Tool #16: Segmentation Briefing Sheet: Demographics

Demographics data plays an important role in segmentation—though not necessarily on its own. Information about age, sex, and professional status, among others provide valuable insight into the preferences and expectations of prospective students. It would be a mistake, however, to rely solely on demographic information to segment and customize interaction. As one expert from the banking field, which has a long history with segmentation practices, noted, "two individuals can look identical for all intents and purposes—same age, same income, same educational background—and be in completely different places in their lives."

Demographic data is most useful for blunt segmentation purposes—applied introspectively to current students to identify potential hotspots to target marketing and recruiting efforts and directed externally to customize communications with prospects. If you pursue the latter option, the COE Forum recommends doing so with proper attention paid to the words of the banking expert above. To get the most use out of demographic information, cross segment with more nuanced information about motivations for returning to school (see Tool #17: Segmentation Briefing Sheet: Motivations for more information).

This tool will outline the most commonly used demographic parameters used for segmentation as well as the unique features of various demographic groups. It will then explore how demographics are used to segment prospective students at one case institution.

Common Demographic Groups and their Key Features

Demographic Parameter	Source of Data	Inferences and Deductions that Can be Used to Customize Communications, Develop Strategy, etc.
Age	• Inquiry forms* • Purchased lists • Communications with prospect	**Motivations:** <u>Younger (22-25)</u>: recent college graduates are less likely to have specific professional development goals in mind and are more likely to be pursuing graduate-level education as the logical next step on the educational path <u>Middle-age (25-55)</u>: are more likely to be re-approaching education for professional reasons <u>Older prospects (55+)</u>: are more likely to be interested for non-professional reasons
Gender	• Possibly inquiry forms* • Purchased lists • Communications with prospects	**Concerns:** <u>Women</u>: more likely to have questions about convenience and schedules and to doubt their qualifications. They are also more likely to be dissatisfied with pre-enrollment services <u>Men</u>: are less likely to inquire and to have admissions and funding questions when they do
Location	• Inquiry forms* • Purchased lists	**Hotspots:** This information can be used to identify the most likely locations the customers in each of the segments may be found and, therefore, further help determine how to reach them
Professional status	• Possibly inquiry forms* • Purchased lists • Communications with prospects	**Motivations:** <u>Employed</u>: more likely to be interested in additional credentials or switching fields <u>In a troubled field</u>: likely looking to re-skill <u>Retired</u>: Most likely either looking for enrichment or an encore career
Previous education	• Possibly inquiry forms* • Purchased lists • Communications with prospects	**Likelihood to need support:** <u>Students transferring from community colleges, first generation students, and recent graduates</u>: all more likely to need additional assistance

*For more information about designing inquiry forms that capture valuable information while remaining appealing to prospective students, see Tool # 13: Inquiry Form Builder.

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Demographics Segmentation at Work: Mini-Profiles

University of Pennsylvania's Professional and Liberal Studies Plans to Use Demographics to Push Outcomes Collateral

Though program of interest is the primary factor influencing communication content, University of Pennsylvania's Professional and Liberal Studies is in the process of implementing a practice of using demographic information to identify segments of prospective students that are likely to have significantly different needs from and expectations of their return to education. Contacts identified those segments and their unique features by analyzing trends in current students 'and past prospects' questions and concerns. Some of the microsegments they consider are military students, job market re-entrants, and community college transfers.

Demographics data allows recruiters to provide prospects with content that helps them envision their future with the institution.
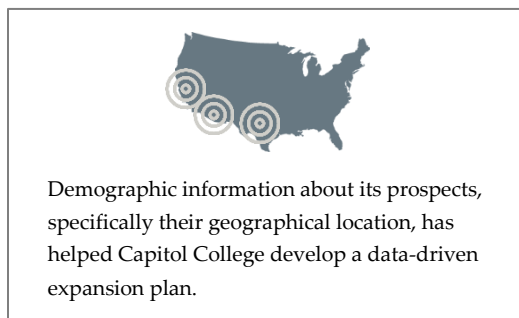
Once classified, prospects receive "students-like-me" profiles that explore the experiences and outcomes of students from the same microsegment. Contacts believe that, by addressing the dominant features, concerns, and motivations of the segment, the profiles will help prospects envision their success at the University of Pennsylvania.
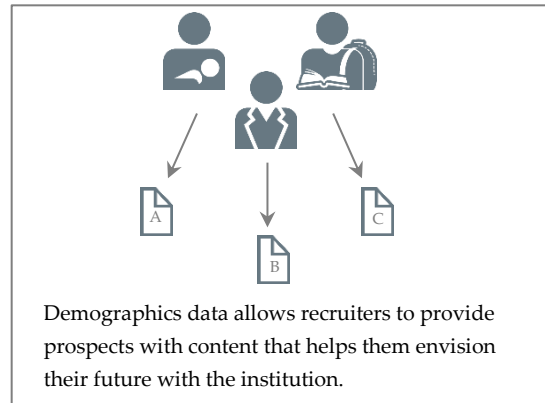
Capitol College uses Demographics to Develop Strategic Growth Plans

Capitol College is a small, private institution with approximately 1,200 students. It has carved out a unique STEM and computer science/cybersecurity training niche to meet the needs of local corporations (mostly contractors like Honeywell and CSC and government agencies like the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security). While Capitol's graduate school does not self-identify as a continuing and online education unit *per se*, all seven of the graduate programs it offers are exclusively online and cater to full-time employees.

Demographic information about its prospects, specifically their geographical location, has helped Capitol College develop a data-driven expansion plan.

Capitol has traditionally relied on word of mouth to grow enrollments in and around the mid-Atlantic region. However, a recent analysis of inquiries discovered that an increasing number of leads were coming from Arizona, California, and Texas. With this information in hand, Capitol has developed a strategic growth plan that invests resources in these states. Contacts expect their geographical segmentation and targeting to drive a 12% annual enrollment growth.