

CASE STUDY

VIRTUAL SUMMER ENGAGEMENT OF NEW FRESHMEN

INTRODUCTION

When May comes and the deposits begin to roll in, admissions officers get their first real sense of how their class is shaping up. Many sigh in relief, while others take stock of what went wrong. In either case, well run admissions offices quickly turn to consolidating deposits made in the spring into real enrollments in the fall.

A good summer engagement strategy certainly mitigates the risk of melt. It also nurtures enrolling students through a time of transition, so they arrive on campus prepared to join their new community. Summer engagement helps students navigate questions about advising, registration, and finances, as well as sets their expectations for the academic program and the community culture.

Historically, institutions have engaged students through on-campus summer orientation programs and pre-enrollment orientation. It is a big ask for families to travel to campus over the summer, though. As an alternative, institutions have mounted email and phone campaigns that consume resources without necessarily yielding results.

This case study highlights how the University of San Diego (USD) used a digital student engagement platform to effectively and efficiently overcome transition issues. The admissions team at USD partnered with student affairs to develop the strategy and used a trusted technology partner to execute the plan. As a result, over the course of four years, USD has seen both quantitative and qualitative improvement in summer engagement, summer melt, and orientation.

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UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO, CA • PRIVATE • ~8,000 STUDENTS



IMPROVE TRANSITION, DECREASE SUMMER MELT

As a private university with high tuition and a high percentage of out-of-state students, University of San Diego is sensitive to burdening families with the travel costs associated with attending an on-campus orientation early in the summer.

Knowing the importance of summer engagement, from the day of deposit to the day of enrollment, USD built a strategic partnership between admissions and student affairs to build and execute on a virtual summer engagement strategy.

THE RIGHT PLATFORM MAKES IMPLEMENTATION PAINLESS

In 2012, USD admissions staff felt that one of their existing technology partners, **CollegeWeekLive**, would be an ideal platform to engage new students. Building on its existing partnership with USD admissions, the company provided a high level of support in training, scheduling, developing content, marketing, and mitigating technology risks for summer engagement webcasts. The expertise it has gained from working with many clients on summer engagement allowed them to highlight many best practices.

USD tested the waters by launching one webcast designed to help students navigate an onerous advising and registration survey. As a result, 69% of deposited freshmen participated in the first webcast, and registration, which usually took two months to complete, was 90% complete after one month.

WELL DESIGNED SUMMER ENGAGEMENT WELCOMES STUDENTS INTO COMMUNITY

USD's first-year success led to the development of four summer webcasts. Each year, one webcast was created to cover additional areas such as

WHY USE TECHNOLOGY?

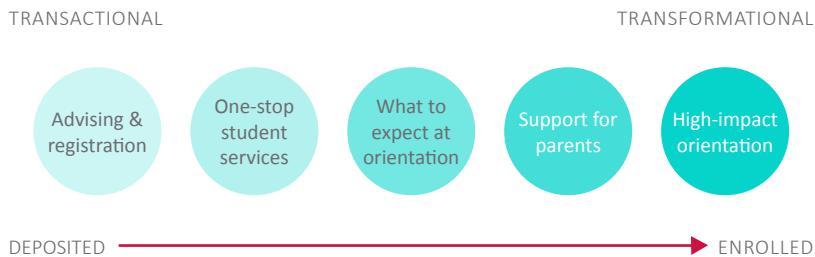
- Improve engagement for new students
- Reduce summer melt
- Expedite transactional aspects of orientation

WHAT IS THE RESULT?

- Continue conversation with students after deposit is received
- Speed up advising and registration
- Avoid ineffectiveness of telephone and email
- Build momentum for on-campus orientation
- Ameliorate summer melt
- Focus orientation on welcoming students into a new community

business transactions at USD's one-stop shop, getting the most out of on-campus orientation, and a parent-focused session on how to both support and let go of their children.

Figure 1. Transition from transactional to transformational interactions



As a result of this summer engagement series, USD has been able to set a registration deadline of one month from the date of deposit, reduce summer melt from 11% to 6%, and, perhaps most importantly, change the nature of on-campus orientation.

Over those four years, USD virtually moved the transactional aspects of orientation earlier into the summer. This enabled its team to build momentum for the transformational experiences to come during on-campus orientation.

The densely packed orientation agenda once filled with transactional activities alongside crucial cultural, social, and academic activities is more relaxed now. Students have time to do what they most desire: to meet and get to know their new classmates, to move into their dorms, and to say goodbye to their families.

USD will continue to develop summer engagement using CollegeWeekLive, perhaps incorporating the platform's ability to connect engagement data with USD's newly launched CRM system to better track student summer engagement.

The combination of a strategic vision to improve summer engagement and a cost effective, easy to implement engagement platform helped USD welcome new students into their vibrant community with appropriate focus on the transformational experience of being a student at USD.

ABOUT EDUVENTURES

Eduventures is the leading research and advisory firm focused exclusively on analyzing the forces transforming higher education. Building on twenty years of success in working with education leaders, Eduventures provides forward-looking, actionable research based on proprietary market data and advisory services that support both strategic and operational decision-making. Our recommendations and personalized support enable clients to understand the top traits of leaders in critical disciplines and to evaluate the opportunities presented by new technologies.

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