MOBILE ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT:

A Higher Education Digital Transformation

Introduction

In recent years, higher education institutions have seen a sharp drop in enrollment that today, due to the pandemic, has created an urgent set of issues for administrators and managers. By 2019, enrollment across public state schools, community colleges, for-profits and private liberal arts schools in the U.S. had **decreased for eight consecutive years**, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

This eight-year decline has been attributed to several factors, including the flat — and in some cases declining — number of high school graduates, a residual effect of the **low birth rates** experienced 20 years ago. The **escalating costs of a college education** also have a contributory impact. States are putting less money into higher education, and that has led to an increased reliance on tuition. As tuition costs increase and grants and scholarships decrease, college attendance becomes more of a financial challenge for many students. Today, with only 2 percent of nearly 3,000 higher education institutions operating their full brick and mortar campus operations, **COVID-19 restrictions** have added to the obstacles standing in the way of attending college on campus, resulting in further enrollment declines.

Interestingly, **a surge in demand** for educational opportunities offering 100% online degrees, credentials and coursework is countering the crisis in on-campus enrollment. This surge in demand seemingly precedes the pandemic and will long survive it. The challenge for colleges and universities is how to benefit from this surge. It's a running race to build a flexible institution with a strong online presence while maximizing structural academic integrity.

> **Having the right tools and technology to engage students in the enrollment process is perhaps a good place to start.**

The Outlook for Online Higher Education:
It's Booming

According to a recent survey by Strada Center for Consumer Insights, **42 percent of Americans** say that if they were to enroll in postsecondary education in the next six months, they would prefer an online education or training program.

This survey showed that the preference for online or hybrid options would remain strong even if COVID-19 weren't a threat:

31%	**28%**	**Ages 25-49**
of respondents said they would prefer a **hybrid** option	stated a preference for **online-only coursework**	the prime market for adult learning, had the **most favorable perceptions of online education**

The good news for online higher education is that graduates of these programs are much more satisfied with the value of their education.

54% of graduates of online-only four-year institutions say their education was worth the cost

59% would say their education made them an attractive candidate to employers

VS.

54% would recommend their educational path to others

35% of graduates of four-year institutions with hybrid or in-person programs say their education was worth the cost

51% would say their education made them an attractive candidate to employers

45% would recommend their educational path to others

Attractive online degree options, coupled with admission processes tailored to the online learner, are now crucial for institutions to achieve sustained growth. The competition, however, is mounting. Today, **over 1,500 degree-granting institutions** in the U.S. offer online programs. And the number of online programs (associate through doctorate) totals **more than 26,200.**
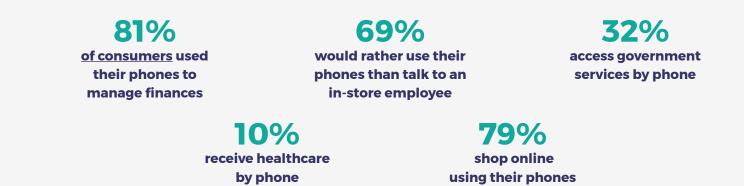
If your institution offers online programs, or is planning to launch new online programs, your first—and perhaps greatest—challenge will be to attract and enroll students within a crowded field of competitors.

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Meeting Students Where They Are —
On Their Phones

It's no secret that Americans are in love with their phones. Adults spent about **3.5 hours a day** using the mobile internet in 2019, and experts expect that time to grow to over four hours a day in 2021. Americans already check their phones **96 times a day** – that's once every 10 minutes!

Today, 85 percent of smartphone users prefer mobile messages **to calls or emails, and when it comes to activities of daily life:**

81%
of consumers used
their phones to
manage finances

69%
would rather use their
phones than talk to an
in-store employee

32%
access government
services by phone

10%
receive healthcare
by phone

79%
shop online
using their phones

It's clear from these trends that connecting with students on their phones can be a powerful solution for growing online higher education programs. With digital transformation accelerating at institutions across the nation, this transformation should include mobile enrollment management processes.

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WHY DO INSTITUTIONS NEED MOBILE ENROLLMENT?

According to the data platform, Statista, the Millennial generation was the largest generation group in the U.S. in 2019, with an estimated population of 72.1 million. Born between 1981 and 1996, Millennials recently surpassed Baby Boomers as the biggest group, and they will continue to be a major part of the population for many years.

In fact, more than half of today's online college students are Millennials, the majority of whom should be considered adult learners between the ages of 22 and 38 years old. These non-traditional learners want **easy access to the most relevant info** for their program of interest. Research has shown that the best way to communicate with this cohort is through digital platforms.

Overall, there is a major shift in technology dependence. The communication and enrollment interaction strategies traditionally deployed are no longer enough to engage effectively with today's tech savvy prospective online students.

> **In response, higher education institutions need to address the technological advances and meet the demands of 21st century consumer communication preferences.**

Student enrollment functions are stagnant in terms of functioning effectively with new student inquiries, admission and enrollment, communication and processing, and even with academic student support services. Overhauling strategic student recruitment and enrollment functions can begin with the implementation of mobile enrollment management.

Higher education leaders need to meet the communication preferences of today's online students by enhancing traditional enrollment processes with mobile innovations.

MEET EMMA™
The Solution to Higher Education Digital Transformation of Recruiting and Admissions

Prospective online students want to have the information they need in the palm of their hand. That's where Emma™ fits in. Emma is the **first and only comprehensive mobile enrollment solution** that meets the complex needs of institutions seeking to grow online programs by attracting, retaining, and graduating more adult learners. Emma is, in part, an advisor, reminder service, traffic cop, motivator – it's like assigning your staff to live with the prospective student until they have enrolled and graduated from their online degree program.

Succeeding in attracting prospective students is more than engaging with them across numerous mobile and digital touchpoints. It is connecting with them through communication, processes, and information tailored to their needs, at a time and place conducive to the prospective student. With Emma, institutions have a dynamic, user-friendly mobile platform that functions as a **24/7 enrollment management solution**, guiding students from their initial inquiry to their first day of class—and beyond.

Getting Ready for Mobile Enrollment:
3 Steps for Optimal Results

To be effective, mobile online enrollment strategies for institutions must include the following elements:

Know your customer base.

Students considering or entering 100 percent online degree programs have different wants or needs from a traditional ground student. Priorities have changed. Recognizing and embracing these changes will become the foundational cornerstone to preparing for digital enrollment.

Create mobile-friendly communications and engagement tools.

When you understand your target audience and how it differs from an audience of traditional campus students, you can make your website, content, and communications far more impactful and useful. All of these engagement tools must work in both a desktop and mobile environment because 40 percent of consumers will turn to a competitor's site after a bad mobile experience, and mobile users are five times more likely to abandon a task if a site isn't optimized for mobile.

Optimize your technology.

Information technology infrastructures need to meet the demands of today's environment and student population with flexibility and adaptability. Each department should utilize a common technology platform with triggers and actions working together collectively. If a student (or prospective student) calls in, technology should show the entire picture of that student. Is something needed from the financial aid office, is something needed from the registrar's office, or are there academic issues? Whoever is speaking with this student should be able to service the student holistically because technology is driving all interactions with data and communication.

Powered by AI, Emma™ is highly tailored to your institution and personalizes each user experience, with expert advice and assistance throughout the entire admissions, enrollment and retention process. The technology guides prospective students through the enrollment pathway, with interviews, educational history and qualification matches to degree requirements.

More importantly, Emma communicates to analyze behavior and customize outreach and engagement in unprecedented ways.

Emma™ guides each student across

- Initial program discovery and inquiry
- Admissions interview
- Evaluation of requirements
- Document collection
- Post-applicant nurturing
- Start coaching
- Retention support / Early alert

Emma™ provides institutions

- Seamless integration with already existing student information systems
- Short-term contract model, no long-term contracts
- Performance-based recruiting, enrollment and retention services
- No upfront cost
- Low-impact technology integration
- White-labeled solutions for institutions
- Data analyzation of student journey

> *"With Emma™, Perdia is redefining enrollment by providing institutions with new technologies that enhance and accelerate online program growth with improved conversion and reduced expenses. Driven by artificial intelligence and behavior science, Emma responds to the shifting communications preferences of today's students by delivering clear, concise and real-time information where they want it, when they want it."*

TONY HUFFMAN, FOUNDER AND CEO OF PERDIA EDUCATION

How Emma™ Addresses the Top 4 Challenges Faced by Enrollment Managers

1 Traditional systems are online failures.

CRMs, student information systems, and learning management systems are built to solve traditional recruitment and enrollment needs. They are not built to address the requirements of online student acquisition and are ill-equipped to deliver the integrations and analytics required in online higher education. The many touchpoints that make up the online student experience often are managed by separate, siloed systems, resulting in wasted time and extra demands on personnel. Perdia's patent-pending Emma™ platform was specifically designed to deliver a **positive, integrated enrollment experience** for online students through its student-centric technological infrastructures.

2 Third-party OPMs are not the solution.

Online Program Managers (OPMs) encourage institutions to outsource their online processes, including enrollment, admissions and retention, to third-party businesses. However, OPM solutions come with long-term contracts and "black-box" procedures that result in the loss of control and transparency for institutions and higher costs for students. Emma is not an OPM. Our performance-based recruiting, enrollment and retention services are provided on a short-term contract model. **White-labeled for colleges and universities,** Emma delivers turnkey, low impact and seamless integration with an institution's existing enrollment software and technology.

3 Online enrollment procedures too often fail to reflect the unique needs of adult learners.

Online education must meet the needs of an even more diverse demographic pool than traditional higher education institutions. According to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, **40 percent** of today's students are adults **25 years or older**. Of those students, **62 percent** of them are **working part-time or full-time jobs** and **28 percent** of them also have **children at home.** The demands upon their time and attention are far different from those of the traditional student, fresh out of high school. Emma is tailored for today's online students, delivering targeted, tailored content throughout the student enrollment journey. Plus, its use of **sophisticated AI technology and behavioral science** serve to customize student engagement.

4 Institutions remain challenged by the need to optimize staff.

Colleges and universities must work to scale their existing personnel to handle the new dynamics, needs and hurdles that arise with online enrollment. Emma serves as a staffing solution to optimize existing employee time and expand human capital without overhead investment. By providing students with the **information that they need 24/7, 365 days a year,** Emma is there when employees go home.

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USING EMMA™ TO DRIVE ONLINE ENROLLMENT: WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY

About William Carey University

William Carey University (WCU) is a private Christian college with campuses located in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Biloxi, Mississippi, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The university has 5,042 students, with 3,249 undergraduate and 1,793 graduate students.

The Challenge

Historically, William Carey University relied heavily on traditional recruitment practices with strong ties to local and state-level K-12 educators. However, with their focus on innovation, WCU began pursuing solutions for virtual recruiting before the pandemic began, which paid off in dividends when face-to-face recruiting was no longer an option. WCU took the critical step of recognizing the importance of connecting on a personal level with prospective online students to better understand their admissions journeys and online program interests. Yet, they lacked the data, analytics and insight into the student journey to grow online program enrollments, and determine what progams to offer.

Perdia's Emma™ Solution

William Carey University engaged Perdia Education to accelerate the university's comprehensive plans for online program growth. The university was able to tap into Perdia's knowledge base and deploy the Emma™ platform to open the stream of communications with prospective online students 24/7. In doing so, data-driven insights and analysis revealed areas to improve the student admissions experience. **Emma not only became a powerful resource for WCU's internal staff to virtually recruit online students, but also informed the development of a seamless admissions process.** In supporting the internal staff with expanded recruitment and admissions capabilities, WCU has been able to reach a wider audience more quickly than their previous traditional tactics.

> " *We've seen tangible results since we engaged Perdia, with Emma™ opening up our ability to communicate with students right from the start of their interest in WCU. An additional and unexpected benefit has been that Emma identified areas of opportunity to improve our admissions process and upgrade the recruitment experience for prospective students. This has enabled us to improve the admissions experience not just for our online students but for all students across their WCU journey."*

BEN BURNETT, PH.D., EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY

Emma™ Steps Up to Help
Online Enrollment Managers

Today's online enrollment manager has to wear many hats.

- Oversee the university's recruitment, enrollment, and retention of online students

- Advise on the online admissions and enrollment processes and evaluate online student applications for admissions and/or financial aid

- Monitor, track and report on intake statistics

- Coordinate with other university departments to provide needed services for online students

- Present information in a variety of forums and formats

- Create and coordinate communications for consistent messaging

Emma™ is designed to wear even more hats.

- Marketing medium analyzer

- Communication expert

- Personal educational assistant

- Structured admissions interviewer

- Validator of fit-for-purpose

- Document collector

- Post-applicant nurturer

- Student start coach

- Early alert indicator

- Data-driven consultant

> "*Emma™ serves as a powerful, 24/7 extension of our in-house admissions and enrollment teams, enabling us to share our programs, processes and guidelines with potential students on their own timeline. With students clearly preferring to use online apps to research information and communicate with others, we see Emma's technology as the wave of the future.*"

BEN BURNETT, PH.D., EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION
AT WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY

Are you ready to embrace the future of online higher education enrollment?

Schedule a virtual meeting and learn more about how Emma
can enhance online student enrollment at

ScheduleOnce

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