

ARTICULATING YOUR

INSTITUTION'S VALUE(S):

FOUR CRITICAL STEPS TO
INCREASE ENROLLMENT

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ValueBased

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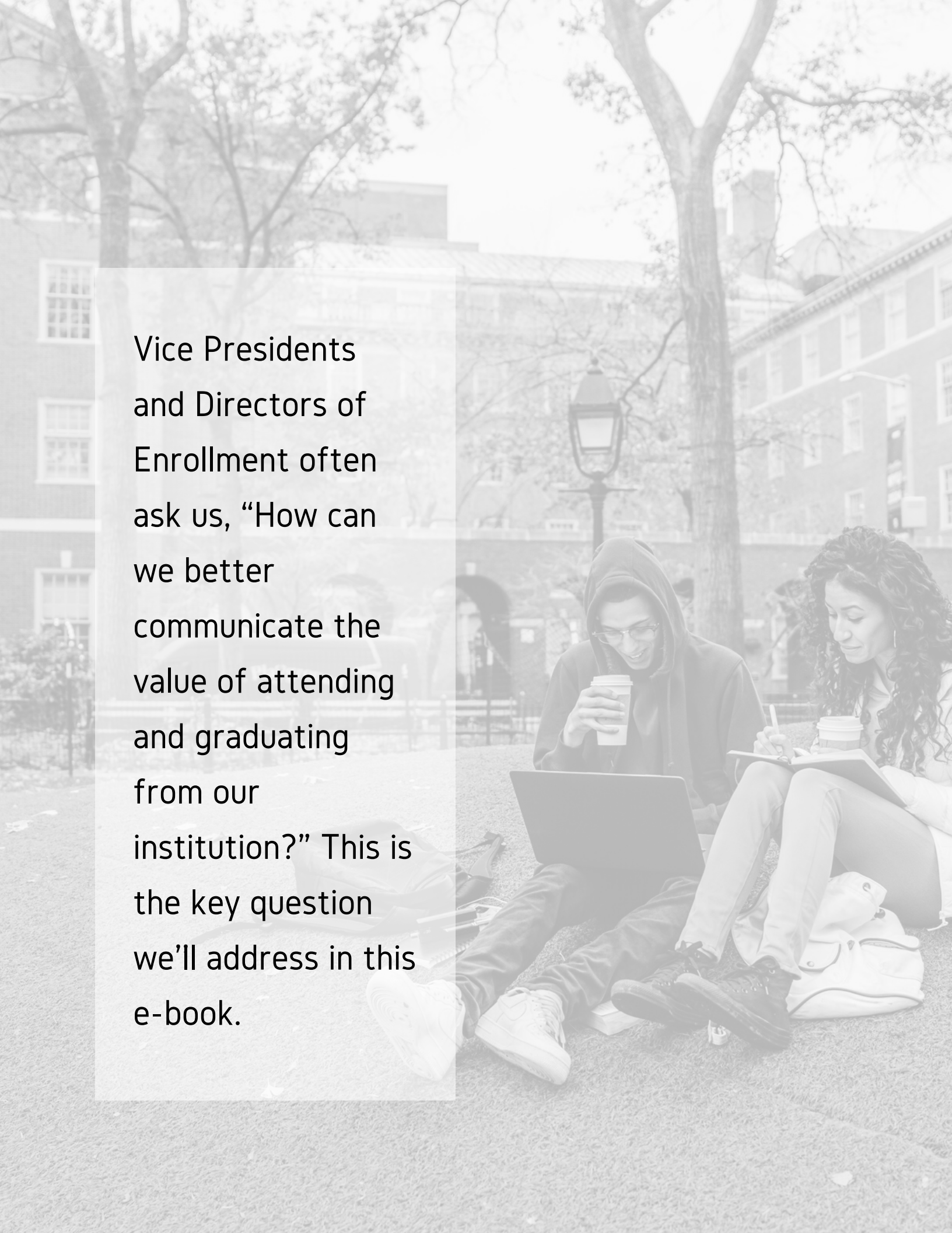
FOUR CRITICAL STEPS TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT

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Vice Presidents and Directors of Enrollment often ask us, “How can we better communicate the value of attending and graduating from our institution?” This is the key question we’ll address in this e-book.

What you'll learn in this e-book:

1. **Part 1: How to identify your institution's core values.** A process to confirm that your institution's desire and ability to deliver value is aligned with the current beliefs and behaviors represented.
2. **Part 2: How to establish value for your institution's offerings.** How to discover and establish the three types of value from two important perspectives for your institution's offerings.
3. **Part 3: How to articulate both the values and value of your institution.** How to articulate and present your institution's "value-givens" (academic programs, services, and offerings) to your prospective students and constituents.
4. **Part 4: How to associate "value-givens" with your prospect's needs.** How to match your institution's "value-givens" to your prospective student and constituent's "value-needs" (needs, desires, opportunities, or challenges).

WELCOME

Vice Presidents and Directors of Enrollment often ask us, “How can we better communicate the value of attending and graduating from our school?” This is the key question we’ll address in this e-book.

Each year as you and your team enter a new recruiting and enrollment season, one question should be paramount:

Why would a prospective student choose to attend my school?

There are likely several answers to this question and many reasons why any particular student might select your institution from a growing list of options. However, there seems to be a single factor motivating more students—and those influencing their decision—today than ever before.

That motivating factor is value.

More specifically: What value does your school offer to an incoming freshman, transfer, or graduate school candidate? The answers identify the value(s) your institution provide.

1

PART 1

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR INSTITUTION'S CORE VALUES



HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR INSTITUTION'S CORE VALUES

Let's begin by suggesting that it may be time for your institution to revisit its core values. Why? Because in our experience, most institution's core values do not include: "Deliver optimum value to our students and constituents." And if a school's core values do not somehow address the issue of student and constituent value, it will be difficult (if not impossible) for the institution to authentically represent or deliver that value.

In other words, your institution's ability to deliver value must begin at the level of the core value or mission statement. If it doesn't live there, chances are your institution's leadership won't direct sufficient resources toward making it a reality. And if it isn't real, you can't expect Admissions or Admissions counselors to articulate or demonstrate it.

Over the past 12 years, our team of enrollment experts have found many institution's mission statements and foundational core values have not been reviewed for some time. For that reason, we'd like to suggest a simple methodology your admissions and enrollment departments can use to review and confirm your institution's core values—and even identify new ones if necessary.

The foundation of healthy enrollment depends upon thoughtful alignment of core values, missions statement, and campus ethos.

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR INSTITUTION'S CORE VALUES

1

Gather the team.

Start by gathering a group of staff members. You need a combination of both new employees (who have been with your institution less than a year) and more seasoned staff members (with more than three years at your institution). Draw from all age and experience levels. Agree to meet for multiple one-hour sessions with breaks in-between.

2

Facilitate brainstorming.

Select a person with good facilitation skills to lead the group and, using a whiteboard, begin brainstorming, collaborating, and documenting what individuals believe are and/or should be core values for your institution. Remember, this is a brainstorming session so all contributions and comments are welcome and honored. Later, when you are paring down your list there will be time for discussion and distillation of the items.

3

Poll newer employees.

Ask your newer staff members what made them want to work at (and attend, if they are alumni) your institution. Ask what they experienced or saw at your institution that they didn't see at others. Have them elaborate. Ask them what they've heard from others about your institution.

4

Poll seasoned employees.

Next, ask your seasoned staff why they remain at your institution. Ask what inspires or excites them and gets them up in the morning, ready to go to work. Lastly, solicit one or two cornerstone values they believe your institution was founded and/or operates on.



Use a tool like PollEverywhere's Word Cloud option to gather and display everyone's keywords.

5

Invite group discussion.

Once everyone's contributions are on the whiteboard, begin discussing them among the group and distilling them down if necessary.

6

Rank the value statements.

When your list is finished, conclude the meeting, take a photo of the whiteboard and transfer the information to a spreadsheet. Share the spreadsheet with all group members and ask them to prioritize the list within each of the school's constituent groups: students, spouses, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, etc.

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Complete your values list.

The next step is to collect everyone's rankings, tally the data, reconvene the group, and share the results. Now the paring and editing can begin. You'll want to whittle the list down to your top 10 essential, non-negotiable values that best represent your institution. This could take time—an additional meeting or two might be required—but the time you spend here is well worth it.

Why is all this necessary?

Because your school's value messaging needs to reflect and align with your school's core values. Further, your marketing and enrollment offices will be investing hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars to craft traditional and digital communication to attract "best fit" prospective students who are the financial lifeblood and sustaining force of your school.

These efforts are very strategic and need the support of your institution's executives, so it is wise to take the time to do it right.

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PART 2

ESTABLISH VALUE FOR YOUR INSTITUTION'S OFFERINGS



ESTABLISH VALUE FOR YOUR INSTITUTION'S OFFERINGS

In Part 1, we presented a process your institution can use to identify and align core values with current beliefs and behaviors in your institution's culture.

In this part, we'll look at how to **discover and establish value for your school's offerings**. When discovering and establishing value for your institution, there are at least two main perspectives to consider:



INSTITUTION'S PERSPECTIVE:

What are the distinctives (solutions) our institution offers that we believe attract students and their constituents?

PROSPECT'S PERSPECTIVE:

What do students and their constituents want from the institution they choose to attend?

ESTABLISH VALUE FOR YOUR INSTITUTION'S OFFERINGS

INSTITUTION'S PERSPECTIVE:

Let's consider the institution's perspective first and follow a process to help discover distinctives. To discover distinctives, compare your updated Top Ten list of values (Part 1) to the top 10-20 distinctives your admissions and marketing teams emphasize when representing your institution.

Be sure to examine all collateral and messaging presented: college fairs, campus tours, personal interviews, emails, phone call scripts, printed materials, website, etc.

Next, from your comparison of these two lists, compile a third list isolating the distinctives that *accurately reflect your institution's newly identified core values*. This "living list" will serve as a good foundation for creating your institution's value(s) messaging. It can and should grow as the institution adds new services, facilities, curriculum, programs, and staff to your institution's offerings.



For more on aligning the marketing and enrollment department messaging, visit...

ESTABLISH VALUE FOR YOUR INSTITUTION'S OFFERINGS

Now let's look at the prospective student's perspective. What do students and their constituents look for in a school? What do they expect in return for their emotional and financial investment?

We recommend you start by looking at the most underserved or unserved issues of prospective students/constituents. (Note: We define a prospective student/constituent issue as a need, desire, opportunity, or challenge.) Create a list of the top 10-20 prospective/constituent issues just as you did with the institution's distinctives list.

For example, some prospective student issues might include:

- An institution with a nationally respected nursing program or business school
- An institution located close to a metro area with a diverse population
- An institution with classroom and student housing facilities that are modern and equipped with state-of-the-art technologies

Some parent/constituent issues might include:

- An institution that offers academic, athletic or merit scholarships
- An institutions that offers part-time employment opportunities
- An institution known for its academic excellence and ability to place graduates into fulfilling, degree-specific jobs soon after graduation

CREATE YOUR INSTITUTION'S LIST OF VALUES

Now, put your two lists side by side, matching the prospect students/constituents issues with the institution's solutions: THEIRS vs. OURS. This exercise answers the question:

“How well does our institution meet the top 10-20 issues that most motivate a student/constituent’s institution choice?”

If this exercise reveals issues that your institution doesn't address, then leadership will need to decide if the institution will commit resources to developing solutions that serve or fulfill them.

Now that you've discovered and established your institution's prioritized core values, the next step is training your Admissions counselors to articulate them to prospective students and constituents at the right stage of your enrollment cycle.

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PART 3

ARTICULATE BOTH THE VALUES AND VALUE



ARTICULATE BOTH THE VALUES AND VALUE OF YOUR INSTITUTION

Why is it important to understand and be able to talk about your institution's values (how your institution uniquely meets the issues facing prospective students and their constituents)? **Answer: Clearly articulating those values is proven to translate directly into increased enrollment, contributions, and gifts.**

In this part, we'll show you how to train your team to personalize how to present your institution's values, how to create authentic value statements, and how to articulate (and prove) those statements to a prospective student or their constituents.

Personalizing Your Institution's Value(s):

Assigning and articulating the value of your institution's offerings is incredibly important, but it can be the most subjective part of the value-messaging process. It's subjective because each prospective student/constituent has his or her own way of emotionally evaluating your institution.

This is a personal process, so your Admissions and marketing staff need to *personalize* your value statements. When we say personalize, we mean selecting and wording your institution's "value-givens" so they match your prospective student's/constituent's value needs (priorities, personality, and preferences.)

ARTICULATE BOTH THE VALUES AND VALUE OF YOUR INSTITUTION

Your "value-givens" can be tangible/intangible and measurable/non-measurable forms of value that your institution offers. So your team will need a context or model that makes it easy to identify, articulate, and assign both the values of your institution and the value of its offerings. It is not within the scope of this e-book to present such a model. You can read more about our Values Based Enrollment Methodology on our website at Valuebased.com.



CREATING VALUE GIVEN EXAMPLES:

Let's start by articulating and categorizing some value statements for a new nursing program at an institution.

Examples 1:

This year, we'll complete construction on a new, multi-million dollar science and nursing school building.

Examples 2:

The new facility is equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment, labs, and technology.

Examples 3:

Ninety-five percent (95%) of our first year's nursing students graduated in four years and received job offers from healthcare facilities within a 75-mile radius of our Institution.

ARTICULATE BOTH THE VALUES AND VALUE OF YOUR INSTITUTION

Value statement 4:

Our institution offers the only local RN-to-BSN program, including on-site coursework and community practicum experience.

Value Statement 5:

Each year our institution awards 3 nursing school scholarships to incoming freshman. The recipients receive 100%, 75%, and 50% of their college expenses fully funded by the Murdock Foundation.

The key is to make each "value-given" personal to the student's/constituent's needs by addressing their priority value needs in a context they prefer. Again, it is not within the scope of this e-book to go in-depth into how to do this, but our Enrollment Experts would be delighted to do so. To schedule a conversation with one of experts, click [here](#).

Providing value(s)-based messaging for your prospective student/ constituent-facing teams is one of the best ways to increase the probability of gaining an enrolled student, contribution, or gift.

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PART 4

ASSOCIATE VALUE STATEMENTS WITH PROSPECT'S ISSUES



ASSOCIATE VALUE STATEMENTS WITH PROSPECT'S ISSUES

We all know the importance of feeling valued. One way to express the value a person has to you and your institution is to personalize what that person sees, hears, and experiences in response to what they ask or want to learn about your institution.

Represent What's Relevant:

This approach is different than our tendency to use our default “school pitches” or what “presents well” regardless of whether it relates and is relevant to the prospective student/constituent.

Personalize Your Questions:

In Part 3 we discussed personalizing "value-givens." Personalizing begins with having something to which to match the personalization. In other words, your team must uncover your prospective student/constituent needs/issues in order to assess whether your institution is the best fit for them by first personalizing questions.

This occurs when we ask the right questions in the right way. This is part of the qualification or discovery process.

ASSOCIATE VALUE STATEMENTS WITH PROSPECT'S ISSUES

The objective of good questions is to pull out their dreams, desires, wants, challenges, and opportunities (which we lump together in a category called "value needs"). Knowing a prospective student/constituent's value needs will direct you and your team to the value statements that best match their needs and authentically represent your institution.



For more coaching on asking the right questions to arrive at key issues, go to...

Once your team knows the prospective student's/constituent's key value needs, they can begin personalizing their presentations of the institution's matching value-givens. In other words, once you've listened to what they've said—and not said—you are ready to associate what your institution can and will deliver. All of which requires knowing which of your value-givens are most important and relevant to your prospective student/constituent.

ARTICULATE BOTH THE VALUES AND VALUE OF YOUR INSTITUTION



Matching Value Statements With Key Issues Example

Let's say you're discussing your institution's nursing program with a young woman who attended a local private high school and is graduating in the top 3% of her high school class. Her father is a small business owner whose company barely survived the recent recession. Her mother is a retired nurse who graduated from your institution's nursing program.

Here are the key motivating issues you discovered for each of them:

Prospective Student

Complete nursing school in four years and get a job at a local hospital that empowers their staff to participate in global outreaches to third-world countries providing medical treatment to those in need.

Mother

For her daughter to attend and graduate from a quality nursing program in a safe community close to home.

Father

For his daughter to graduate in four years and obtain sufficient financial aid, allowing him to continue to retire the debt accumulated to keep his company in business.

ARTICULATE BOTH THE VALUES AND VALUE OF YOUR INSTITUTION



Knowing the above key motivating value needs, you can select from the list on page 18 and 19 of this e-book to effectively and personally represent the value your institution offers to each of them?

Prospective Student

Value statements 3 and 4

Mother

Value statements 1, 2 and 3

Father

Value statement 5

We call this “representing what is relevant, not what’s in our repertoire.” It may represent a change for your team, but our clients have found that if their team learns and integrates this into your enrollment process, you’ll be pleased with the results.

ASSOCIATE VALUE STATEMENTS WITH PROSPECT'S ISSUES

Remain Authentic:

One last critical thing: Always present and represent the value(s) of your institution that are *obvious* and/or *observable* through your institution's culture and community.

In this age of excessive marketing and selling, it's critical that we remain real, authentic, and natural in order to attract and enroll prospective students who are yearning for authenticity.

CONCLUSION: HOW DO WE KNOW A VALUE(S)-BASED APPROACH WORKS?

Our team of experts have 90+ years of experience delivering enrollment marketing solutions that result in sustained enrollment increase. Programs are customized to communicate your institution's curriculum, community, and culture. We offer onsite, online or blended training programs, plus ongoing reinforcement coaching and consulting. Ready to learn more? Contact us at infous@valuebased.com.



Our goal is for client institutions to recoup their investment within the duration of their average enrollment cycle, beginning at the completion of the engagement.





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