes:

Discovery and Strategic Planning
Our research and discovery process is governed by our Center of Excellence audit (COE). The COE framework guides us through a series of review questions and topics spanning marketing, enrollment, and operations for both existing programs and new programs. This comprehensive 360 degree review is designed to accelerate knowledge transfer, stimulate ideation, and begin laying the groundwork for a detailed digital marketing plan. Most importantly, Carnegie will utilize this knowledge to assist you in building enrollment forecasts and financial models that tie our services to performance and return on investment.

Infrastructure Audit
Analysis of your entire Marketing and Enrollment infrastructure including Creative, media, admissions, advising, CRM, technology, and support services.

In Source / Out Source Staff Plan
Review of your current staffing and opportunities for outsource augmentation.

Competitive Brand/Program Review
A high level scan of your brand, program portfolio and key competitors.

Media and SEO Analysis
Review your current Search Engine Optimization, website performance and engagement, media mix, and performance.

Financial Pro forma
Development of a flipped funnel enrollment forecast in conjunction OPX service model and tuition cost create a 3 –5 year financial proforma and ROI analysis.

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Questions & Conversations

Scan the QR code for a 20% discount on a 12-month Conversion Rate Optimization package

Thank You!

Dean Gething

dgething@carnegiehighered.com

CARNEGIE

210 Littleton Road, Suite 100 Westford, MA 01886

978-692-5092 | info@carnegiehighered.com

CarnegieHigherEd.com