

Higher Ed Benchmarks

Trends in Enrollment Management

2015 Adult Learner Marketing and Recruitment Practices Benchmark Report

for Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

What's working in adult learner recruitment and marketing and which practices are most widely used? To find out, Ruffalo Noel Levitz conducted a 72-item, web-based poll in April 2015 as part of the firm's continuing series of benchmark polls for higher education. Because undergraduate and graduate programs often employ similar practices to attract adult learners, this report combines its findings across undergraduate and graduate levels. For a profile of the poll respondents, please refer to the Appendix, page 41. Note that all respondents in this study had at least one adult-focused degree program.

Among the highlights:

- Across sectors, three highly effective practices for generating inquiries from adult learners were open houses, face-to-face information sessions, and website "request information" forms.
- Evening and online classes were widely used course formats for attracting adult learners across sectors. Also popular were cohort-based classes, once-weekly classes, and mixed modalities (a blend of online and on-ground coursework).
- Webinar information sessions were rated effective by respondents from private and public, four-year and graduate institutions, but were used by only a minority of these institutions.
- Television ads were among several practices for generating inquiries that were rated "minimally effective" by respondents from two-year public institutions but which were nevertheless widely used in the two-year public sector.
- Phone call attempts and personalized emails were the most widely used practices across sectors for following up with adult learner inquiries.
- Two-year public institutions were more likely than institutions from other sectors to offer VA benefits, work study, state scholarships, tuition reimbursement from companies, and discounts for external organizations.
- Compared to public institutions, a larger percentage of private institutions reported having adult degree programs in place for more than 10 years and having a specific recruitment plan for adult learners. Private institutions also reported shorter response times for follow up with inquiries.

How do your practices compare?

Readers are encouraged to compare the findings in this report to the practices on their campus. For rankings of effective marketing and recruitment practices for traditional-age prospective students, visit www.noellevitz.com/BenchmarkReports.

CONTENTS

See the Appendix for detailed findings from all 72 items on the poll.

Highlights	
Popular course formats for adult learners	3
Recruitment planning practices	4
Top 10 most effective practices and least-used practices for generating inquiries	5
Five least-effective practices for generating inquiries	6
Five least-used practices for generating inquiries, including promising practices	7
Top modes of communication for inquiry follow-up	8
Financial aid scholarship practices	9
Recruitment funnel benchmarks and stealth shopping	10
Ratios of annual inquiries and enrollees per enrollment counselor	11

APPENDIX/COMPLETE FINDINGS

Complete findings by institution type	12
<i>Widely used tuition practices • Effectiveness and usage of 37 practices for generating inquiries • Organization, resources, and staffing for adult learner recruitment • Inquiry tracking practices • Inquiry follow-up practices • And more</i>	
Responding institutions	41
About Ruffalo Noel Levitz and our higher education research	44

Findings color key:

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined

Public institutions, two-year

About the rankings and the statistical process used in this study

All of the findings in this report are judged to be statistically significant. This determination was made by calculating a statistical confidence interval for each finding (e.g., means, medians, proportions, and other relevant test statistics) and then judging the confidence interval to be acceptably small relative to the size of the finding.

Note that **rankings included in this study are by effectiveness or by usage (popularity) or both**. To rank the most and least effective practices, respondents were asked to rate each practice on the following scale:

___ Very effective ___ Somewhat effective ___ Minimally effective ___ Practice not used

To report the findings as accurately as possible, the rankings of effectiveness were based only on the relative effectiveness options that were chosen by respondents: “very effective,” “somewhat effective,” and “minimally effective.” This approach of excluding the fourth response, “method not used,” allows emerging, less-frequently-used practices to be included in the “top 10” rankings—those practices that are rated very effective but which are not currently being used by the majority of institutions.

Note: To identify the proportion of institutions using a particular method, a simple calculation was made of the inverse of those who selected “Practice not used.”

NA notation: Please note that effectiveness ratings are unavailable (shown as “NA”) in cases where the number of respondents was too small to provide statistically significant findings.

Popular course formats for adult learners

Here are 14 formats for adult learner academic programs, ranked by their usage.

Rankings by usage*	Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, two-year
1	Evening classes	Online	Evening classes
2	On ground, on campus	Evening classes	Online
3	Online	Semester-based	Mixed modalities, online and on ground
4	Mixed modalities, online and on ground	Cohort-based	On ground, on campus
5	Cohort-based	On ground, on campus	Semester-based
6	Once weekly classes	Mixed modalities, online and on ground	Once weekly classes
7	Term-based	Weekend classes	On ground, off campus
8	On ground, off campus	On ground, off campus	Cohort-based
9	Semester-based	Once weekly classes	Term-based
10	Weekend classes	Term-based	Weekend classes
11	Monthly class start dates	Competency-based model	Self-paced
12	Every other week classes	Every other week classes	Monthly class start dates
13	Self-paced	Monthly class start dates	Every other week classes
14	Competency-based model	Self-paced	Competency-based model

What the data show: Evening classes were widely used across sectors, as were online classes, on-ground, on-campus classes, once-weekly classes, and classes of mixed modalities (online and on ground). Competency-based models and self-paced models were less widely used. At private institutions, online classes and on-ground, on-campus courses were almost equally popular.

Boldface indicates formats that were being used by more than half of respondents within the sector (please see the Appendix for details).

*Two types of rankings were used in this study—rankings by usage (popularity) and, where indicated, rankings by effectiveness.

Recruitment planning practices

The tables below provide a window into institutions' adult learner recruitment planning.

Do you have a specific recruitment plan for the adult learner? (yes/no)

	Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, two-year
Percentage yes	83.8%	66.7%	56.0%

Which best describes your adult recruitment plan?

Here respondents chose only one response from the four options listed below; only those who responded "yes" to the previous question responded to this question.

Rankings of plan descriptions	Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, two-year
1	100 percent focused on adult programs	Focused on recruiting adult learners into specific majors or into a specific academic college	Subplan of a larger plan
2	Focused on recruiting adult learners into specific majors or into a specific academic college	Subplan of a larger plan	100 percent focused on adult programs
3	Subplan of a larger plan	100 percent focused on adult programs	Focused on recruiting adult learners into specific majors or into a specific academic college
4	Other*	Other*	Other*

What the data show: The majority of respondents across sectors reported they had a recruitment plan for adult learners, led by respondents from four-year private institutions. However, respondents across sectors reported a range of practices in the types of plans they used. For example, the most widely used plan description for private institutions was "100 percent focused on adult programs," while the most widely used plan description for two-year public institutions was "subplan of a larger plan." Please see the Appendix for details.

*Fewer than 4 percent of respondents selected "Other," and no two respondents who selected "Other" provided the same response.

Top 10 most effective practices for generating inquiries

Respondents rated both the effectiveness, and their use, of 37 strategies and tactics for generating inquiries from adult learners. Items most frequently rated “very effective” appear below.

Rankings by effectiveness*	Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined**	Public institutions, two-year***
1	Information sessions, face-to-face	Information sessions, face-to-face	Free application
2	<i>Referral program</i>	Open houses	Website “request information” form
3	Website “request information” form	<i>Off-campus group meetings for prospective students</i>	Information sessions, face-to-face
4	Free application	<i>Partnerships with military</i>	Partnerships with military
5	Open houses	<i>Partnerships with other colleges or schools</i>	Partnerships with businesses
6	Search engine optimization (SEO) to improve organic (non-paid) search engine results	<i>Website pages focused on adult learner recruitment</i>	General college website
7	<i>Award credits for nontraditional learning</i>	Website “request information” form	Open houses
8	<i>Off-campus group meetings for prospective students</i>	<i>Award credits for nontraditional learning</i>	NA
9	Partnerships with businesses	General college website	NA
10	Website pages focused on adult learner recruitment	Travel to other colleges and schools	NA

What the data show: Face-to-face information sessions, open houses, and website “request information” forms emerged as the most effective practices across sectors for generating inquiries from adult learners. However, none of the top-rated practices were rated “very effective” by the majority of respondents despite being rated more highly compared to other practices. Please see the Appendix for specific proportions of respondents choosing each rating category.

Italics indicates practices that were not being used by more than a one-quarter of institutions within the sector, despite the ratings of effectiveness. Institutions not using these practices may want to consider using them. Please see the Appendix for details.

*Reminder: Rating options for effectiveness included “very effective,” “somewhat effective,” “minimally effective,” or “practice not used.” Respondents who selected “practice not used” were excluded from the effectiveness ratings.

**Two additional practices—web scheduling tools for appointments, and virtual open houses—also appeared to be effective for this sector, but there were not enough respondents using these practices to rate their effectiveness with statistical confidence (see usage levels in Appendix).

***A total of 16 practices were unranked for two-year public institutions as there were not enough respondents using these practices to rate their effectiveness with statistical confidence (see usage levels in Appendix). Of the remaining 21 practices, only the top seven (one-third) appear above, paralleling the “top 10” listings for the other sectors. Note that five of the 16 practices not shown—including pay-per-click ads on search engine sites, search engine optimization (SEO), online chats, web scheduling tools for appointments, and website pages focused on adult learner recruitment—appeared to be effective for this sector.

Five least-effective practices for generating inquiries

The table below shows the five items that respondents most frequently rated “minimally effective” among the 37 strategies and tactics that were measured for their effectiveness and usage.

Rankings by ineffectiveness	Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, two-year
1	Online chat	Online chat	Travel to business and industry to meet prospective students
2	Purchasing names of prospective students from list vendors	Print media ads (newspaper, magazines, etc.)	Education fairs
3	Print media ads (newspaper, magazines, etc.)	Direct mail (USPS)	Partnerships with military
4	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)	Television ads
5	Trade show exhibits	Billboards, bus, or other outdoor ads	Faculty/departmental events

////////////////////////////////////

What the data show: Online chats, print media ads, and social media were frequently rated minimally effective by respondents from the first two sectors shown above. Notice that a majority of institutions were using most of the practices listed here, as highlighted in **Boldface**.

Boldface indicates practices that were being used by half or more of institutions within the sector. For more details, please see the Appendix.

Five least-used practices for generating inquiries, including promising practices

Least-used practices appear below. Note that least-used practices may be least-used for distinct reasons. For example, a practice may be least used because it is ineffective or it may be because it is a practice that has not yet caught on widely.

Rankings by least used	Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, two-year**
1	Open houses (virtual)	Web scheduling tool for appointments*	Open houses (virtual)
2	Web scheduling tool for appointments	Free application	Information sessions via webinars
3	Online chat	Pay-per-click ads on Facebook	Web scheduling tool for appointments
4	<u>Information sessions via webinars</u>	Open houses (virtual)*	Purchasing names of prospective students from list vendors
5	Television ads	<u>Information sessions via webinars</u>	Online chat

////////////////////////////////////

What the data show: Webinars were used by only a minority of respondents from private and public, four-year and graduate-level institutions, but were rated an effective practice for these sectors. See Appendix for details.

Underline in this table indicates practices that half or more of respondents rated “very effective” or “somewhat effective.”

*There were not enough respondents in the data sample to rate the effectiveness of all practices with statistical confidence. Hence, this item is not **underlined** even though it appeared to be effective for this sector.

No items are **underlined in this column as there were not enough respondents to rate effectiveness.

Top modes of communication for inquiry follow-up

Respondents rated the effectiveness of six modes of communication for following up with adult learner inquiries. Items most frequently rated “very effective” appear below. Two-year public institutions: See note below.

Rankings by effectiveness	Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, two-year (rankings by usage)
1	Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	Personalized email
2	Personalized email	Personalized email	Phone attempt by staff not in a call center
3	<i>Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)</i>	Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)	Material mailed to home
4	<i>Text message</i>	Non-personalized email	Non-personalized email
5	Material mailed to home	Material mailed to home	Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)
6	Non-personalized email	<i>Text message</i>	<i>Text message</i>

What the data show: Personalized emails and phone attempts by staff not in a call center were the most effective modes of communication for inquiry follow-up for four-year and graduate institutions. These two modes were also the most widely used inquiry follow-up modes for two-year public institutions (see Appendix for details).

Italics indicate modes of communication that were not being used by more than half of institutions within the sector.

Two-year public institutions: The rankings here are by *usage* rather than by effectiveness because there were not enough responses in the data sample to rank effectiveness for this section.

Financial aid and scholarship practices, ranked from most to least popular

Respondents reported using the following nine financial aid and scholarship practices as follows:

Rankings by usage	Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Public institutions, two-year
1	Institutional scholarships/fellowships	Aid for full-time students	Aid for part-time students
2	Aid for full-time students	Institutional scholarships/fellowships	Institutional scholarships/fellowships
3	Aid for part-time students	Aid for part-time students	State scholarships
4	State scholarships	Work study	Aid for full-time students
5	Tuition reimbursement from companies	Tuition reimbursement from companies	Work study
6	Payment plans	State scholarships	Tuition reimbursement from companies
7	Work study	VA benefits	Discounts offered to external organizations
8	VA benefits	Discounts offered to external organizations	VA benefits
9	Discounts offered to external organizations	Payment plans	Payment plans
10	Other*	Other*	Other*

////////////////////////////////////

What the data show: While institutions across all sectors used traditional financial aid such as institutional and state scholarships, some were also using more adult-focused strategies such as offering discounts to students from external organizations. Notice, too, that two-year public institutions were more likely than other institutions to offer many types of scholarships and financial aid. Please see the Appendix for more details, including findings on widely used and lesser-used adult program tuition practices.

Bold in this table indicates practices that were being used by more than three-quarters of respondents from the sector.

*Please see the Appendix for details.

Recruitment funnel benchmarks

Benchmarks for funnel conversion rates for adult learner recruitment are provided here to assist with predicting adult learner behavior and setting goals. Two-year public institutions: Please see note below.

Recruitment funnel metrics	Statistic	Private institutions, four-year and graduate level	Public institutions, four-year and graduate level
Conversion rate from inquiry to application	First Quartile	20.0	24.0
	Median	29.0	40.0
	Third Quartile	41.0	59.8
Admit rate from completed application to admit	First Quartile	72.0	66.5
	Median	81.0	80.0
	Third Quartile	90.0	88.5

////////////////////////////////////

What the data show: Adult learner conversion rates from inquiry to application varied considerably for the two sectors shown above. However, admit rates were similar at the median.

Stealth shopping benchmarks

Below are benchmarks for stealth shopping—the percentage of adult learners who apply for admission without inquiring beforehand.

Stealth shopper benchmarks	Private institutions, four-year and graduate level	Public institutions, four-year and graduate level
First Quartile	10.0	15.0
Median	20.0	40.0
Third Quartile	31.3	60.0

////////////////////////////////////

What the data show: At the median, there were twice as many stealth shoppers for public four-year and graduate institutions compared to private four-year and graduate institutions.

////////////////////////////////////

Two-year public institutions: There were not enough responses in the data sample to provide benchmarks for stealth shoppers and recruitment funnels.

Ratios of annual inquiries and enrollees per enrollment counselor

Respondents of the poll were asked to report the number of inquiries, enrollees, and dedicated enrollment counselors* from their most recent 12-month recruiting cycle. Using these figures, the following ratios were calculated.

Staffing benchmarks	Private institutions, four-year and graduate	Public institutions, four-year and graduate	Public institutions, two-year <i>Caution: see note below</i>
Ratio of annual adult learner <i>inquiries</i> to dedicated enrollment counselors			
First quartile	114.5	129.2	285.7
Median	286.5	302.0	800.0
Third quartile	669.9	1,414.3	1,250.0
Ratio of annual adult learner <i>enrollees</i> to dedicated enrollment counselors			
First quartile	34.6	59.4	114.3
Median	61.0	190.0	500.0
Third quartile	105.0	424.9	2,861.0

//////

What the data show: At the median, the findings in the top half of this table show there were 286.5 inquiries per enrollment counselor at private institutions, compared to 302 inquiries per counselor at public four-year and graduate institutions, and 800 inquiries per counselor at two-year public institutions. In the bottom half of the table, the findings show there were 61 enrollees per enrollment counselor at private institutions at the median compared to 190 enrollees per counselor at public four-year and graduate institutions and 500 enrollees per counselor at two-year public institutions.

*Respondents were instructed to include part-time staff and to round off their responses to the nearest whole number. For example, 5 full-time + 2 half-time = 6.

Caution for two-year public institutions: These findings have limited statistical validity due to low numbers of respondents.

See more findings on staffing and organization in the Appendix

Two-thirds (66 percent) of public four-year and graduate institution respondents reported they organize their adult programs in a separate division, compared to 49 percent of respondents from private four-year and graduate institutions. In addition, private institution respondents reported that their adult program tends to make decisions to admit students, while public institutions reported that the campus admissions office tends to make decisions to admit students. See the Appendix for details and for additional findings on organization and staffing. For private institutions, there are also benchmarks on costs.

Appendix with complete findings by sector

The following tables include the complete findings of this study, divided and color-coded for each of the three sectors examined.

Contents

Private institutions,
four-year and
graduate levels
combined

Pages 13-22:

Usage and Effectiveness of 37 Practices for Generating Inquiries	13
Inquiry Tracking Practices	14
Inquiry Follow-Up Practices	15
Recruitment Funnel Metrics	17
Tuition and Financial Aid Practices	17
Organization, Resources, and Staffing for Adult Learner Recruitment	18
Planning Practices and the Cost of Recruiting	21

Public institutions,
four-year and
graduate levels
combined

Pages 23-31:

Usage and Effectiveness of 37 Practices for Generating Inquiries	23
Inquiry Tracking Practices	24
Inquiry Follow-Up Practices	25
Recruitment Funnel Metrics	27
Tuition and Financial Aid Practices	27
Organization, Resources, and Staffing for Adult Learner Recruitment	28
Planning Practices	31

Public institutions,
two-year

Pages 32-40:

Usage and Effectiveness of 37 Practices for Generating Inquiries	32
Inquiry Tracking Practices	33
Inquiry Follow-Up Practices	34
Tuition and Financial Aid Practices	36
Organization, Resources, and Staffing for Adult Learner Recruitment	37
Planning Practices	40

NA notation: Please note that effectiveness ratings are unavailable (shown as “NA”) in cases where the number of respondents was too small to provide statistically significant findings.

Usage and Effectiveness of 37 Practices for Generating Inquiries—Ordered by Percent Rated “Very Effective”

Rankings of Practices

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Institutions using practice	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Very or somewhat effective
Information sessions, face-to-face	91.5%	41.9%	44.4%	13.7%	86.3%
Referral program	74.6%	35.1%	37.2%	27.7%	72.3%
Website “request information” form	97.7%	34.7%	47.6%	17.7%	82.3%
Free application	80.0%	29.7%	43.6%	26.7%	73.3%
Open houses (ground)	76.9%	27.2%	43.5%	29.3%	70.7%
Search engine optimization (SEO) to improve organic (non-paid) search engine results	85.4%	27.1%	44.9%	28.0%	72.0%
Award credits for nontraditional learning	62.3%	26.3%	32.9%	40.8%	59.2%
Off-campus group meetings for prospective students	59.2%	25.7%	35.7%	38.6%	61.4%
Partnerships with businesses	81.5%	23.8%	40.6%	35.6%	64.4%
Website pages focused on adult learner recruitment	89.2%	23.2%	62.5%	14.3%	85.7%
Partnerships with other colleges or schools	80.8%	22.8%	43.6%	33.7%	66.3%
Travel to business and industry to meet prospective students	81.5%	22.0%	35.0%	43.0%	57.0%
Partnerships with military	57.7%	21.7%	42.0%	36.2%	63.8%
Travel to other colleges and schools	86.9%	20.8%	36.8%	42.5%	57.5%
General college website	99.2%	19.7%	50.4%	29.9%	70.1%
Veteran yellow ribbon program participant	76.9%	19.6%	32.6%	47.8%	52.2%
Information sessions via webinars	35.4%	19.0%	31.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Pay-per-click ads on search sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo	69.2%	18.2%	51.1%	30.7%	69.3%
Business/community development	85.4%	15.2%	35.2%	49.5%	50.5%
Radio ads	81.5%	13.7%	48.0%	38.2%	61.8%
Direct mail (USPS)	78.5%	13.5%	41.7%	44.8%	55.2%
Outbound phone calling campaigns	63.8%	12.8%	42.3%	44.9%	55.1%
Faculty/departmental events	47.7%	12.3%	45.6%	42.1%	57.9%
Content marketing to generate inquiries	70.0%	11.8%	42.4%	45.9%	54.1%
Television ads	43.1%	11.8%	33.3%	54.9%	45.1%

Rankings of Practices, Continued

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Institutions using practice	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Very or somewhat effective
Web scheduling tool for appointments	30.8%	11.4%	37.1%	51.4%	48.6%
Education fairs	91.5%	11.4%	40.4%	48.2%	51.8%
Pay-per-click ads on Facebook	56.9%	11.3%	36.6%	52.1%	47.9%
Online chat	33.8%	11.1%	16.7%	72.2%	27.8%
Billboards, bus, or other outdoor ads	67.7%	11.0%	31.7%	57.3%	42.7%
Email blasts to purchased email lists	64.6%	10.1%	31.6%	58.2%	41.8%
Open houses (virtual)	28.5%	9.4%	34.4%	56.3%	43.8%
Tradeshow exhibits	75.4%	8.6%	31.2%	60.2%	39.8%
Print media ads (newspaper, magazines, etc.)	86.9%	8.3%	28.7%	63.0%	37.0%
Other online ads (flat rate cost; not pay-per click)	70.0%	7.1%	45.2%	47.6%	52.4%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)	89.2%	6.3%	31.3%	62.5%	37.5%
Purchasing names of prospective students from list vendors	61.5%	5.3%	30.3%	64.5%	35.5%

The only practice for generating inquiries identified by two or more respondents in an optional “Other” field was referrals from students.

Inquiry Tracking Practices

Routine Tracking of Inquiries

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percent yes
Do you routinely track the number of inquiries generated by the practices above? (yes/no)	77.7%

Use of Tracking Data for Recruitment Planning

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percent yes
If you answered yes to the previous question, do you use this information to guide your recruitment planning? (yes/no)	94.1%

Inquiry Follow-Up Practices

Usage and Effectiveness of Six Modes of Communication for Following Up With Inquiries—Ordered by Percent Rated “Very Effective”

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Institutions using practice	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Very or somewhat effective
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	94.6%	60.0%	30.9%	9.1%	90.9%
Personalized email	100.0%	58.4%	36.8%	4.8%	95.2%
Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)	48.5%	40.5%	38.1%	21.4%	78.6%
Text message	45.4%	25.0%	42.9%	32.1%	67.9%
Material mailed to home	79.2%	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Non-personalized email	88.5%	6.3%	53.7%	40.0%	60.0%

Speed of Following Up with Inquiries Who Completed an Online Form on the Campus Website Via Same Six Modes of Communication

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Within a day	Within three days	Within a week	More than a week later
Personalized email	83.9%	8.1%	5.6%	2.4%
Non-personalized email	76.8%	8.4%	9.5%	5.3%
Text message	15.9%	13.6%	11.4%	59.1%
Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)	49.4%	9.4%	10.6%	30.6%
Material mailed to home	35.8%	27.4%	21.1%	15.8%
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	60.7%	15.9%	11.2%	12.1%

Speed of Following Up With All Other Inquiries Via Same Six Modes of Communication

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Within a day	Within three days	Within a week	More than a week later
Personalized email	80.0%	14.4%	4.0%	1.6%
Non-personalized email	63.3%	17.7%	10.1%	8.9%
Text message	19.5%	12.2%	12.2%	56.1%
Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)	45.2%	9.7%	16.1%	29.0%
Material mailed to home	37.5%	25.0%	23.9%	13.6%
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	61.7%	19.6%	11.2%	7.5%

Average Time Lapse Between Initial Follow-Up Contact(s) and an Appointment of Any Type (e.g., Phone, In Person, Skype) With an Enrollment Representative

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Within one week	82.9%
Greater than one week	17.1%

Average Time Lapse Between Receipt of a Completed Application and an Admissions Decision

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Within one week	66.1%
Greater than one week	33.9%

Average Time Lapse between Receiving an Application (Complete or Incomplete) and the First Day of Enrollment

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Within 90 days	78.6%
Greater than 90 days	21.4%

Recruitment Funnel Metrics

Recruitment Funnel Conversion and Admit Rates

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined		Statistic
Conversion rate from inquiry to application	First Quartile	20.0
	Median	29.0
	Third Quartile	41.0
Admit rate from completed application to admit	First Quartile	72.0
	Median	81.0
	Third Quartile	90.0

Stealth Shoppers—Applicants Who Did Not Inquire Before Applying

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined		Statistic
Stealth applicant rate	First Quartile	10.0
	Median	20.0
	Third Quartile	31.3

Tuition and Financial Aid Practices

Approaches to Adult Student Tuition

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage in agreement
Comparable to traditional day	15.4%
Lower than traditional day	62.3%
Higher than traditional day	4.6%
Charged per credit, not by semester	57.7%
Competitive in our market	60.0%
Tuition varies by program	38.5%

Respondents were instructed to affirm as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Financial Aid and Scholarship Practices

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Institutional scholarships/fellowships	92.3%
Aid for full-time students	86.2%
Aid for part-time students	86.2%
State scholarships	79.2%
Tuition reimbursement from companies	63.1%
Payment plans	51.5%
Work study	48.5%
VA benefits	41.5%
Discounts offered to external organizations	30.8%
Other*	10.0%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many of the above practices as their students could access.

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 3.8 percent indicated other scholarships, but these responses varied widely with no two respondents naming the same type of scholarship.*

Organization, Resources, and Staffing for Adult Learner Recruitment

Organizational Design of Adult Programs

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Administered under a separate adult-focused school/college/division	49.2%
Administered by traditional academic and administrative units	41.5%
Administered under an adult-focused academic governance structure	13.8%
Operates collaboratively within traditional academic and administrative units	44.6%
Operates autonomously from traditional academic and administrative units	9.2%
Very much a part of the whole institution	50.0%
Fully accepted as an important part of our mission and purpose	50.0%
Not viewed as an important part of our mission and purpose	15.4%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Format of Adult Programs

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Evening classes	80.8%
On ground, on campus	76.2%
Online	75.4%
Mixed modalities (online and on ground)	65.4%
Cohort-based	60.0%
Once weekly classes	57.7%
Term-based	53.8%
On ground, off campus	52.3%
Semester-based	48.5%
Weekend classes	36.2%
Monthly class start dates	17.7%
Every other week classes	14.6%
Self-paced	10.0%
Competency-based model	5.4%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Ratio of Annual Adult Learner Inquiries to Dedicated Enrollment Counselors

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Statistic
First Quartile	114.5
Median	286.5
Third Quartile	669.9

Ratio of Annual Adult Learner Enrollees to Dedicated Enrollment Counselors

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Statistic
First Quartile	34.6
Median	61.0
Third Quartile	105.0

Who Makes the Official Admissions Decision?

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Adult program personnel	41.9%
Campus admissions office	28.7%
Other*	16.2%
Program chair/head	14.0%
Registrar's office	6.2%

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 3.1 percent indicated an admissions committee, 2.3 percent indicated a dean, and 1.6 percent indicated the admissions office staff. Other decision makers identified by respondents varied widely, with no two respondents naming the same type of decision maker.*

Who is Primarily Responsible for Generating New Inquiries for Prospective Adult Learners?

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Adult and/or online enrollment department	60.8%
Other*	16.9%
Traditional graduate enrollment department	8.5%
Traditional undergraduate enrollment department	7.7%
A third party vendor	6.2%
Faculty	0.0%

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 8.5 percent indicated marketing/recruitment and 3.8 percent indicated the admissions office. Other responses identified by two or more respondents included combinations of offices, adult program directors, and directors of individual campuses.*

Who is Primarily Responsible for Following Up with Inquiries from Prospective Adult Learners?

Survey items—Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Adult and/or online enrollment department	70.0%
Other*	10.8%
Traditional graduate enrollment department	9.2%
Traditional undergraduate enrollment department	7.7%
A third party vendor	2.3%
Faculty	0.0%

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 3.1 percent indicated the admissions office. Another response identified by two or more respondents was simply "advisors."*

Planning Practices and the Cost of Recruiting

Use of a Recruitment Plan

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percent yes
Do you have a specific recruitment plan for the adult learner? (yes/no)	83.8%

Which Best Describes Your Recruitment Plan?

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
100 percent focused on adult programs	41.3%
Focused on recruiting adult learners into specific majors or into a specific academic college	33.0%
Subplan of a larger plan	23.9%
Other*	1.8%

Respondents were instructed to choose one response only from the four options above.

*"Other" responses varied, with none of the same responses being identified by two or more respondents.

Time Since First Introduction of an Adult Degree Program

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Less than one academic year	0.0%
One to three academic years	4.6%
Four to five academic years	6.2%
Six to ten academic years	11.5%
Over ten academic years	77.7%

Average Cost per Inquiry for the Adult Learner*

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Statistic
First Quartile	\$43.75
Median	\$195.00
Third Quartile	\$369.25

To calculate the average cost, respondents were instructed to divide their total budget for recruitment/enrollment of adult learners from their most recent fiscal year (including **salaries, advertising, travel, and supplies) by the number of inquiries received for the fiscal year.*

Average Cost per Enrollment for the Adult Learner*

Private institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Statistic
First Quartile	\$306.25
Median	\$1,000.00
Third Quartile	\$2,000.00

To calculate the average cost, respondents were instructed to divide their total budget for recruitment/enrollment of adult learners from their most recent fiscal year (including **salaries, advertising, travel, and supplies) by the number of adult enrollees for the fiscal year.*

Usage and Effectiveness of 37 Practices for Generating Inquiries—Ordered by Percent Rated “Very Effective”

Rankings of Practices

Public Institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Institutions using practice	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Very or somewhat effective
Information sessions, face-to-face	88.1%	38.9%	41.7%	19.4%	80.6%
Open houses (ground)	88.1%	31.4%	45.7%	22.9%	77.1%
Off-campus group meetings for prospective students	50.0%	26.3%	36.8%	36.8%	63.2%
Partnerships with military	61.9%	25.0%	41.7%	33.3%	66.7%
Partnerships with other colleges or schools	71.4%	24.1%	24.1%	51.7%	48.3%
Website pages focused on adult learner recruitment	66.7%	23.1%	69.2%	7.7%	92.3%
Website “request information” form	85.7%	22.9%	51.4%	25.7%	74.3%
Award credits for nontraditional learning	59.5%	21.7%	30.4%	47.8%	52.2%
General college website	100.0%	19.5%	46.3%	34.1%	65.9%
Travel to other colleges and schools	81.0%	18.8%	40.6%	40.6%	59.4%
Search engine optimization (SEO) to improve organic (non-paid) search engine results	61.9%	16.0%	36.0%	48.0%	52.0%
Information sessions via webinars	38.1%	13.3%	46.7%	40.0%	60.0%
Outbound phone calling campaigns	59.5%	12.5%	33.3%	54.2%	45.8%
Online chat	42.9%	11.8%	11.8%	76.5%	23.5%
Referral program	45.2%	11.1%	38.9%	50.0%	50.0%
Veteran yellow ribbon program participant	66.7%	11.1%	37.0%	51.9%	48.1%
Partnerships with businesses	69.0%	10.7%	57.1%	32.1%	67.9%
Travel to business and industry to meet prospective students	76.2%	10.0%	40.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Email blasts to purchased email lists	52.4%	9.5%	33.3%	57.1%	42.9%
Education fairs	88.1%	8.6%	48.6%	42.9%	57.1%
Other online ads (flat rate cost; not pay-per-click)	52.4%	5.0%	35.0%	60.0%	40.0%
Faculty/departmental events	61.9%	4.2%	54.2%	41.7%	58.3%
Pay-per-click ads on search sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo	61.9%	4.0%	36.0%	60.0%	40.0%
Business/community development	64.3%	3.8%	53.8%	42.3%	57.7%
Radio ads	66.7%	3.7%	40.7%	55.6%	44.4%

Rankings of Practices, Continued

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Institutions using practice	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Very or somewhat effective
Print media ads (newspaper, magazines, etc.)	71.4%	3.4%	27.6%	69.0%	31.0%
Billboards, bus, or other outdoor ads	76.2%	3.3%	33.3%	63.3%	36.7%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)	88.1%	2.8%	33.3%	63.9%	36.1%
Content marketing to generate inquiries	57.1%	0.0%	69.6%	30.4%	69.6%
Television ads	40.5%	0.0%	43.8%	56.3%	43.8%
Purchasing names of prospective students from list vendors	52.4%	0.0%	38.1%	61.9%	38.1%
Trade show exhibits	57.1%	0.0%	38.1%	61.9%	38.1%
Direct mail (USPS)	64.3%	0.0%	34.6%	65.4%	34.6%
Web scheduling tool for appointments	31.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Open houses (virtual)	33.3%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Free application	33.3%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pay-per-click ads on Facebook	33.3%	NA	NA	NA	NA

Only a few other practices were identified by respondents in an “Other” field provided at the end of this survey section, with no two respondents naming the same practice.

Inquiry Tracking Practices

Routine Tracking of Inquiries

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percent yes
Do you routinely track the number of inquiries generated by the practices above? (yes/no)	65.9%

Use of Tracking Data for Recruitment Planning

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percent yes
If you answered yes to the previous question, do you use this information to guide your recruitment planning? (yes/no)	84.6%

Inquiry Follow-Up Practices

Usage and Effectiveness of Six Modes of Communication for Following Up With Inquiries—Ordered by Percent Rated “Very Effective”

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Institutions using practice	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Very or somewhat effective
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	71.4%	41.7%	41.7%	16.7%	83.3%
Personalized email	97.6%	39.5%	52.6%	7.9%	92.1%
Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)	64.3%	11.1%	50.0%	38.9%	61.1%
Non-personalized email	81.0%	7.1%	46.4%	46.4%	53.6%
Material mailed to home	78.6%	3.7%	51.9%	44.4%	55.6%
Text message	33.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA

Speed of Following Up with Inquiries Who Completed an Online Form on the Campus Website Via Same Six Modes of Communication

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Within a day	Within three days	Within a week	More than a week later
Personalized email	69.2%	15.4%	12.8%	2.6%
Non-personalized email	66.7%	7.4%	7.4%	18.5%
Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)	30.0%	15.0%	35.0%	20.0%
Material mailed to home	33.3%	22.2%	29.6%	14.8%
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	37.5%	4.2%	20.8%	37.5%
Text message	NA	NA	NA	NA

Speed of Following Up With All Other Inquiries Via Same Six Modes of Communication

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Within a day	Within three days	Within a week	More than a week later
Personalized email	63.2%	26.3%	7.9%	2.6%
Non-personalized email	54.5%	22.7%	4.5%	18.2%
Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)	26.3%	15.8%	31.6%	26.3%
Material mailed to home	32.0%	28.0%	12.0%	28.0%
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	28.6%	21.4%	14.3%	35.7%
Text message	NA	NA	NA	NA

Average Time Lapse Between Initial Follow-Up Contact(s) and an Appointment of Any Type (e.g., Phone, In Person, Skype) With an Enrollment Representative

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Within one week	81.3%
Greater than one week	18.8%

Average Time Lapse Between Receipt of a Completed Application and an Admissions Decision

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Within one week	55.3%
Greater than one week	44.7%

Average Time Lapse between Receiving an Application (Complete or Incomplete) and the First Day of Enrollment

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Within 90 days	48.5%
Greater than 90 days	51.5%

Recruitment Funnel Metrics

Recruitment Funnel Conversion and Admit Rates

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined		Statistic
Conversion rate from inquiry to application	First Quartile	24.0
	Median	40.0
	Third Quartile	59.8
Admit rate from completed application to admit	First Quartile	66.5
	Median	80.0
	Third Quartile	88.5

Stealth Shoppers—Applicants Who Did Not Inquire Before Applying

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined		Statistic
Stealth applicant rate	First Quartile	15.0
	Median	40.0
	Third Quartile	60.0

Tuition and Financial Aid Practices

Approaches to Adult Student Tuition

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage in agreement
Comparable to traditional day	52.4%
Lower than traditional day	16.7%
Higher than traditional day	11.9%
Charged per credit, not by semester	45.2%
Competitive in our market	54.8%
Tuition varies by program	31.0%

Respondents were instructed to affirm as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Financial Aid and Scholarship Practices

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Aid for full-time students	95.2%
Institutional scholarships/fellowships	92.9%
Aid for part-time students	90.5%
Work study	78.6%
Tuition reimbursement from companies	76.2%
State scholarships	73.8%
VA benefits	59.5%
Discounts offered to external organizations	52.4%
Payment plans	23.8%
Other*	21.5%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many of the above practices as their students could access.

**Among the respondents who chose “Other,” 4.8 percent indicated other scholarships. A wide variety of responses were included in this 4.8 percent. Only one practice in this section was named by two or more respondents—military scholarships.*

Organization, Resources, and Staffing for Adult Learner Recruitment

Organizational Design of Adult Programs

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Administered under a separate adult-focused school/college/division	66.7%
Administered by traditional academic and administrative units	23.8%
Administered under an adult-focused academic governance structure	2.4%
Operates collaboratively within traditional academic and administrative units	52.4%
Operates autonomously from traditional academic and administrative units	4.8%
Very much a part of the whole institution	38.1%
Fully accepted as an important part of our mission and purpose	42.9%
Not viewed as an important part of our mission and purpose	11.9%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Format of Adult Programs

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Online	83.3%
Evening classes	69.0%
Semester-based	64.3%
Cohort-based	59.5%
On ground, on campus	59.5%
Mixed modalities (online and on ground)	59.5%
Weekend classes	57.1%
On ground, off campus	57.1%
Once weekly classes	54.8%
Term-based	40.5%
Competency-based model	9.5%
Every other week classes	7.1%
Monthly class start dates	4.8%
Self-paced	2.4%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Ratio of Annual Adult Learner Inquiries to Dedicated Enrollment Counselors

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Statistic
First Quartile	129.2
Median	302.0
Third Quartile	1,414.3

Ratio of Annual Adult Learner Enrollees to Dedicated Enrollment Counselors

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Statistic
First Quartile	59.4
Median	190.0
Third Quartile	424.9

Who Makes the Official Admissions Decision?

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Campus admissions office	61.9%
Adult program personnel	14.3%
Other*	19.1%
Registrar's office	7.1%
Program chair/head	2.4%

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 4.8 percent indicated faculty made the admissions decision. The only other decision maker identified by two or more respondents was an admissions officer.*

Who is Primarily Responsible for Generating New Inquiries for Prospective Adult Learners?

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Traditional undergraduate enrollment department	35.7%
Adult and/or online enrollment department	23.8%
Other*	19.0%
Traditional graduate enrollment department	16.7%
A third party vendor	4.8%
Faculty	0.0%

**Other responses identified by two or more respondents included various combinations of offices.*

Who is Primarily Responsible for Following Up with Inquiries from Prospective Adult Learners?

Survey items—Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Traditional undergraduate enrollment department	40.5%
Adult and/or online enrollment department	21.4%
Traditional graduate enrollment department	16.7%
Other*	16.7%
Faculty	2.4%
A third party vendor	2.4%

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 4.8 percent indicated the admissions office has this responsibility. Other responses identified by two or more respondents included various combinations of offices.*

Planning Practices

Use of a Recruitment Plan

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percent yes
Do you have a specific recruitment plan for the adult learner? (yes/no)	66.7%

Which Best Describes Your Recruitment Plan?

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Focused on recruiting adult learners into specific majors or into a specific academic college	50.0%
Subplan of a larger plan	35.7%
100 percent focused on adult programs	10.7%
Other*	3.6%

Respondents were instructed to choose one response only from the four options above.

*"Other" responses varied, with none of the same responses being identified by two or more respondents.

Time Since First Introduction of an Adult Degree Program

Public institutions, four-year and graduate levels combined	Percentage
Less than one academic year	4.8%
One to three academic years	9.5%
Four to five academic years	19.0%
Six to ten academic years	23.8%
Over ten academic years	42.9%

Usage and Effectiveness of 37 Practices for Generating Inquiries—Ordered by Percent Rated “Very Effective”

Rankings of Practices

Two-year public institutions

Survey items— Two-year public institutions	Institutions using practice	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Very or somewhat effective
Free application	92.0%	40.9%	22.7%	36.4%	63.6%
Website “request information” form	92.0%	27.3%	59.1%	13.6%	86.4%
Information sessions, face-to-face	92.0%	27.3%	36.4%	36.4%	63.6%
Partnerships with military	88.0%	19.0%	19.0%	61.9%	38.1%
Partnerships with businesses	92.0%	18.2%	45.5%	36.4%	63.6%
General college website	96.0%	17.4%	65.2%	17.4%	82.6%
Open houses (ground)	84.0%	15.0%	40.0%	45.0%	55.0%
Print media ads (newspaper, magazines, etc.)	92.0%	13.6%	45.5%	40.9%	59.1%
Billboards, bus, or other outdoor ads	64.0%	13.3%	33.3%	53.3%	46.7%
Award credits for nontraditional learning	80.0%	11.1%	38.9%	50.0%	50.0%
Television ads	76.0%	11.1%	33.3%	55.6%	44.4%
Content marketing to generate inquiries	80.0%	10.5%	57.9%	31.6%	68.4%
Outbound phone calling campaigns	80.0%	10.5%	52.6%	36.8%	63.2%
Faculty/departmental events	84.0%	10.0%	35.0%	55.0%	45.0%
Radio ads	88.0%	9.5%	52.4%	38.1%	61.9%
Direct mail (USPS)	88.0%	9.5%	47.6%	42.9%	57.1%
Partnerships with other colleges or schools	88.0%	9.5%	47.6%	42.9%	57.1%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)	92.0%	9.1%	40.9%	50.0%	50.0%
Business/community development	80.0%	5.3%	42.1%	52.6%	47.4%
Travel to business and industry to meet prospective students	84.0%	5.0%	3.0%	65.0%	35.0%
Education fairs	88.0%	0.0%	35.0%	65.0%	35.0%
Website pages focused on adult learner recruitment	64.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Off-campus group meetings for prospective students	56.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Travel to other colleges and schools	56.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Search engine optimization (SEO) to improve organic (non-paid) search engine results	48.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA

Rankings of Practices, Continued

Survey items— Two-year public institutions	Institutions using practice	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Minimally effective	Very or somewhat effective
Veteran yellow ribbon program participant	52.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Referral program	52.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pay-per-click ads on Facebook	52.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Other online ads (flat rate cost; not pay-per-click)	48.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Trade show exhibits	48.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pay-per-click ads on search sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo	40.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Online chat	40.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Email blasts to purchased email lists	40.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Purchasing names of prospective students from list vendors	40.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Web scheduling tool for appointments	32.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Information sessions via webinars	24.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Open houses (virtual)	16.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA

In an “Other” field provided at the end of this survey section, only a few responses were given with no two respondents naming the same practice.

Inquiry Tracking Practices

Routine Tracking of Inquiries

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percent yes
Do you routinely track the number of inquiries generated by the practices above? (yes/no)	41.7%

Use of Tracking Data for Recruitment Planning

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percent yes
If you answered yes to the previous question, do you use this information to guide your recruitment planning? (yes/no)	90.0%

Inquiry Follow-Up Practices

Usage of Six Modes of Communication for Following Up With Inquiries

Survey items— Two-year public institutions	Institutions using practice
Personalized email	92.0%
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	92.0%
Material mailed to home	92.0%
Non-personalized email	88.0%
Phone attempt by call center (internal or external)	56.0%
Text message	44.0%

Speed of Following Up with Inquiries Who Completed an Online Form on the Campus Website Via Popular Modes of Communication

Survey items— Two-year public institutions	Within a day	Within three days	Within a week	More than a week later
Personalized email	68.2%	9.1%	0.0%	22.7%
Non-personalized email	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	37.5%
Material mailed to home	27.8%	5.6%	50.0%	16.7%
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	20.0%	20.0%	33.3%	26.7%

Speed of Following Up With All Other Inquiries Via Popular Modes of Communication

Survey items— Two-year public institutions	Within a day	Within three days	Within a week	More than a week later
Personalized email	63.2%	21.1%	10.5%	5.3%
Material mailed to home	17.6%	29.4%	35.3%	17.6%
Phone attempt by staff not in a call center	NA	NA	NA	NA
Non-personalized email	NA	NA	NA	NA

Average Time Lapse Between Initial Follow-Up Contact(s) and an Appointment of Any Type (e.g., Phone, In Person, Skype) With an Enrollment Representative

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Within one week	75.0%
Greater than one week	25.0%

Average Time Lapse Between Receipt of a Completed Application and an Admissions Decision

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Within one week	100.0%
Greater than one week	0.0%

Average Time Lapse between Receiving an Application (Complete or Incomplete) and the First Day of Enrollment

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Within 90 days	69.2%
Greater than 90 days	30.8%

Tuition and Financial Aid Practices

Approaches to Adult Student Tuition

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage in agreement
Comparable to traditional day	44.0%
Lower than traditional day	8.0%
Higher than traditional day	0.0%
Charged per credit, not by semester	52.0%
Competitive in our market	48.0%
Tuition varies by program	4.0%

Respondents were instructed to affirm as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Financial Aid and Scholarship Practices

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Aid for part-time students	92.0%
Institutional scholarships/fellowships	88.0%
State scholarships	88.0%
Aid for full-time students	84.0%
Work study	84.0%
Tuition reimbursement from companies	80.0%
Discounts offered to external organizations	80.0%
VA benefits	72.0%
Payment plans	16.0%
Other*	4.0%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many of the above practices as their students could access.

In an “Other” field at the end of this section, no additional practices were mentioned by two or more respondents.

Organization, Resources, and Staffing for Adult Learner Recruitment

Organizational Design of Adult Programs

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Administered under a separate adult-focused school/college/division	76.0%
Administered by traditional academic and administrative units	12.0%
Administered under an adult-focused academic governance structure	0.0%
Operates collaboratively within traditional academic and administrative units	32.0%
Operates autonomously from traditional academic and administrative units	4.0%
Very much a part of the whole institution	44.0%
Fully accepted as an important part of our mission and purpose	44.0%
Not viewed as an important part of our mission and purpose	8.0%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Format of Adult Programs

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Evening classes	76.0%
Online	72.0%
Mixed modalities (online and on ground)	68.0%
On ground, on campus	64.0%
Semester-based	56.0%
Once weekly classes	56.0%
On ground, off campus	48.0%
Cohort-based	40.0%
Term-based	32.0%
Weekend classes	32.0%
Self-paced	20.0%
Monthly class start dates	4.0%
Every other week classes	0.0%
Competency-based model	0.0%

Respondents were instructed to indicate as many responses as were applicable to their situation.

Ratio of Annual Adult Learner Inquiries to Dedicated Enrollment Counselors

Caution: The findings in the next two tables have limited statistical validity due to low numbers of respondents.

Two-year public institutions	Statistic
First Quartile	285.7
Median	800.0
Third Quartile	1,250.0

Ratio of Annual Adult Learner Enrollees to Dedicated Enrollment Counselors

Caution: See note above

Two-year public institutions	Statistic
First Quartile	114.3
Median	500.0
Third Quartile	2,861.0

Who Makes the Official Admissions Decision?

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Campus admissions office	63.6%
Other*	40.9%
Registrar's office	9.1%
Program chair/head	4.5%
Adult program personnel	0.0%

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 18.2 percent indicated they are open admission enrollment. No other responses were given.*

Who is Primarily Responsible for Generating New Inquiries for Prospective Adult Learners?

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Traditional undergraduate enrollment department	70.8%
Other*	20.8%
Adult and/or online enrollment department	8.3%
Traditional graduate enrollment department	0.0%
A third party vendor	0.0%
Faculty	0.0%

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 12.5 percent indicated the marketing/recruitment office or staff is responsible for this. Other responses varied, with none of the same responses being identified by two or more respondents.*

Who is Primarily Responsible for Following Up with Inquiries from Prospective Adult Learners?

Survey items—Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Traditional undergraduate enrollment department	79.2%
Other*	12.5%
Adult and/or online enrollment department	8.3%
Traditional graduate enrollment department	0.0%
Faculty	0.0%
A third party vendor	0.0%

**Among the respondents who chose "Other," 8.3 percent indicated the marketing/recruitment office or staff has this responsibility. Other responses varied, with none of the same responses being identified by two or more respondents.*

Planning Practices

Use of a Recruitment Plan

Survey items— Two-year public institutions	Percent yes
Do you have a specific recruitment plan for the adult learner? (yes/no)	56.0%

Which Best Describes Your Recruitment Plan?

Survey items— Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Subplan of a larger plan	85.7%
100 percent focused on adult programs	7.1%
Focused on recruiting adult learners into specific majors or into a specific academic college	7.1%
Other	0.0%

Respondents were instructed to choose one response only from the four options above.

Time Since First Introduction of an Adult Degree Program

Survey items— Two-year public institutions	Percentage
Less than one academic year	13.0%
One to three academic years	8.7%
Four to five academic years	17.4%
Six to ten academic years	30.4%
Over ten academic years	30.4%

Respondent profile

Representatives from 195 colleges, universities, and graduate schools participated in the Ruffalo Noel Levitz April 2015 national electronic poll of adult learner recruitment and marketing practices. The poll was emailed to accredited, degree-granting institutions across the United States. All respondents had one or more degree programs specifically designed for adult learners. Respondents included 128 private four-year and graduate-level institutions, 42 public four-year and graduate level institutions, and 25 two-year public institutions. Among the respondents from the four-year and graduate-level institutions, more than 80 percent offered graduate programs for adult learners in addition to serving adult undergraduates.

Thank you to those who participated.

Private institutions

Note: Any participating two-year private colleges are included on this list.

Alaska Bible College (AK)
 Albright College (PA)
 Anderson University (SC)
 Asbury University (KY)
 Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (MO)
 Augsburg College (MN)
 Baker University (KS)
 Bay Path University (MA)
 Belmont Abbey College (NC)
 Bethel College (IN)
 Bluffton University (OH)
 Brandman University (CA)
 Bryan College (TN)
 Buena Vista University (IA)
 California National University for Advanced Studies (CA)
 Campbellsville University (KY)
 Cardinal Stritch University (WI)
 Catawba College (NC)
 Centenary College (NJ)
 Central Baptist College (AR)
 Chestnut Hill College (PA)
 Cincinnati Christian University (OH)
 Coker College (SC)
 College of New Rochelle, The (NY)
 College of Saint Elizabeth (NJ)
 College of Saint Scholastica, The (MN)
 Colorado School of Traditional Chinese Medicine (CO)
 Columbia College (SC)
 Columbia International University (SC)
 Concordia University (NE)
 Converse College (SC)
 Creighton University (NE)
 Criswell College (TX)
 Delaware Valley College (PA)
 Doane College (NE)
 Eckerd College (FL)
 Edgewood College (WI)
 Franciscan University of Steubenville (OH)
 Franklin Pierce University (NH)
 Friends University (KS)
 Georgia Military College (GA)
 Gordon College (MA)
 Grand View University (IA)
 Gratz College (PA)
 Greenville College (IL)
 Hilbert College (NY)
 Hiram College (OH)
 Huston-Tillotson University (TX)
 Judson University (IL)
 Kaplan University (MD)
 Keiser University (FL)
 Kettering University (MI)
 Keuka College (NY)
 La Salle University (PA)
 LaGrange College (GA)
 Lancaster Bible College (PA)
 Lee University (TN)
 LeTourneau University (TX)
 Lincoln College (IL)
 Linfield College (OR)
 Lipscomb University (TN)
 Loyola University Chicago (IL)
 Madonna University (MI)
 Manor College (PA)
 Maria College of Albany (NY)
 Marian University (WI)
 Marist College (NY)

Metropolitan College of New York (NY)
 Midway College (KY)
 Milligan College (TN)
 Mississippi College (MS)
 Mount Aloysius College (PA)
 Mount Saint Mary College (NY)
 Mount Saint Mary's University (CA)
 Mount St. Joseph University (OH)
 Mount St. Mary's University (MD)
 Mount Vernon Nazarene University (OH)
 Nazarene Bible College (CO)
 Nebraska Methodist College (NE)
 Neumann University (PA)
 New School, The (NY)
 New York Chiropractic College (NY)
 Newman University (KS)
 North Central College (IL)
 Northwest University (WA)
 Northwood University (MI)
 Oral Roberts University (OK)
 Ottawa University (KS)
 Pace University (NY)
 Piedmont College (GA)
 Pillar College (NJ)
 Point Park University (PA)
 Pratt Institute (NY)
 Quinnipiac University (CT)
 Reinhardt University (GA)
 Robert Morris University (PA)
 Rockford University (IL)
 Rollins College (FL)
 Sacred Heart University (CT)
 Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College (IN)
 Saint Mary's University of Minnesota (MN)
 Shorter University (GA)
 Southern Nazarene University (OK)
 Southwestern Assemblies of God University (TX)
 Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership (IL)
 St. Catherine University (MN)
 St. Edward's University (TX)
 St. Vincent's College (CT)
 Trevecca Nazarene University (TN)
 Trinity International University (IL)

Trocaire College (NY)
 Unification Theological Seminary (NY)
 United States Sports Academy (AL)
 University of Denver (CO)
 University of Mary (ND)
 Upper Iowa University (IA)
 Ursuline College (OH)
 Valparaiso University (IN)
 Vanguard University of Southern California (CA)
 Waynesburg University (PA)
 Webster University (MO)
 Wescoe School of Muhlenberg College, The (PA)
 Western New England University (MA)
 Wheeling Jesuit University (WV)
 William Jessup University (CA)
 Wilson College (PA)
 Wisconsin Lutheran College (WI)
 Xavier University (OH)

Public four-year and graduate institutions

Austin Peay State University (TN)
 California State University-Dominguez Hills (CA)
 California University of Pennsylvania (PA)
 Central Connecticut State University (CT)
 Central Washington University (WA)
 Clarion University of Pennsylvania (PA)
 Cleveland State University (OH)
 Concord University (WV)
 Darton State College (GA)
 East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania (PA)
 East Tennessee State University (TN)
 Eastern Illinois University (IL)
 Eastern Kentucky University (KY)
 Evergreen State College, The (WA)
 Georgia Southern University (GA)
 Great Basin College (NV)
 Missouri Western State University (MO)
 Northern Kentucky University (KY)
 Ohio University Main Campus (OH)
 Penn State World Campus (PA)
 Peru State College (NE)
 Portland State University (OR)
 Prairie View A & M University (TX)

Southern Connecticut State University (CT)
 Southern Polytechnic State University (GA)
 State University of New York at Binghamton (NY)
 State University of New York at New Paltz (NY)
 Tarleton State University (TX)
 Temple University School of Social Work (PA)
 Troy University (AL)
 University of Arizona (AZ)
 University of Houston - Downtown (TX)
 University of Kansas Edwards Campus (KS)
 University of Kansas Main Campus (KS)
 University of Massachusetts (MA)
 University of Minnesota-Crookston (MN)
 University of North Carolina Greensboro (NC)
 University of Northern Colorado (CO)
 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (WI)
 University of Wisconsin-Parkside (WI)
 University System of Georgia Office (GA)
 Wichita State University (KS)

Public two-year institutions

Cleveland State Community College (TN)
 College of DuPage (IL)
 Columbia State Community College (TN)
 Columbus State Community College (OH)
 Contra Costa College (CA)
 East Central College (MO)
 Eastern Iowa Community College District (IA)
 El Centro College (TX)
 Grayson College (TX)
 Harper College (IL)
 Hawkeye Community College (IA)
 Highland Community College (IL)
 Jefferson Community College (NY)
 Kaskaskia College (IL)
 Lakeshore Technical College (WI)
 McHenry County College (IL)
 Middlesex Community College (MA)
 Miles Community College (MT)
 North Arkansas College (AR)
 Owens Community College (OH)
 Pierpont Community & Technical College (WV)
 Rogue Community College (OR)
 State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (FL)
 State Fair Community College (MO)
 York Technical College (SC)

Questions about this report? Want to discuss the findings?

We hope you found this report to be helpful and informative. If you have questions or would like to discuss adult learner enrollment strategies with an expert from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, please contact us at 800.876.1117 or ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com. Our consultants are available to come to your campus to present the report findings and to offer adult learner recruitment and marketing counsel.

About Ruffalo Noel Levitz and our higher education research

A trusted partner to higher education, Ruffalo Noel Levitz helps systems and campuses reach and exceed their goals for enrollment, marketing, and student success. Our consultants work side by side with campus executive teams to facilitate planning and to help implement the resulting plans, using data and research to guide decision making.

For more than 20 years, we have conducted national surveys to assist campuses with benchmarking their performance. This includes benchmarking marketing/recruitment and student success practices and outcomes, monitoring student and campus usage of the web and electronic communications, and comparing institutional budgets and policies. There is no charge or obligation for participating, and responses to all survey items are strictly confidential. Participants have the advantage of receiving the findings first, as soon as they become available.

For more information, visit www.RuffaloNL.com.

Related reports from Ruffalo Noel Levitz

Benchmark Poll Report Series

www.noellelvitz.com/BenchmarkReports

E-Expectations Report Series

www.noellelvitz.com/E-ExpectationsSeries

Latest Discounting Report

www.noellelvitz.com/DiscountingReport

National Student Satisfaction-Priorities Reports

www.noellelvitz.com/SatisfactionBenchmarks

National Freshman Attitudes Reports

www.noellelvitz.com/FreshmanAttitudes

Read more about our higher education research at www.noellelvitz.com/TrendResearch.

Find it online:

This report is posted online at:

www.noellelvitz.com/BenchmarkReports

Sign up to receive additional reports or our e-newsletter.

Visit our webpage: www.noellelvitz.com/Subscribe

How to cite this report

Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2015). *2015 adult learner marketing and recruitment practices benchmark report*. Coralville, Iowa: Ruffalo Noel Levitz. Retrieved from www.noellelvitz.com/BenchmarkReports.

All material in this document is copyright © by Ruffalo Noel Levitz. Permission is required to redistribute information from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, either in print or electronically. Please contact us at ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com about reusing material from this document.

View previous reports on recruitment practices

Visit www.noellelvitz.com/BenchmarkReports to access our complete series of Benchmark Poll Reports, including previous reports on recruitment and marketing practices for undergraduate and graduate programs.