

**A UNIVERSITY
MARKETER'S
GUIDE TO A
STUDENT
LIFECYCLE**

PRIOR TO APPLYING

EACH YEAR AS STUDENTS NEAR THEIR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION DATE, THEY FLOCK ONLINE AND BEGIN RESEARCHING THE UNIVERSITY WHERE THEY'RE GOING TO SPEND THE NEXT FOUR YEARS OF THEIR LIVES. WHILE MANY UNIVERSITIES SEE AN INFLUX OF APPLICATIONS AND WEBSITE TRAFFIC, ARE YOU SEEING AS MUCH AS YOU COULD? ARE YOU APPEALING TO THE NEEDS OF TODAY'S STUDENTS AND HIGHLIGHTING YOUR UNIVERSITY APPROPRIATELY? IN ANALYZING STUDENT BEHAVIOR THROUGHOUT THEIR STUDENT LIFE, UNIQUE NEEDS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED THAT TARGET HOW UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENT HOUSING PROVIDERS SHOULD BE MARKETING TO STUDENTS BASED ON STUDENTS' SPECIFIC NEEDS.

In today's competitive market, 20% of students begin looking at and researching universities as far out as 120 days before they actually apply. That means months before applications are due, your website could be seeing an increase in traffic, and it's imperative to be showing up for applicable search terms. Approximately 83% of query paths begin with a non-branded term, meaning for the majority of students, you aren't necessarily on their radar when they begin researching colleges.

Make sure your SEO strategy is ready to go and is reflective of the benefits you offer at your university. While you're at it, don't forget to optimize your website for mobile use, and consider algorithms used by popular search engines like Google that may affect

your ranking. Even when at home, two out of three mobile researchers continue to use a mobile device when researching education. Don't shoot yourself in the foot from the get-go — instead, make sure your website is ready to go and highlights the same points you would want to emphasize to a prospective applicant.

The time prior to application deadlines can be a long one, so make sure you stay in front of the people who have searched your university before. This is a great time to look at retargeting opportunities and to start lead nurturing campaigns to further entice people who have already been on your site, but haven't already applied. Don't underestimate the power in an ad that runs in front of users who have already visited your site and are still considering applying.



01

SEO

Increase your SEO presence to attract prospective applicants and make sure you're showing up in their search queries.

LEAD NURTURE

Follow up with prospective applicants who have shown interest in your school with emails, direct mail, and more.

02

03

MOBILE FRIENDLY

Even when at home, 2 in 3 mobile researchers use mobile devices when researching education. Is your website equipped to handle and direct mobile traffic?

**BE SURE YOU ARE READY FOR APPLICANTS!
IS YOUR MESSAGING COHESIVE?
IS YOUR APPLICATION PROCESS STREAMLINED?
IS YOUR WEBSITE UPDATED AND MOBILE-FRIENDLY?**



APPLYING

AND LAST

RESEARCH

ALTHOUGH APPLICANTS MAY START THEIR SEARCH EARLY, MANY APPLICANTS WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO SUBMIT THEIR APPLICATION. **THESE LAST FEW WEEKS PRIOR TO APPLICATION DEADLINES ARE CRUCIAL TO HIGHLIGHT YOUR UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION.**

Imagine that everyone who comes to your website is asking the question: “Why should I go to school here?” Are you answering that with the highlights that will matter to these applicants?

In 2011, 29% of students applied to seven or more colleges — a number that continues to rise. Make sure you’re standing out from the crowd of options and consider all aspects of the student’s life in your marketing messaging. Maybe your residence life programming is a huge selling point or your athletic program is unmatched in the area. Chances are, at this point applicants already get the big picture — they just need that last bit of persuasion to finalize their application.

During this stage of application and last-minute

research, don’t forget to highlight your facilities and student life. In the decision making stage, 67% of students use videos to understand specific features of a school, including housing. With today’s technology and the use of drones for making quality videos, you have the opportunity to wow students without having to recruit an entire production team on campus.

Although chances are students have already researched your school, at least marginally, this is not a time to slack on your SEO strategy. The last few weeks prior to application deadlines see an increase in branded search terms — as many as twice as much when compared to 120 days out.



01

SEO

83% of query paths begin with a non-branded term – is your university showing up? Make sure it is with increased SEO efforts in the weeks prior to application deadlines.

02

VIDEO

67% of students use videos to understand specific features of a school, including housing options. Showcase your school with video that appeals to students and their parents.'

RES
LIFE

PRESTIGE

USP

What is your university's Unique Selling Point? In other words, how will you respond when a potential student asks, "Why should I go here?"

SPORTS

ACADEMICS

ACCEPTANCE AND DECISION MAKING

ONCE A STUDENT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED, IT IS KEY TO GET THEM EXCITED ABOUT IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES WITH YOUR SCHOOL. THEY ARE HUNGRY FOR A SENSE OF CULTURE AND OPPORTUNITIES TO START EMOTIONALLY INVESTING IN THEIR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE.

IT'S TIME TO START SHARING INFORMATION WITH ACCEPTED STUDENTS ABOUT STUDENT HOUSING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING ON CAMPUS.

Chances are your off-campus competitors are already marketing to these students and sharing off-campus student housing options. A great way to get students involved while keeping them hyped up about their impending transition is through personality-style quizzes and marketing. Whether you require freshmen to live on campus or not, BuzzFeed-style identity quizzes engage students and help to narrow down their choices, especially if you have several different style apartments or dorms for them to choose from. This is also a great way to find out what each student values in their housing situation — value, amenities, or a sense of community.

Consider using fun quizzes that narrow down a student's perfect fit to two or three dorms or apartments, then market those specific places to them with lead-nurturing campaigns.

If you don't require on-campus housing, use this chance to highlight the benefits of living on campus and how students benefit in the long run from programming you offer. Remind residents that they still get all of the benefits of pools or gyms that the off-campus competitors may have because of their close proximity to campus facilities.



START MARKETING HOUSING

*Your approach will vary
depending on your answer:
Is university housing
required for freshmen?*

YES

QUIZ

*Start helping students
narrow down their
choices of dorms*

NO

BEGIN CAMPAIGN

*Start marketing benefits
of living in university
housing to those who
are eligible*



FRESHMAN

YEAR

NOW THAT STUDENTS HAVE STARTED THEIR FIRST SEMESTER AWAY FROM HOME, MAKE SURE THEY'RE COMFORTABLE AND KNOW THE INS AND OUTS OF LIVING ON CAMPUS.

Highlight your residence life programming and make sure residents are getting involved in campus activities that are going to benefit them throughout their time at your school. This is also a great time to start lining up events and activities that show residents why living on campus is the right choice, not just for their freshman year, but throughout their college career.

As early as October, depending on your school's leasing schedule, on-campus residents will begin receiving marketing materials from off campus competition. Use resident assistants and social media to help you promote positive word of mouth about your on campus properties. Use RAs as brand

ambassadors and solicit their help in encouraging residents to remain living on campus for another year.

Mid-fall semester is also a good time to gauge resident sentiment and find out what their thoughts are for the following year. Survey residents to ask if they have already made housing decisions for the next year. This will allow you to again target specific messaging to residents based on what they value in their housing and is a good time to start promoting a transition to more independent living. For example, if you have on-campus apartments that are furnished but have less residence life programming, explain why that's a good transition for freshman to sophomore year.



AUG-SEPT

MARKETING ANALYSIS AND CONSULTING

Spend the first 6 weeks marketing Res Life events to freshmen

DEC

DIRECT MAIL AND EMAILS

Target parents of first-year students and push sophomore housing options

OCT

WORD OF MOUTH SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMAILS

MARKETING DURING THIS PHASE WILL DEPEND ON A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT'S ANSWER TO THE FOLLOWING:
WHERE AM I GOING TO LIVE NEXT YEAR?

ON CAMPUS

PUSH SOPHOMORE HOUSING

Less furnished and less Res Life, more freedom

OFF CAMPUS

MARKET UNIVERSITY OPTIONS

Use surveys and targeted emails and mailers to push benefits

QUIZ

Start helping students narrow down their choices of dorms

?

SOPHOMORE TO

JUNIOR YEAR

ONCE FRESHMEN HAVE MOVED ON TO THEIR SOPHOMORE, JUNIOR, AND SENIOR YEARS, **YOUR MARKETING GOALS WILL REMAIN MOSTLY THE SAME.**

Make sure you're communicating with residents early on in the fall semester to keep from falling behind your off-campus competition. As residents get older, promote the option to become an RA and gain real-life experience and to boost resumes.

Continue surveying residents to see what their housing plans are for the next year, and continue promoting positive word of mouth and social media visibility.



**WORD OF MOUTH
SOCIAL MEDIA
AND
EMAILS**

**MARKETING DURING THIS PHASE
WILL DEPEND ON A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT'S
ANSWER TO THE FOLLOWING:
WHERE AM I GOING TO LIVE NEXT YEAR?**

**ON
CAMPUS**

**PROMOTE
JUNIOR
AND SENIOR
HOUSING**

*Highlight job
opportunities to build
resumes within the Res
Life Program.*

**OFF
CAMPUS**

**MARKET
UNIVERSITY
OPTIONS
AND
BENEFITS**



SENIOR

YEAR

AS SENIORS PREPARE TO GRADUATE, THERE IS **NO BETTER TIME TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU DID RIGHT AND WHERE YOU CAN IMPROVE IN YOUR HOUSING STRATEGIES.**

Survey seniors to find out what their priorities are when looking for housing, and use their insights for future campaigns. This is a good place to find information to help make quizzes for younger students and help them narrow down their housing options.

It is also imperative to obtain student testimonials showing the positive experience they had living in university-
"affiliated housing. Whether that is on campus or off, it's important that other students see their peers enjoyed their experience and got something positive from it. You can also use these to show parents why living on campus gives students an advantage that they don't have at off-campus apartments.

The most important thing throughout the student lifecycle is to stay relevant and make sure your brand presence is working for your benefit. At Catalyst, we have extensive experience in marketing to students and analyzing their behaviors to tailor marketing strategies to be most effective. By measuring the results of each individual marketing piece in a campaign, we can make adjustments in real time, allowing for optimal results and conversions. Contact us today for a marketing analysis and to see how we can strategically plan your marketing efforts for the next cycle.



01

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

Let students speak for themselves! Collect testimonials from residents to use for future marketing efforts.

02

INFO GATHERING

Learn about your different demographics and what they're looking for in housing. You can use these insights in the future for quiz options and targeted messaging.



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