

# From Interest to Enrollment

Marketing at Each Stage  
of the Student Journey

# Meet Your Moderator



Michael Assink  
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Michael currently serves as the Vice President of Sales for MLive Media Group, focusing on the Advance Travel and Tourism team, as well as key accounts in the business-to-business and Education space.

Michael has been in advertising and marketing since 1991, with experience in sales team development for media companies and campaign development at the client level. The majority of his career has been spent in Michigan, spending time with organizations in all areas of the state. The last seven years of his career have been focused on digital marketing and using new media channels to help clients grow business.

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# Meet Your Presenter



Therri Oberdick  
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Therri currently serves as Account Director for Mlive Media Group, focusing on Healthcare, Education and Finance clients in Michigan.

Beginning her journey in the world of publishing, Therri joined MLive Media Group through its B2B publication in 2005 and has held various positions within the organization's advertising and marketing teams.

Therri's extensive background in marketing, technology, and automotive OEMs allows her to provide valuable insight and consultation to clients in a wide range of industries. Therri has a passion for delivering results-oriented solutions with integrity—and developing long-term mutually beneficial partnerships.

# About MLive Media Group

MLive Media Group is a division of Advance Local, a leading national media company comprised of 12 news and information websites that rank #1 among local media in their respective markets. While the history of our company stretches back to the 1800's with our eight newspaper properties, the MLive Media Group that exists today was incorporated in 2012.

Advance Local is part of Advance Publications, along with Condé Nast and American City Business Journals. Throughout our history in Michigan, we have worked with thousands of local Michigan businesses, as well as government/legislature, from local to state levels.



# Agenda

## From Interest to Enrollment Marketing at Each Stage of the Student Journey

### Part 1: **Who Are Today's Students?**

An overview

### Part 2: **Capturing Their Attention**

How great content cuts through the noise

### Part 3: **Getting On Their Short List**

Close the deal by knowing what they really want

### Part 4: **Following Up, Staying Engaged**

Retain the students you have and create ambassadors

### Part 5: **Conclusion and Questions**

# Do Colleges *Really* Need to Market Themselves?

*Mentioning “marketing” in relation to higher education used to be taboo. That’s not how colleges thought of themselves. But a shift has taken place. And it’s healthy.*

*Colleges are becoming more sophisticated in segmenting their markets. It’s not advertising. It’s thinking carefully about your programs and the people who attend them, and then making sure your message matches the audience.*

—Michael Lofstead, education consultant  
and web strategist



# **The Student's Journey**

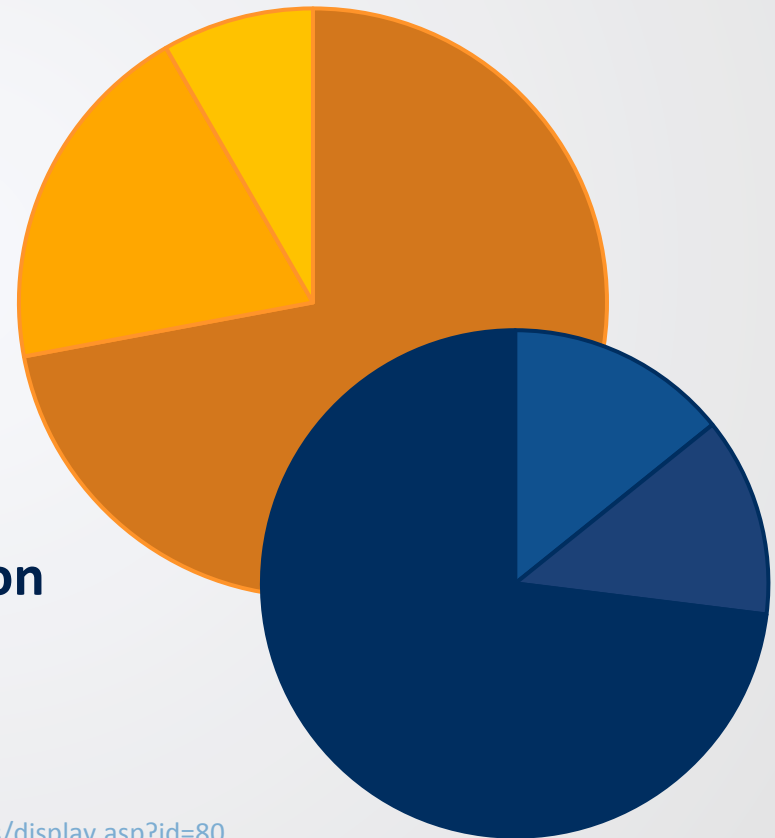
## **Part 1: Who Are Today's Students?**



# The Student Body at a Glance

Total U.S. enrollment (undergraduate & graduate): **20.4 million**

- **Public: 14.7 million**
- **Private nonprofit: 4 million**
- **Private for profit: 1.7 million**
- **Classroom only: 14.9 million**
- **Online only: 2.6 million**
- **Classroom and online: 2.9 million**



# Portrait of Generation Z



- Born 1998 to present, 69 million strong
- The fully digital generation—no knowledge of life before the Internet
- Average 3-plus hours per day staring into a screen

Source: “Emerging Theme Radar: What if I told you...”, December 2, 2015, <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/pages/macroeconomic-insights-folder/what-if-i-told-you/report.pdf>; “Everything You Need to Know About Generation Z,” February 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-generation-z-born-in-the-digital-age-2015-2>

# They Are

- **Practical** – 79% want internships/professional experience; 85% want to learn skills like financial planning
- **Uncertain** – 82% say finding the best college for them is an obstacle; 63% cite the application process
- **Entrepreneurial** – 63% want to study entrepreneurship; 72% would like the option to design their own major

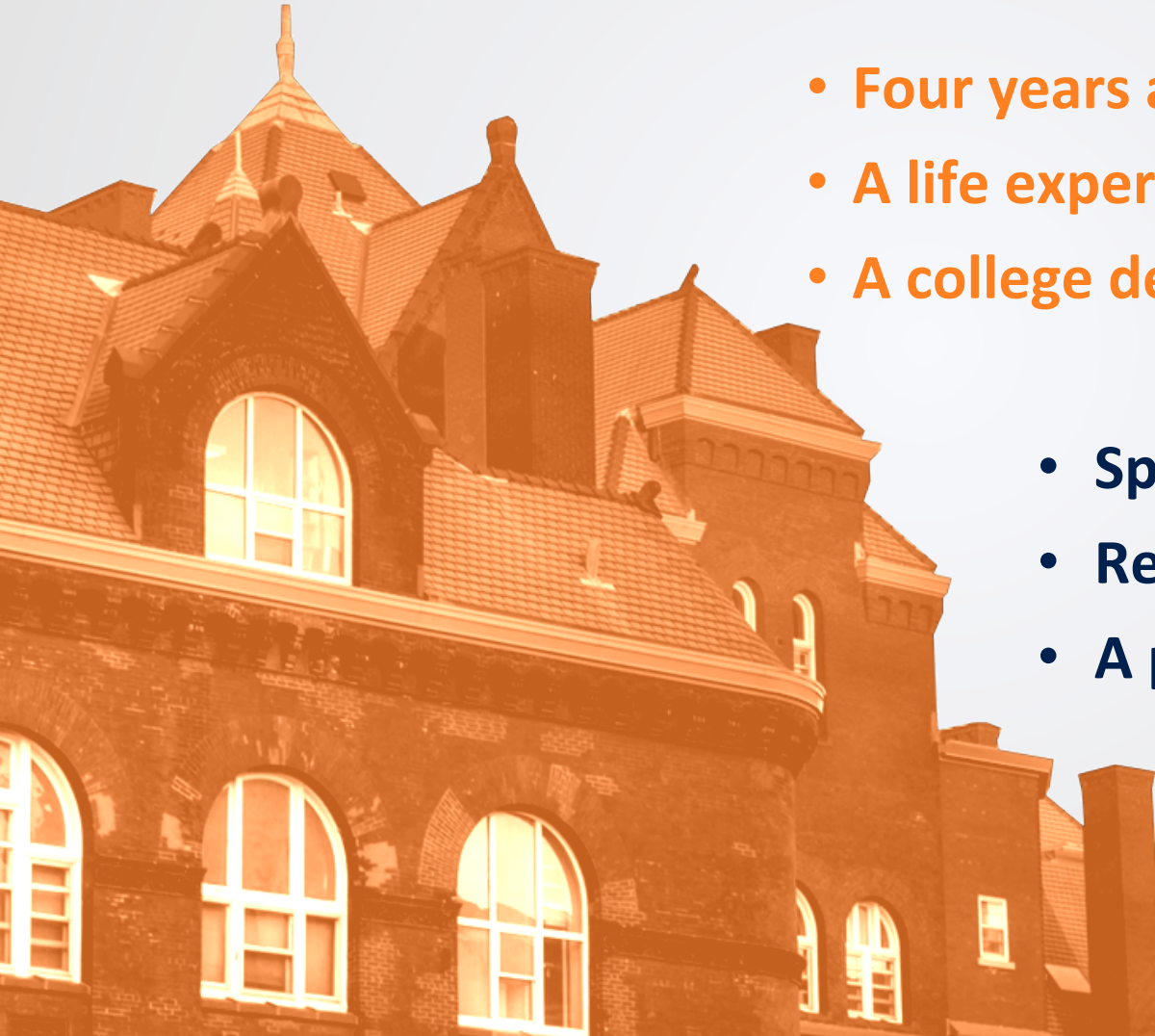
# What They Expect from College

## Then

- Four years and ivy-covered walls
- A life experience
- A college degree

## Now

- Specialized programs
- Return on investment
- A path to a career



# Parent Expectations and Their Impact on Student Decisions

60% of prospective college students report they research colleges with their parents, and 61% of parents say that the final decision on where to enroll is made together.

## Most Important Factors:

- Safe environment
- Real-life marketable skills
- A good "fit"
- A first-rate academic experience
- Affordability



# Portrait of Non-Traditional Students



- Age 25 and older
- Fastest growing educational demographic making up 47% of student population on campus
- Balancing multiple demands
  - Works full-time or part-time
  - Commuter
  - Veteran
  - Has dependents other than a spouse/partner

Source: <http://www.back2college.com/library/faq.htm>

# They Are

- **Lifelong Learners**

- **Personal:** 74% of adults participate in activities that advance their knowledge about something of personal interest
- **Professional:** 63% of working adults are looking to advance their career

- **Seeking knowledge** – Personal learners cite the following sources for education: publications (58%), clubs (35%), conventions (30%), courses (25%), and online courses (16%)

- **Driven** – Professional learners reference the following reasons for furthering education: learn job skills (55%), need certification (36%), get a raise (24%), get a new job (13%)

# What They Expect from College

- **Flexibility** – in time, and location, for course completion and access to student services
- **Accelerated Learning** – degrees designed to be completed in a shorter time frame
- **Individualized Programming** – highly customized coursework to align with career goals and prior learning



# The Student's Journey

## Part 2: Capturing Their Attention



# The Plugged-In Student

Then



Now





# Lost in (cyber)Space

**31m** – US internet users who will only go online via a mobile device in 2016

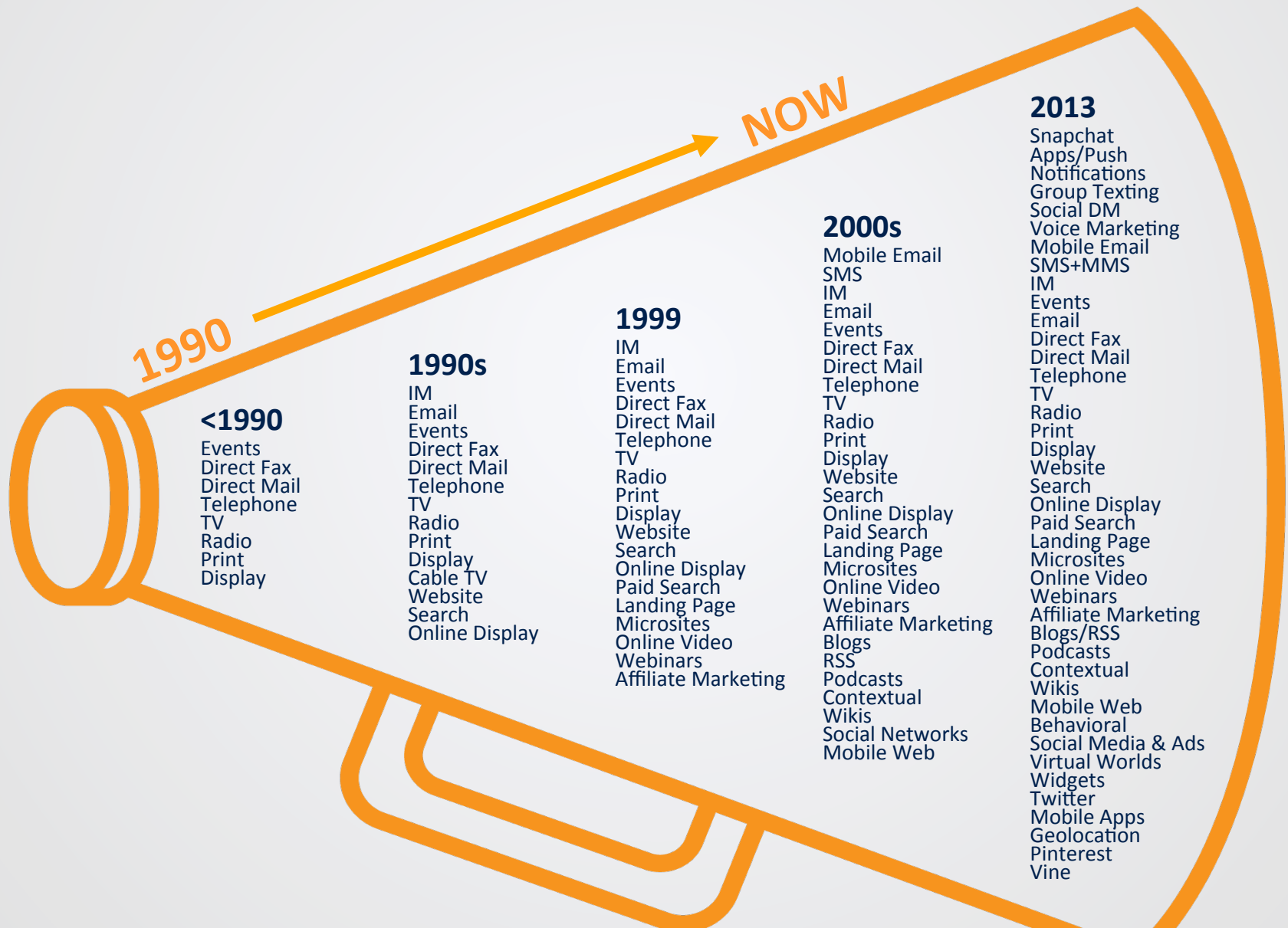
**198** – Number of minutes North Americans age 16-24 spend on mobile devices daily

**98** – Percentage of text messages opened compared with 20 percent of emails

**65** – Percentage of monthly Facebook users who use it daily

Source: eMarketer, “US Internet Users Rely on Mobile Devices for Digital Access”, March 2, 2016, <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/US-Internet-Users-Rely-on-Mobile-Devices-Digital-Access/1013649#sthash.XlZAxw7r.dpuf>; Statista, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/295148/us-teen-mobile-internet-users-by-age/>; Mobile Marketing Watch, “SMS Marketing Wallops Email with 98% Open Rate and only 1% spam, <http://mobilemarketingwatch.com/sms-marketing-wallops-email-with-98-open-rate-and-only-1-spam-43866/>; DMR Facebook Statistic Report (January 2016), <http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/downloads/facebook-statistics/>

# The Expanding Content Megaphone



# It's a Crowded Digital World



## Search results:

### Search term

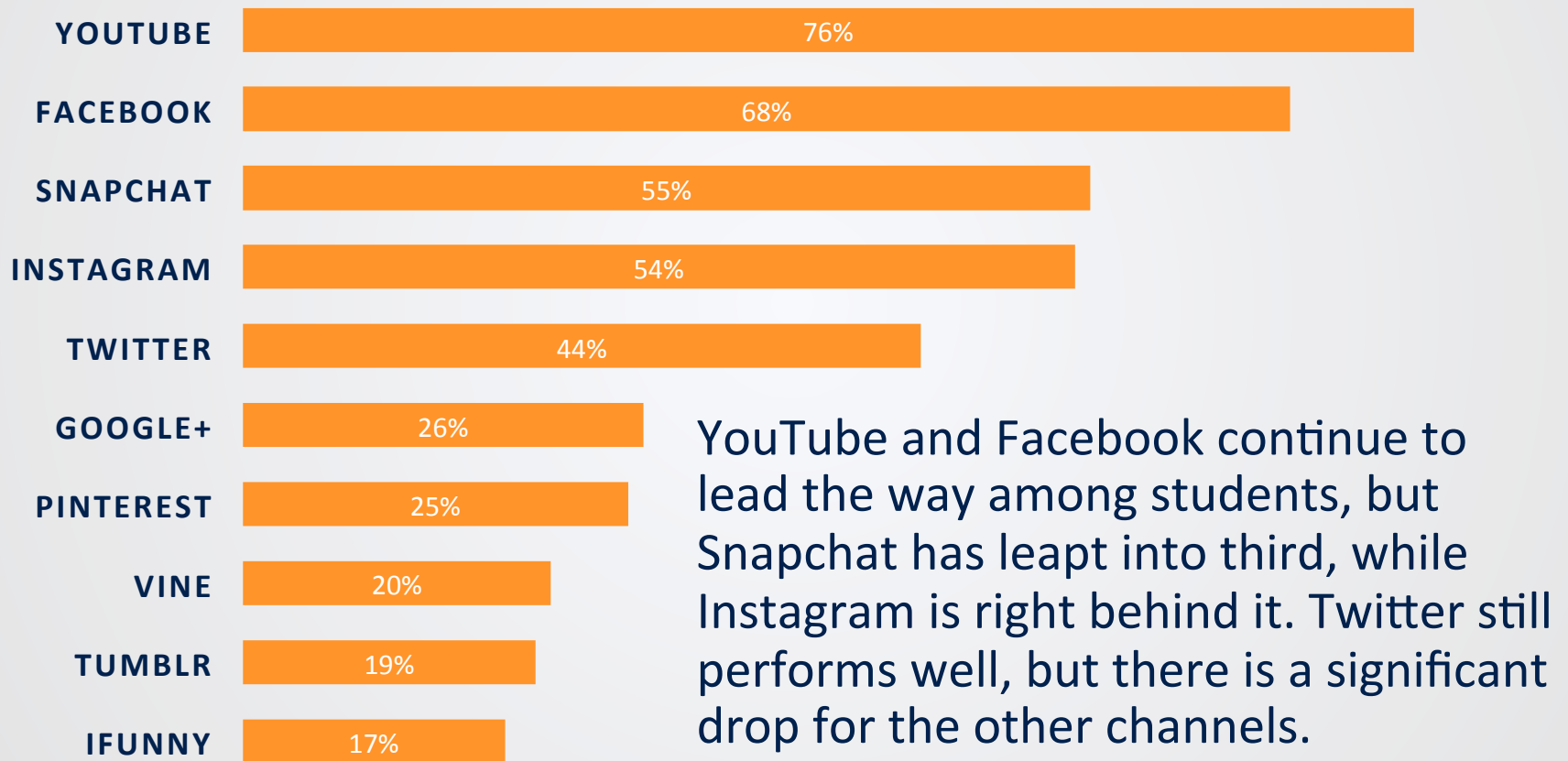
### Number of results\*

- College 2.4 billion
- College search 1.7 billion
- Online college 1.5 billion
- Best colleges for me 1.2 billion
- Graduate degree 458 million
- Best colleges in the East 135 million
- Best colleges for computer science in the West 43 million
- Affordable colleges in the Midwest 431,000

\*Google, as of April 2016

# Where to Find Them on Social Media

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS USED AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK BY STUDENTS



Source: Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2015 E-Expectations Report, average percentage of responses from juniors and seniors, <https://www.ruffalonl.com/papers-research-higher-education-fundraising/2015/2015-e-expectations-report>

# Your Content Strategy

Don't just wing it. Address these key areas:

- **Your goals** – What are your overall objectives in creating content?
- **Your plan** – How will you ensure each piece of content furthers those goals?
- **Your resources** – Do you have the appropriate staff to create and distribute great content?
- **Your partners** – What external help might you need to fulfill your goals?
- **Measurement** – How will you define and measure success (and course correct) as needed?



# Ways to Reach Today's Students



## Discovered via:

- Your website
- Social media  
(Facebook, Twitter, Instagram,  
etc.)
- Media partners
- Search engine optimization

# Four Ways to Make Your Content Hit Home

## #1 Design for mobile

Optimize your content for **both large and small screens**, if you can. But if you must choose one or the other, go with mobile. Content designed to look great on a larger screen may be unreadable on a Smartphone—where your prospective students spend so much of their time.

# Four Ways to Make Your Content Hit Home

## #2 Consider keywords carefully

When advertising for keywords on Google or other search engines, recognize that a busy nurse seeking an advanced degree will use different search terms from a prospective undergraduate. Target different content to the likely searches for each type of student.

# Four Ways to Make Your Content Hit Home

## #3 Eliminate friction

Avoid overly clever wordplay and coy messaging that takes three clicks to get to a punch line. These approaches may be perfect for a print magazine, but online they just create friction that may drive impatient visitors away. Concentrate on clear, direct language focused on the visitors' needs.

# Four Ways to Make Your Content Hit Home

## #4 Offer appropriate calls to action

The goal of content is to drive enrollment. But a call to “Apply now” may be too much, too soon. Few prospects are going to apply based on an initial internet search. Instead, feature calls to action that guide them to further information and ways to more deeply explore what you offer.



A black pushpin is pinned to a map, with the text "The Student's Journey Part 3: Getting on Their Short List" overlaid. The map shows various locations including Buffalo, Jewett, Thornton, and Perry. The text is in a light blue color, and the pushpin is in the upper right corner.

# The Student's Journey

## Part 3: Getting on Their Short List

# Show Them Value

*Students today want to know what they're getting out of this purchase.*

—Brendan Mernin, founding tutor  
with Noodle Pros

# Students are *Focused on Results*

**Nanodegrees** – Highly targeted “microcredentials” that prepare them for specific jobs in tech or business.

**The Rise of Community Colleges** – No longer a last resort, rising quality and low cost make these schools an increasingly popular option.

**Online U.** – A quarter of U.S. undergraduate and graduate students take at least some of their courses online. Of these students, more than half are full-time online.

**Blended Learning** – Combining the best of face-to-face and online learning in individual courses. Online students periodically meet face-to-face with students, and traditional in-person courses supplement the curriculum with online material.

# **Your Content Should...**

Highlight areas where you are uniquely equipped to prepare students for specific careers or destinies. Instead of presenting yourself as all things to all students, understand at a visceral level what you do best, and communicate that.

# How Two Colleges Do It

**Western Governors University** and **Southern New Hampshire University's College for America** are two high-profile examples of competency-based education schools. Students enrolled in these formal programs work closely with those in support roles (e.g., academic coaches, coordinators, advisors, mentors) to build and establish their knowledge and skills. Courses are designed with specific learning outcomes or goals, and students are assessed through a combination of tests, projects, presentations and other activities, but without the traditional structure of lectures and class time.



# Students are *Worried about Money*



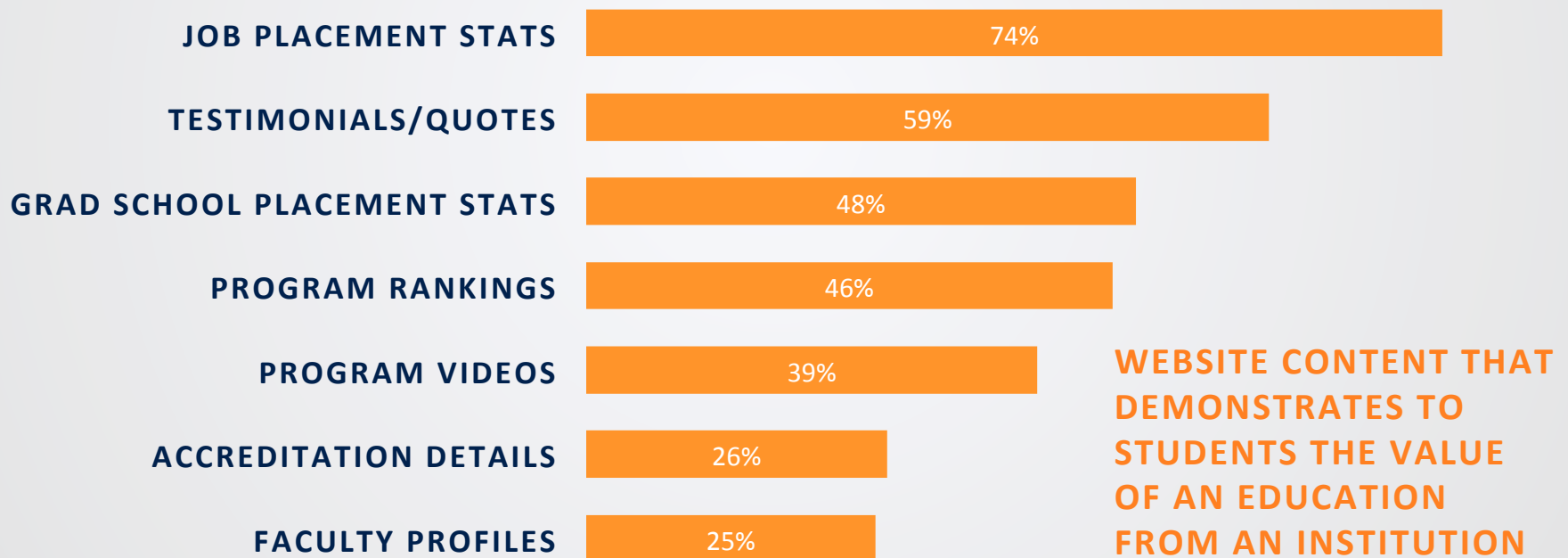
- **67% concerned about affording college**
- **64% concerned about getting a job**
- **72% feel stressed about personal finances**
- **Just 22% always follow a weekly or monthly budget**

## The good news:

- 81% see college as necessary for the career they want
- 78% believe they'll one day be able to support themselves financially

# Your Content Should...

Stress the value you create. If you offer a great education at bargain rates, make sure **that message** resonates loud and clear in your content. If your tuition is on the high end, stress the long-term benefits, such as starting salaries of your graduates, or admissions to graduate school.



Source: Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2015 E-Expectations Report, average percentage of responses from juniors and seniors, <https://www.ruffalonl.com/papers-research-higher-education-fundraising/2015/2015-e-expectations-report>

# How One College Does It

**University of Richmond in Virginia**, while a high-cost, elite college, delivers value through abundant financial aid and grant packages that put it on par financially with almost any other public college in the state. Combine that with one of the highest four-year graduation rates in the country and you've got a good fiscal bet.

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{COST}}{\text{RETURN}}$$

**COST**  
[Annual Education Cost - (Grants + Scholarships)] x Years to Graduate

**RETURN**  
Annual Expected Salary - Annual Loan Repayment

# Students are... *Eager to Serve*

Celebrate opportunities for them to help those in your state or area, through course work or volunteering.

- **26.4% of teenagers 16-19 volunteer for charitable causes.** Later in life, nearly 40% of college graduates will volunteer.



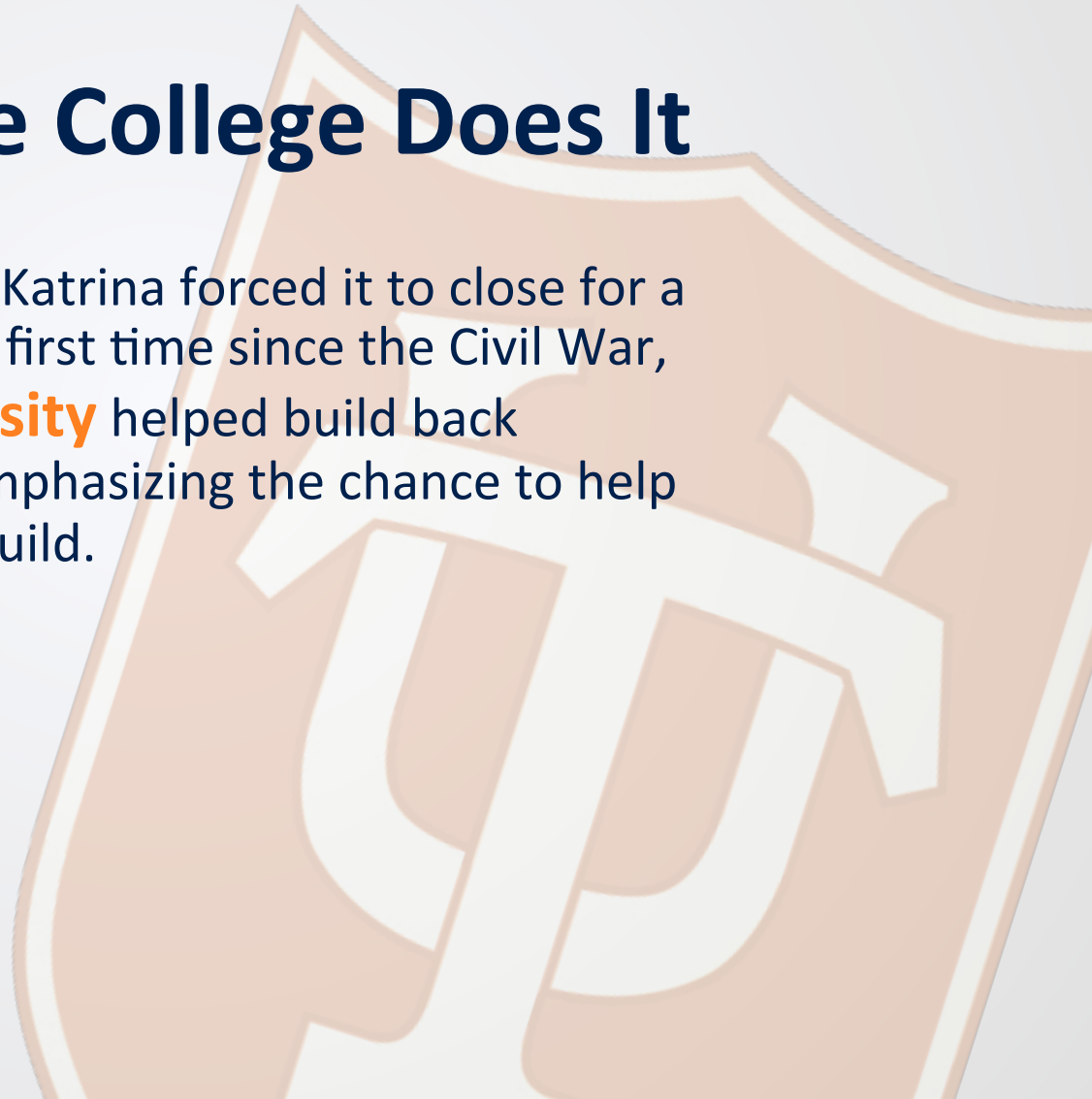
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>

# **Your Content Should...**

Highlight efforts by your institution to be a conscientious citizen of your community, and the world.

# How One College Does It

When Hurricane Katrina forced it to close for a semester for the first time since the Civil War, **Tulane University** helped build back enrollment by emphasizing the chance to help New Orleans rebuild.







# Students are... *Hungry*

CURRENT TOP 5 COLLEGES WITH THE BEST FOOD,  
ACCORDING TO CHEGG.COM

1. **Bowdoin College**

Students love: “The Bowdoin Log”

2. **UCLA**

Students love: “Chocolate Mousse Bombs”

3. **Occidental College**

Students love: “Butternut squash ravioli”

4. **Virginia Tech**

Students love: “Gelato”

5. **UMass Amherst**

Students love: “Chicken breast schnitzel with chipotle salsa”

# **Your Content Should...**

Highlight areas of campus life, food or otherwise, that will enhance the experience for students who enroll.

A dark, blue-tinted photograph of several students sitting at a long table in a library or study hall. They are focused on their work, with some looking at books and others at laptops. The background shows bookshelves filled with books.

# **The Student's Journey**

## **Part 4: Following Up, Staying Engaged**

# Focus on Retention

**Only 59%** of students who enroll in 4-year colleges graduate within 6 years.

Even as you market to prospects and alumni, don't let your current students fall through the cracks.

- Keep delivering content about your programs and specialties, just as you did when they were prospects.
- Establish red flags that alert you when a student might be in danger of dropping out.
- Step up your advisory program to give students a path from enrollment to graduation.
- Target content to students who have withdrawn, encouraging them to return.

# How One College Does It

**Delgado Community College** launched an innovative College Coach program and series of focused workshops that serve to help students transition from high school to the demands of college with the assistance of campus leaders. Results show more freshman are continuing to the second semester than were previously. Most importantly, students are learning new skills and gaining confidence through participation in the college's success programs.

# Building a Sense of Community

Nothing says community like students spontaneously sharing happy moments online. Find creative ways to encourage them.



# How One College Does It

**The University of Michigan** has built a vibrant, interconnected social media presence that not only pushes out information, but also encourages the involvement of current students and alumni.

Students hashtag their personal Instagram photos with things like **#UMInstagram** **#UMsocial**, in hopes that they will be picked up and posted on official school accounts. The school has an authentic and personal presence that celebrates the community's moments of achievement and appreciation of the school.

- **100,000+ Instagram followers**
- **740,000+ Facebook fans**
- **9,000+ Twitter followers**
- **2<sup>nd</sup> college on Snapchat**

# Creating Student Ambassadors

Enthusiastic students you once relied upon to lead campus tours can be a big help engaging prospects seeking information on social media.

Equip them with:

## **Rules of engagement**

Guidelines for language and conduct that best represent the college

## **Taking the conversation offline**

Ways to move from a public forum to a one-to-one conversation, turning a casual visitor into a recruitment opportunity

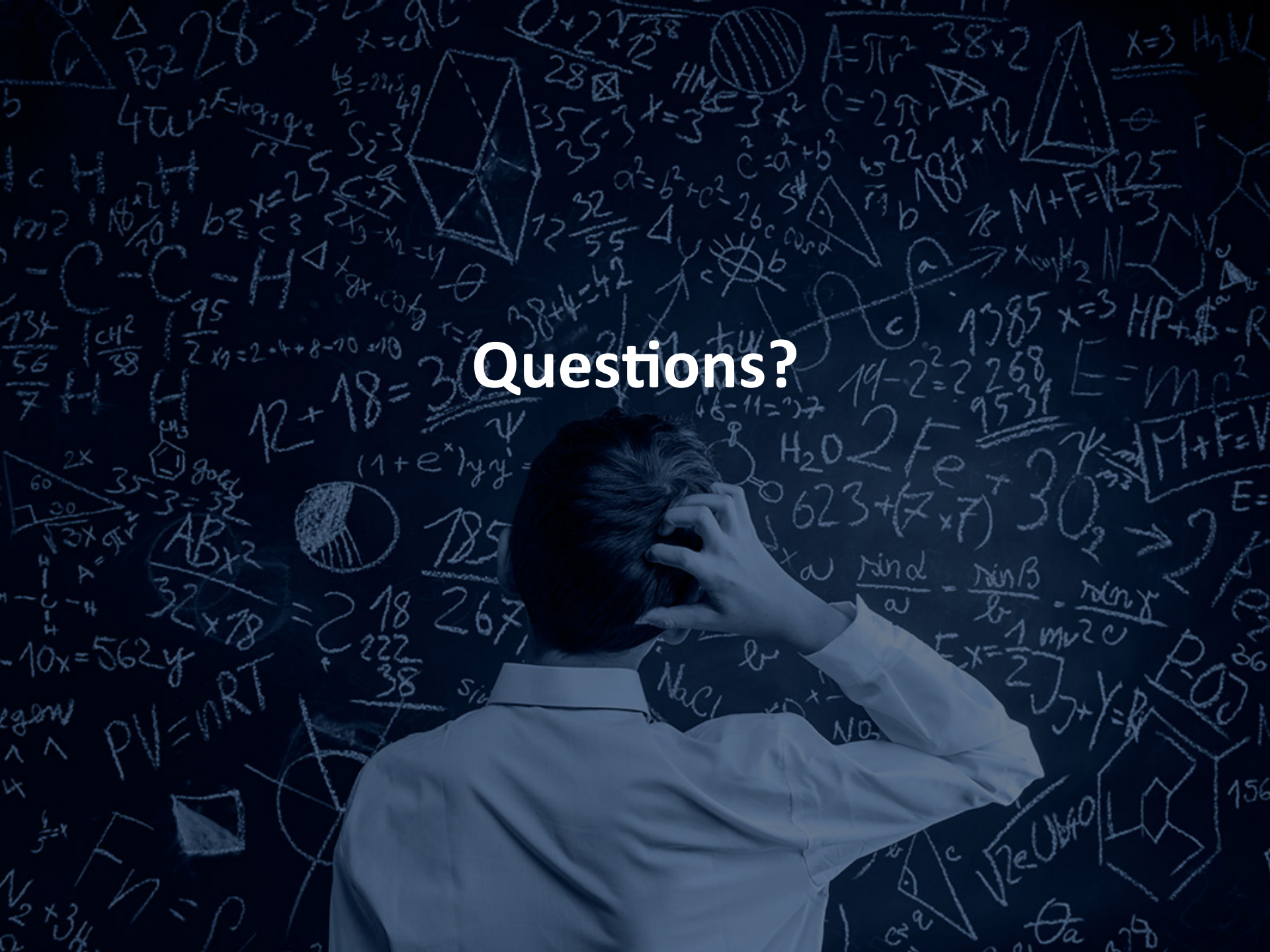
## **Seamless handoffs to the experts**

Established processes for putting a prospect in touch with college officials with greater knowledge of details

# Closing Thoughts

- **Transform your marketing strategy.** Understand your audiences; how to reach them; develop marketing strategies that engage them leveraging compelling content that is relevant to them.
- **Be creative with your content.** Try new things. Emphasize video. Make the most of your student ambassadors. Strive to create content that reflects the joy and passion for learning that your most talented professors and students feel.
- **Reach students where they live.** Mailings, phone calls, and college fairs still have their place. But truly connecting with the best prospects means going to the places where they spend most of their time.
- **Focus on your strengths.** Whether it's a cutting-edge biotechnology program or a first-class liberal arts education—help prospective students understand what it is you do best, what makes you different, and why they'll emerge prepared for a successful life.

Questions?





# For Further Information:



**Contact MLive Media Group today:**

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MLive Media Group functions as an extension of our clients' marketing or communications teams; as a collaborator, contributor, or project manager as determined by the needs of each project. We manage the detail of day-to-day campaign execution, and are available for the ever-changing needs of our clients.

We recognize that colleges and universities have many stakeholders and multiple campaigns with direct ties to defined goals. Our work layers the priorities of each, while maintaining the consistency of the whole, all while thoughtfully serving the interest of all vested stakeholders through all levels of the higher education environment.