



# Targeted Yield-Performance Turnarounds

Learning from EAB's Enroll360 Product Suite on How to Rapidly  
Improve Admitted-Student Engagement

Marketing and Enrollment Solutions | Enroll360



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# An Urgent Mandate for Improved Yield Performance

## A high-stakes funnel stage

The post-admit phase is widely recognized by enrollment teams as the highest-stakes part of the enrollment funnel. More so than any other stage of student recruitment, this is where missteps on your part are likely to have the biggest repercussions for your downstream enrollment outcomes.

This fact takes on special significance in today's increasingly competitive and volatile higher education market.

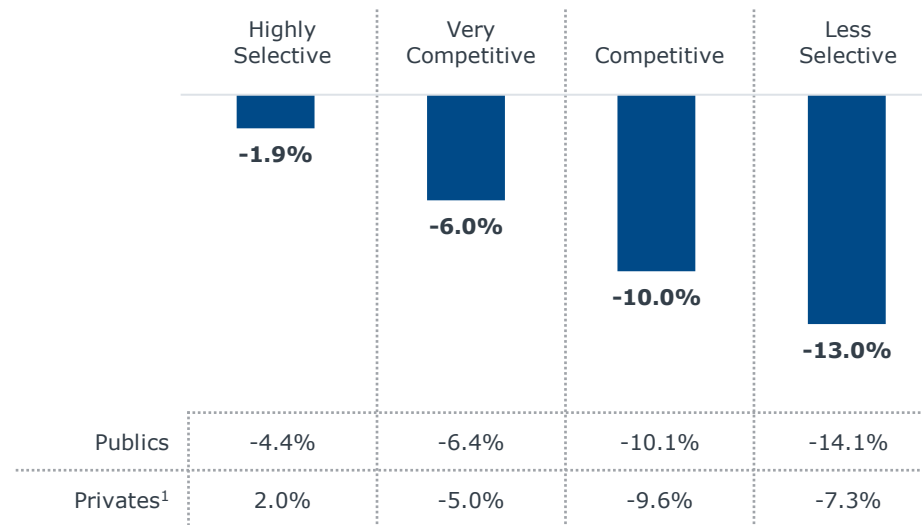
## A glimpse of a troubling future

As shown at right, the COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp relief just how drastically and suddenly a school's enrollment fortunes can change. It also underscored how uneven that impact can be across school segments.

While it may be tempting to see the past two years as an anomaly, they are more likely a preview of things to come, as shrinking college-bound demographics promise to further heat up competition between schools. Surviving this environment will increasingly depend on transformative improvements in yield performance.

## Change in Freshman Enrollment, by School Segment

Four-Year US Colleges and Universities, Fall 2019 to Fall 2021



<sup>1</sup> Excludes for-profit institutions.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's Regular Updates on Higher Education Enrollment, October 26, 2021.

# A Seemingly Impossible Task

## Diminishing returns

Historically, many enrollment teams' efforts to improve yield performance have focused on small, incremental fixes, pursued opportunistically. More recently, a growing number of schools are finding that such modestly scoped efforts are no longer enough.

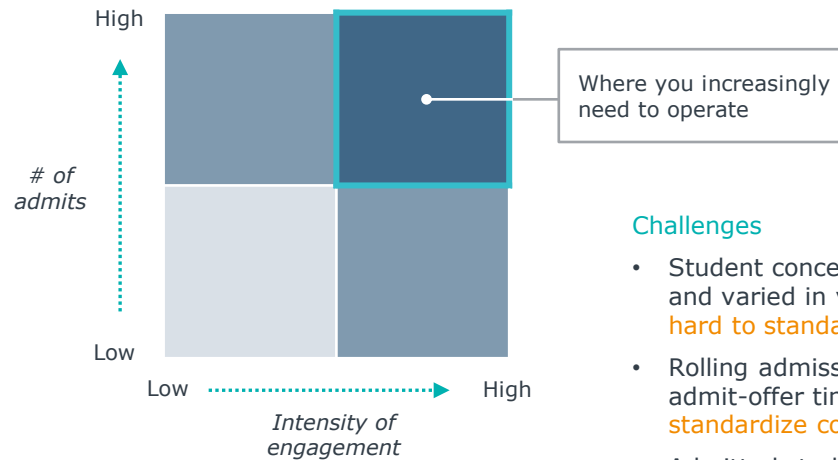
## A scalability problem

To prosper within hypercompetitive markets, colleges need to be able to do two things—grow their admit pools and increase the rate at which they're converting students from admits to enrolls.

Unfortunately, the most effective tools for converting admitted students are also the least sustainable and scalable, e.g., increased discounting and frequent, highly personalized outreach to students by counselors.

Furthermore, of the limited range of approaches that are more easily leveraged across greater numbers of students, several have been more or less taken off the table by the pandemic—campus-based, in-person yield events, for example.

## How to Scale Intensive Admitted-Student Engagement?



## Challenges

- Student concerns become more specific and varied in yield phase—this makes it **hard to standardize comm-flow messaging**
- Rolling admission results in highly varied admit-offer timing—this makes it **hard to standardize comm-flow calendars**
- Admitted students are scattered across a growing variety of online channels—it is hard to know **where to reach them**
- Interventions with the clearest impact—especially customized interpersonal interactions—have built-in **limits to scalability**

# This Document Focuses on Fast, High-Impact Yield Fixes

## A large and varied toolkit

As explained on the preceding page, today's highly competitive recruitment markets demand a more ambitious approach to yield management, with a focus on scalable, high-intensity student engagement.

This page shows the main yield levers available to admissions teams, each of which has its own profile in terms of impact, yield specificity, and speed to results.

## First priorities

This report focuses selectively on approaches that meet the following three criteria: they substantially improve yield performance; they act primarily on the yield phase, as opposed to other funnel stages; and they may be expedited with help from EAB, thereby increasing speed to results.

This focus corresponds to the broader aim of this report, which is to explain approaches enrollment teams can use to rapidly produce meaningful improvements in yield performance.

## Yield Levers at Your Disposal

*By Impact, Yield Specificity, and Speed to Improved Performance*

	Yield impact	Yield specificity	Speed to improved performance	
Your school's website				As achievable with outside help
Search and application marketing				
Counselor "sales" activity				Related EAB offerings
Chatbot				
Social media				Wisr
Predictive analytics				Yield
Campus visits/events				YouVisit
Financial aid impact monitoring				Aid

This report focuses on interventions that:

- Improve yield performance
- Are primarily relevant for the yield phase of the funnel
- May be expedited via partnership with EAB

# Fast Tracks to Improved Yield Performance

## What makes an effective partner?

As described on the preceding page, enrollment teams can produce large improvements in yield performance quickly by taking advantage of assistance from a third party such as EAB.

Several factors account for EAB’s ability to expedite implementation of important yield-management capabilities. One is that it has a large staff capable of parallel-processing key steps. Another is the staff’s high level of expertise, based on specialized training and experience from a large number of implementations—factors that reduce the amount of time required to execute each of those steps.

## A matter of weeks

The chart at right offers more specific information about how quickly advanced yield-management capabilities can be implemented with EAB’s help. Most core elements of our yield suite can be up and running at your institution in less than one calendar quarter.

## Implementation Timelines

For Key Yield-Active Components of EAB’s Recruitment-Marketing Suite

Implementation timeline

EAB offering	Description	Weeks
Yield	Advanced predictive analytics for yield management incorporating student surveys and advanced data science; associated reporting and workflow-management tools	8 <sup>1</sup>
Wisr	School-owned social networks that cultivate relationships between prospective students and members of your campus community, including current students and faculty	6
Aid	Comprehensive financial aid optimization, including advanced statistical analysis, interactive real-time modeling tools, aid policy development, and continuous aid-impact monitoring	10 <sup>2</sup>
YouVisit	Virtual campus tours powered by advanced immersive digital media formats and a suite of wraparound services that maximize tour traffic and impact	16-18

1. EAB’s Yield service is available to institutions that have been EAB recruitment marketing and Deposit IQ partners for 12 months more, Deposit IQ being an EAB program through which admitted students are surveyed regarding their intent to deposit. (A year’s worth of recruitment and survey data from your institution is required to train the predictive model used by Yield). See page 8 for additional detail on Deposit IQ.
2. The 10-week timeframe is typical turnaround for public colleges and universities; implementation for private institutions typically takes 8 weeks.





# Generalizable Lessons from EAB's Yield Suite

## Help for DIY-ers

As explained on the preceding pages, for most colleges the surest route to large and rapid improvements in yield performance is partnership with an expert third party such as EAB.

That said, if you choose not to go that route, you can still benefit from the countless hours of research EAB has put into refining its yield approach and lessons we've learned across hundreds of implementations of our related services.

Each of the yield-active components of EAB's product suite has a well-defined set of animating principles—key elements that account for the bulk of their impact. And these are, to varying degrees, approaches enrollment teams can replicate through their own efforts.

The remainder of this document walks you through six related lessons you can use to boost your own yield performance.

## Six Steps to Maximum Yield

### Focus your efforts where they will have the greatest impact

1	Ask students about their intentions	Yield
2	Use a robust predictive model	Yield
3	Hardwire your response	Yield
4	Treat aid-granting as a continuous, dynamic process	Aid

### Eliminate barriers to admitted-student engagement

5	Mobilize your campus community at scale	Wisr
6	Offer students an immersive virtual experience of your school	YouVisit

Related  
EAB  
offerings



Focus your efforts where they will have the greatest impact

## Cut Your Yield-Management Task Down to Size

### A tall order

One of the central challenges of yield management is the size of colleges' admit pools. As mentioned earlier in this document, schools face an urgent imperative to grow their admit pools, this being the single most powerful determinant of downstream enrollment outcomes, including class size and revenue.

At the same time, converting these students increasingly requires highly intensive and personalized outreach.

### Focus where it matters

No enrollment teams have the capacity to perform that kind of outreach across the whole of their admit pool. All too often, they are left to guess which students to focus on and hope for the best—an approach that can lead to underinvesting in some prospects and overinvesting in others.

Solving this problem entails getting a more accurate read on your admitted students' intent, which enables you to focus your most intensive efforts where they will have the biggest impact—an idea that is developed further across the next few pages.

### Admitted Students

*By Likelihood to Yield and Correct Degree of Outreach Intensity, Typical EAB Partner College*

	Likelihood to pick your school	Probably a lost cause	A long shot	Could be persuaded	Ready to deposit
	Percentage of admits	30%	30%	20%	20%
Outreach intensity	Standard communications	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Opportunistic personal engagement		✓		✓
	Intensive personal engagement			✓	

Highest-intensity outreach efforts focused selectively on just 20% of admit pool, greatly reducing burden on admission staff and boosting quality of engagement with students

# Lesson 1: Ask Students About Their Intentions

## The power of surveying

One of the most effective ways of predicting students' yield behavior is also the simplest—just ask them what their plans are.

EAB research has consistently shown that admitted students' response to the question "Do you intend to deposit?" is highly correlated with the actions they ultimately take. For example, around three-quarters of students who respond "yes" end up enrolling, while just 1% of those who answer "no" do so.

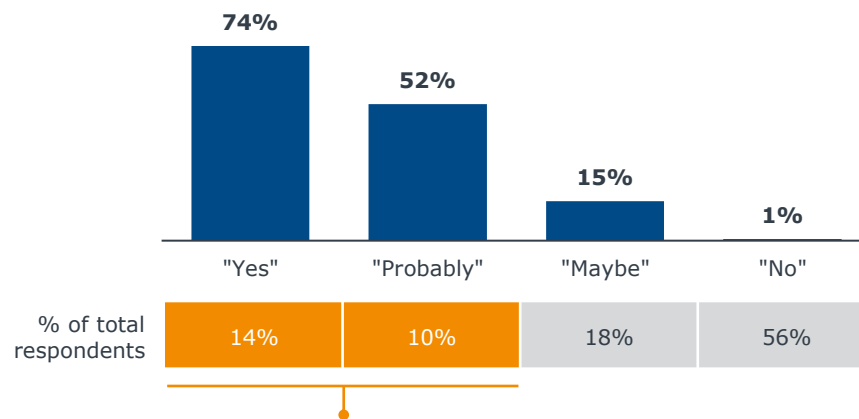
Based on a typical distribution of responses, data from surveys enables enrollment teams to focus their most intensive outreach on just a quarter of respondents, thereby greatly reducing their workload, with no related yield-performance penalty.

## How you ask matters

One important additional consideration related to yield surveying is that while not all students respond, using best practices in outreach to them consistently produces response rates in the neighborhood of 40%.

## Students' Survey Responses Accurately Predict Their Yield Behavior

*Deposit Rate by Admitted-Student Response to Question "Do You Intend to Deposit?"*



Intensive follow-up may be focused selectively on this group—around a quarter of respondents

40%

of surveyed students respond

1. Not shown here are an additional 2% of students who responded "done."



Associated EAB offering: Yield

## Lesson 2: Use a Robust Predictive Model

### The limits of surveying

As shown on the preceding page, student surveys can offer reliable insight into yield behaviors of around 40% of your admit pool (the typical upper limit for survey response rates). But what do you do about the remaining 60%?

### Looking to predictive analytics

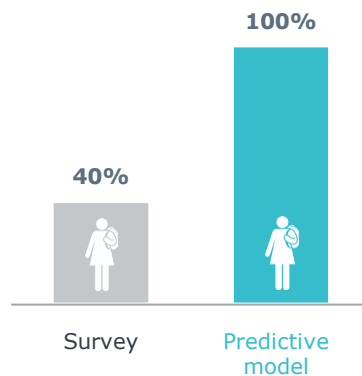
One important answer is found in data science. As explained on this and the following pages, predictive models can provide actionable insight on likelihood to yield for all students in your admit pool.

Furthermore, they can do so earlier in yield season. EAB research has shown that statistical models incorporating data from recruitment-marketing interactions, typically available several months before survey responses, are highly predictive of student behavior.

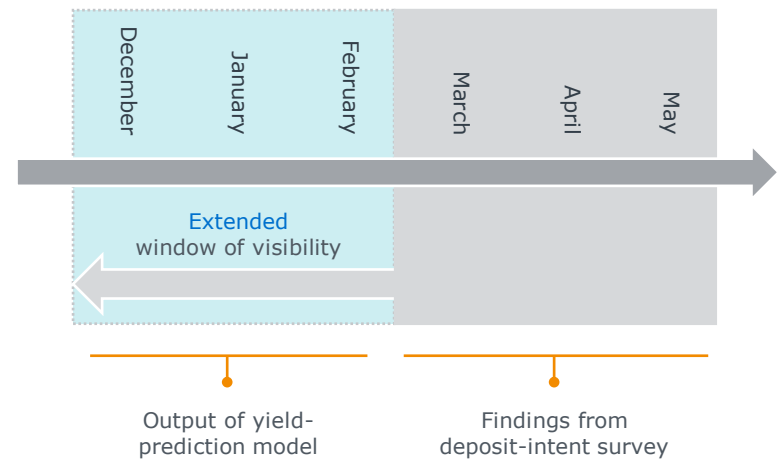
The greatest degree of insight into student intent becomes available to enrollment teams earliest when both approaches—student surveying and predictive modeling—are used in combination.

### Delivering Earlier Insight on More Students

*% of Admitted Students Covered*



*Timing*



Associated EAB offering: Yield

# An Unstable Marketplace Raises the Stakes for Yield Modeling

## Yield is becoming less predictable

As explained on the preceding page, predictive models can give you earlier insight into likelihood to yield for a larger number of students. One factor making this more important than ever is increased yield volatility.

There was a time not so long ago when yield rate did not vary markedly from year to year. That is no longer the case. As shown at right, numerous factors, from students applying to more schools to the rise of test-optionality, are boosting the uncertainty associated with yield season.

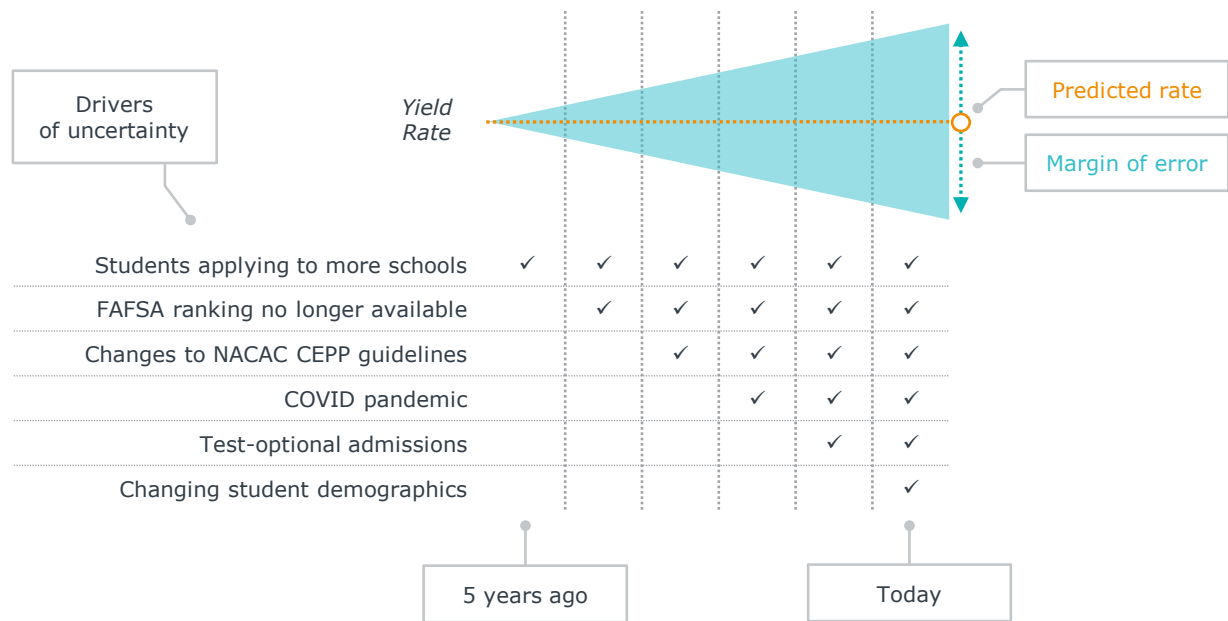
## A problem you can't afford to ignore

The problems caused by that kind of uncertainty are not merely hypothetical. The pandemic has demonstrated just how consequential large, unanticipated swings in yield rate can be, with some schools having seen double-digit drops in enrollment and others unintentionally overenrolling their classes by 10% or 20%.

The corresponding imperative for enrollment teams is to find better ways of predicting yield—an aim that, for most, will mean using more robust predictive models.

## Cumulative Factors Making Yield Rate Harder to Anticipate

*Predicted Versus Actual Yield Rate*



# Effective Models Stand Up to Market Turmoil

## The quality of your model matters

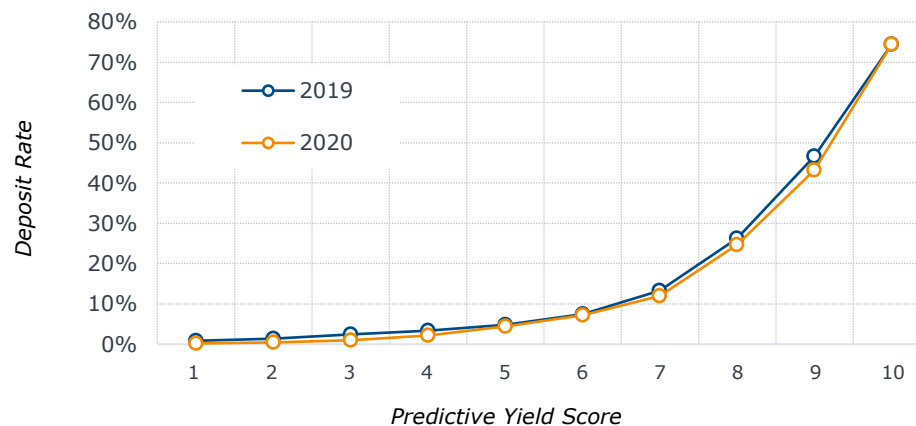
When thinking through what use you might make of data science in managing yield, it's important to understand that not all predictive models are created equal.

Yield-related statistical models vary greatly in their predictive power, accuracy, and ability to adapt to unexpected market conditions. This is especially true in this day and age, as an explosion of data available on students and associated advances in data science is enabling previously unseen levels of modeling power.

EAB's own research has shown that advanced statistical methods, incorporating the right inputs, give yield models a remarkable degree of adaptability—having enabled them, for example, to predict yield with undiminished accuracy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Deposit Rate by Yield Score

*EAB Yield Predictive Model, Aggregate Data Across EAB Partner Colleges, Pre- and Post-pandemic*



Accuracy of predictive model unaffected by the pandemic



Associated EAB offering: Yield

# What Makes a Yield Model Robust?

## Seeking a solid foundation

As explained on the preceding page, predictive models vary greatly in terms of their quality and efficacy.

If you're using the output of a model to inform the actions your admissions team is taking—and that is, after all, their main purpose—then that variation in quality matters quite a bit.

## Characteristics of strong models

So—how can you tell if your model is good enough?

Certainly, it may be judged retrospectively, as you compare predicted with actual outcomes, which is absolutely something you should be doing.

But you can also assess the quality of models based on characteristics of them that are evident prior to implementation and are associated with strong performance. Four examples of such characteristics are shown at right.

## Four Key Characteristics



### Specific to your institution

Your model should be designed specifically for your institution, using your data. (Some third-party models are generic, based on data from other institutions.)



### Dynamically updated

Your model should be calibrated throughout yield season to adapt it to changes in market context (e.g., the pandemic).



### Diversified

Your model should use a diverse array of variables, so that if the predictive power of one is diminished, others can compensate.



### Methodologically advanced

Your model should take advantage of ongoing advances in data science, which can greatly increase the accuracy and timeliness of yield prediction.



Associated EAB offering: Yield

# Lesson 3: Hardwire Your Response

## From insight to impact

As mentioned earlier, the insight that predictive modeling gives you into individual students' likely yield behavior helps your admissions team better tailor outreach to them, focusing your counselors' most intensive efforts where they have the greatest impact.

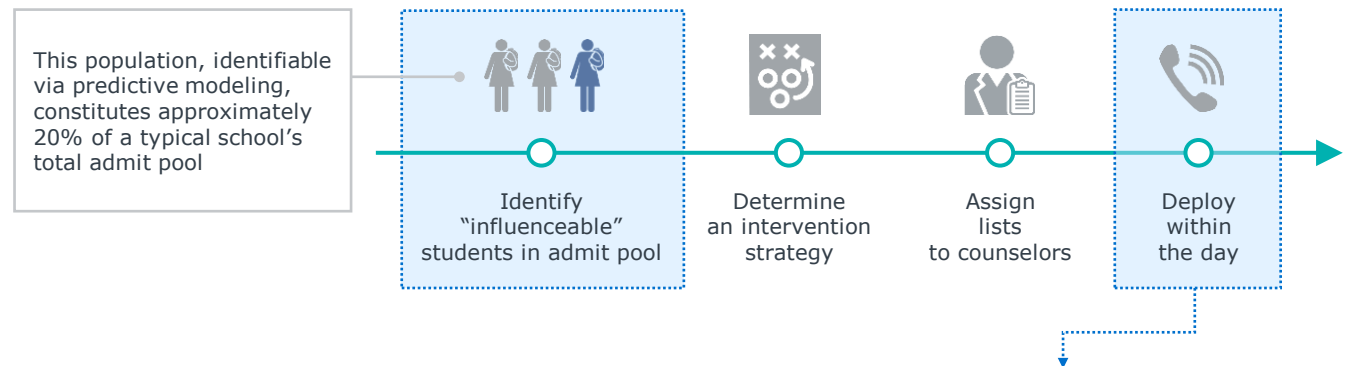
But to make the most of that capability, you'll need to have processes in place that reliably translate insight on students into concrete action by your team.


## Where the rubber meets the road

The graphic on the upper portion of this page shows a basic four-step process by which that aim is accomplished, from identifying a subset of "influenceable" students to their assignment to particular counselors to actual deployment of outreach.

As shown below that, triage of this sort enables outreach to this group of students to be both highly customized and intensive—the sort of contact proven to produce higher rates of conversion in the right students but impossible to scale across an entire admit pool.

## Creating a Short Path from Descriptive Information to Action



	<i>Communication preferences and interests</i>	<i>Customized communication plan</i>
 <b>Student A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email, phone (7–9 pm)</li> <li>Has questions about academics</li> <li>Interest in accounting</li> </ul>	Email and call in the evening, emphasizing accounting internship opportunities
<b>Student B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email, mail</li> <li>Has questions about housing</li> <li>Interest in biology</li> </ul>	Email with alumni success story about a biology major, special mailer on housing
<b>Student C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email, phone</li> <li>Has questions about financial aid</li> <li>Interest in education</li> </ul>	Phone call and follow-up email explaining student's financial aid package



Associated EAB offering: Yield



# Lesson 4: Treat Aid Granting as a Continuous, Dynamic Process

## Dollars move the dial

Of all the levers that schools can use to convert admitted students to enrolls, institutional aid is among the most powerful.

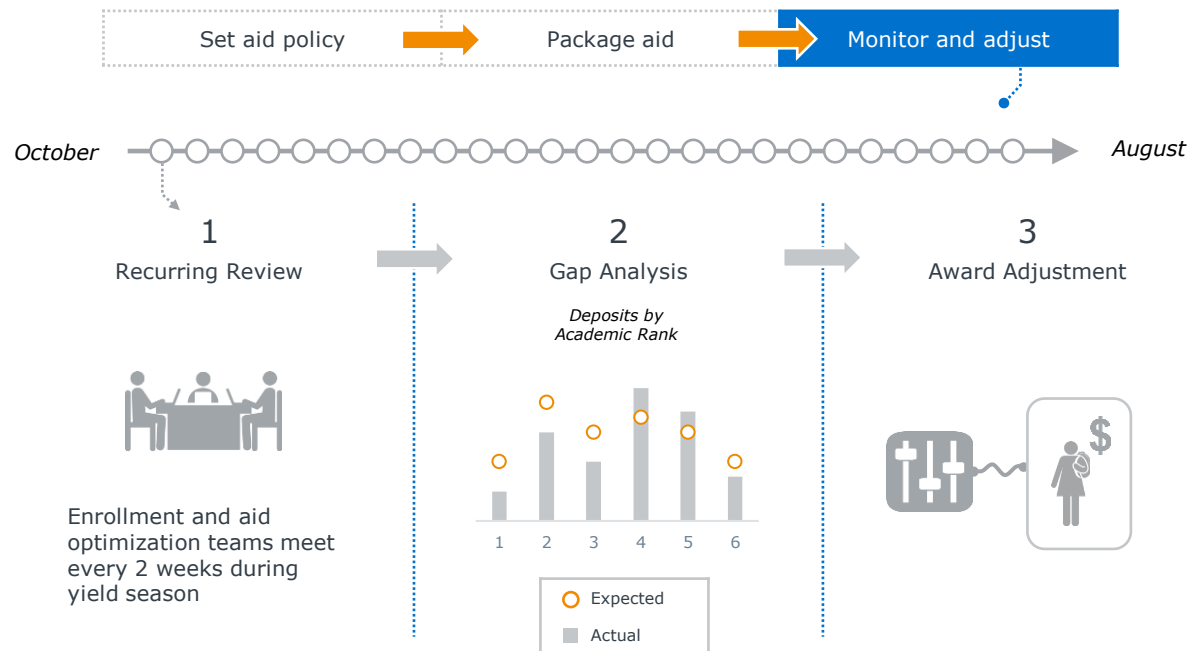
Many schools understand this and place correspondingly high importance on their aid models. Less widely appreciated is how aid can play a big role in influencing students not only at the point of the initial award but throughout yield season.

## Dynamic adjustments to aid

This page illustrates an approach consistent with the premise described above—one that treats aid awarding as a continuous and dynamic process. Rather than “setting and forgetting” aid grants, enrollment and aid optimization teams meet regularly throughout yield season, comparing actual deposits to expected levels and disbursing additional aid as required to address shortfalls.

The overall effect is that of increasing the efficiency of your institutional aid, producing maximum progress toward your enrollment goals while minimizing your institution’s financial outlay.

## Aid Monitoring in Action



Associated EAB offering: Aid

## Lesson 5: Mobilize Your Campus Community at Scale

### A premium on personalization

A major theme of this report is how to scale intensive engagement of admitted students. “Intensive engagement” in this context mostly means frequent interpersonal contact focusing on issues known to be of urgent interest to a particular student. Scaling that kind of outreach is the defining imperative and key challenge of yield management today.

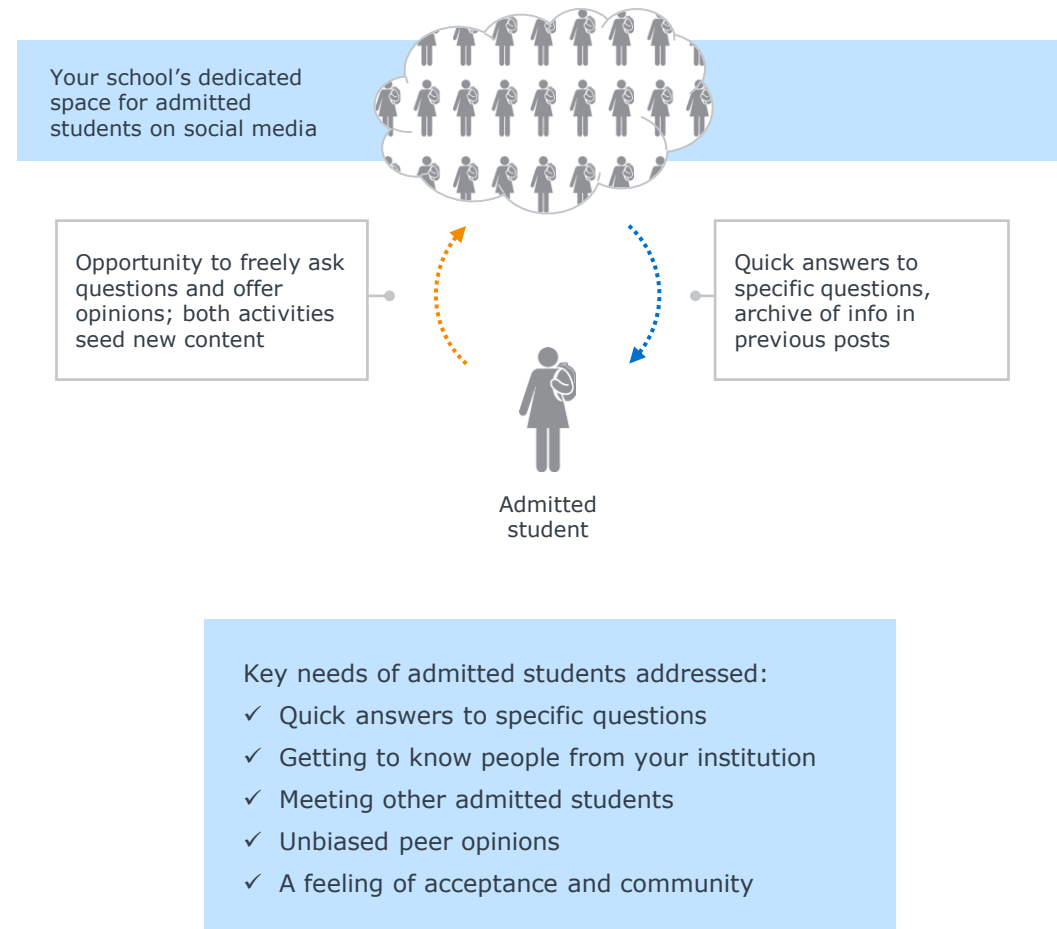
### Special relevance for social media

Of all the innovations of the digital communications era, the one that is arguably best suited to delivering that scalability is social media.

One of the more salient features of social networks in this regard is their ability to quickly generate large amounts of highly relevant content for admitted students, with minimal effort on your part. Another is their ability to promote interpersonal connections.

These and other features of social media directly address several needs of admitted students, such as getting quick and easy answers to specific questions and their desire to get to know your organization’s people.

### Social Media as a Tool for Scaling Intensive Student Engagement Across Your Admit Pool



# School-Owned Social Networks Improve on Third-Party Options

## Limits of third-party networks













For the reasons outlined on the preceding page, many schools have made social media a core element of their strategy for engaging and converting admitted students, an especially common approach being the creation of groups for admitted students and their parents on Facebook or other social networks.

While such approaches can be highly impactful, the use of third-party commercial networks does have drawbacks. They are often rife with distractions, offering users tempting “off ramps” to other content on the platform not associated with your institution. Furthermore, social networks are at the mercy of users’ fast-changing allegiances—trends that can be amplified by negative perceptions of a network’s brand caused by adverse media coverage.

## A school-owned alternative

For these and other reasons, a growing number of schools are opting to set up their own, school-owned social networks—an approach that delivers many of the benefits of commercial social networks without their drawbacks.

## Third-Party Versus School-Owned Social Networks

Third-party social network		School-owned social network	
	Distractions		Focus
	Uneven content quality		Fine-tuned quality control
	Limiting site architecture		Purpose-built site architecture
	Siloed		Integrated with other channels
	Data rationing		Full data transparency
	Platform rejection by users		No compromising affiliations



Associated EAB offering: Wisr

# Don't Leave Social Engagement to Chance

## Not an all-or-nothing proposition

Even if you don't, as described on the preceding page, decide to build your own dedicated social network for admitted students, there are related things you can do to make your social strategy more impactful.

One important example is to more effectively deploy members of your campus community.

## Activating your campus community

How engaging admitted students find your social presence depends largely on the amount and quality of information they find there.

For that reason, many admissions teams actively manage their admitted-student groups on Facebook and other networks—assigning members of their staff to serve as moderators, for example.

Fewer have developed that approach to the point where it consistently ensures the right degree of content quality and user engagement. Those that have tend to be ambitious in their approach, enlisting many members of their campus communities in the effort and tasking them with clearly defined goals.

## "Staff" Your Social Network with an Active Team of Ambassadors



Student ambassadors



Faculty/staff ambassadors



Alumni ambassadors

- Representative responsibilities:
- ✓ Respond to inbound student questions
  - ✓ Post in communities to drive momentum
  - ✓ Reach out to students with low engagement

A cast of dozens



Associated EAB offering: Wisr

# Boost the Effectiveness of Your Social Ambassadors

## A more structured effort

As noted on the preceding page, one way of ensuring maximum effectiveness of social media for engaging admitted students is to have more members of your campus community get more involved.

One important way of advancing that objective is to bring the right degree of structure to the effort. Simply inviting your current students, staff, and alumni to participate is unlikely to deliver the level of impact you're looking for. Instead, you'll want to set clear goals and expectations, offer hands-on assistance, and provide feedback on their performance.

## Many options for support

One especially impactful form of assistance is that of helping your ambassadors burnish their personal profiles—for example, helping them create compelling video introductions. Another is to share data that benchmarks their activity on social media with that of their peers—a great way of spurring healthy competition.

## A Comprehensive Support Infrastructure for Your Social Staff



### Set clear goals and expectations

Your ambassadors won't know what, specifically, to do on your network and how often if you don't spell it out for them. Give them concrete guidance, including numerical targets.



### Offer hands-on assistance

Where feasible, pitch in directly on key components of your ambassadors' online presence, e.g., use your knowledge about best practices for social-media video to help them create compelling videos to include in their profiles.



### Benchmark ambassador performance

Share data with your ambassadors, showing how their activity and results on your network compare with those of their ambassador peers—information that can be a highly effective motivator.



Associated EAB offering: Wisr

# Lesson 6: Offer Students an Immersive Virtual Experience of Your School

## Visits important but unavailable

When it comes to admitted students' ultimate decision regarding whether or not to attend your school, few factors carry more weight than a visit to your campus; almost half of surveyed students say visits were a "very important" factor in their choice of school.

It is especially troubling, then, that the pandemic has put in-person interactions of that sort off the table for many students.

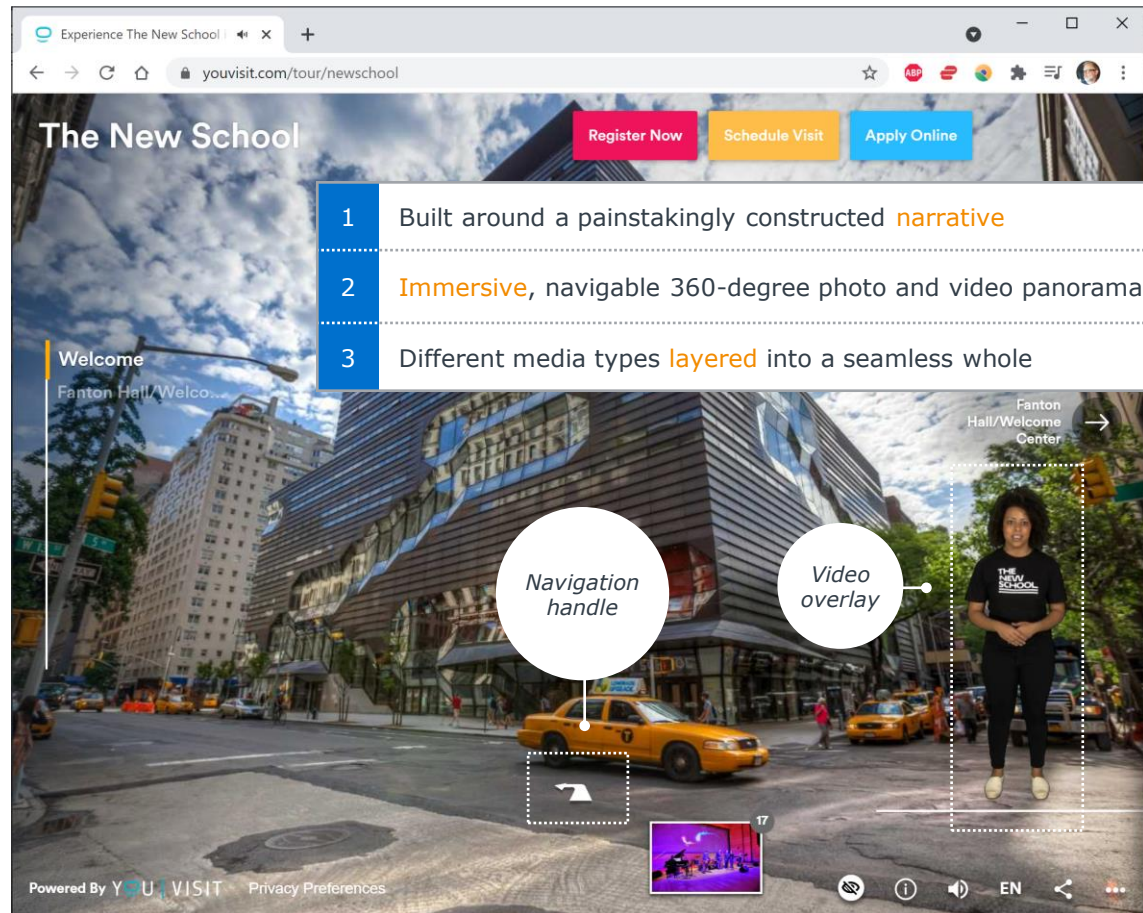
## Robust digital alternatives

By way of compensating, students have quickly become used to assessing their options virtually.

In this context, your school's online presence takes on new and decisive significance. Recognizing this fact, a growing number of institutions are embracing digital approaches that more closely re-create for students the physical experience of campus—for example, media types that allow students to interactively navigate schools' campuses online (similar to how Google Street View enables users to explore cities).

## Three Characteristics of Highly Effective Virtual Tours

*Representative Example from The New School*



Associated EAB offering: YouVisit



# A Guide to Additional Yield-Management Resources from EAB



Access the resources below by clicking on their titles in the PDF of this document or by visiting our [Yield-Management Resource Center](https://eab.com/yield-resources) at [eab.com/yield-resources](https://eab.com/yield-resources).

## White Papers and Toolkits

### **10 Practices for Improved Yield Communications**

*Recommendations for Creating Maximum Engagement with Your Admitted Students*

This report describes communication best practices enrollment leaders can use to boost admitted-student engagement, from maximized text-message outreach to live-casting on social media.

### **Post-pandemic Enrollment Strategy**

*Actionable Lessons and Tools for Enrollment Teams*

This study, while not focused exclusively on yield management, does offer advice with a high degree of relevance for the post-admit phase of the recruitment funnel, including a guide to evaluating your campus-visit experience, lessons on how to promote your virtual tour, and best practice advice for hosting virtual events. See pages 5–18.

### **Why You're Worth It**

*Nine Lessons on Communicating Your Value Proposition to Increasingly Price-Sensitive Families*

While the lessons in this report apply to all funnel stages, they have special relevance for yield season, when students' focus on questions of value tends to be at its most intense. The piece includes data from parent and student surveys showing what matters most to them about colleges they're considering and which types of information they want at which funnel stages.



## White Papers and Toolkits (continued)

### **2021 Wisr Enrollment Yield Report**

*Measuring the Effects of Virtual Enrollment Yield Programming*

This report examines the impact that Wisr sites—school-owned social networks created in partnership with EAB—had on the yield performance of colleges using them to help enroll their 2021 freshman classes. It includes both aggregate data and case studies from individual institutions.

### *Topic Spotlight: Boosting the Impact of Your Campus Visits*

#### **Campus Visit Fact Sheets**

*Answers to Common Questions About School Selection and Campus Visit Design*

Few aspects of your recruitment effort are more complex than your campus visit. This document helps you master that complexity by offering a comprehensive, high-level overview of key aspects of campus-visit design—a perspective you can use to assess and refine your institution's approach.

#### **Campus-Partner Primer**

*A Guide to Four Key Campus Partnerships That Improve Visitor Experience and Enhance Visit Effectiveness*

One common challenge enrollment leaders face when trying to ensure high-quality visit experiences for prospective students is getting all the necessary stakeholders on board, from facilities to faculty to IT. This toolkit offers practical guidance on how to do it.

#### **Post-visit Survey Best Practices**

*A Guide to Creating Good Questions and Effectively Administering the Survey*

Maximally impactful campus-visit experiences depend on continuous improvement and refinement, informed by a detailed understanding of what students like and don't like about your visit. This tool provides practical A to Z guidance on how to gather that information and what to do with it.

## Webinars

### **Yielding Your Class During a Global Pandemic**

This webinar highlights important learning from the COVID-19 era on how to more consistently yield admitted students—insights with lasting relevance beyond the pandemic.

### **Wisr: Scaling High-Touch Engagement Across Your Admit Pool**

This webinar explains how two key components of EAB's yield suite work together to boost yield rates—our predictive-analytics platform, Yield, and Wisr sites, school-owned social networks that colleges create in partnership with EAB.

## Podcasts

### **Yield Your Class During a Time of Uncertainty**

In this podcast, Carla Hickman and Madeleine Rhyneer, Vice President of Consulting Services and Dean of Enrollment Management at EAB, discuss how the pandemic changed yield season and how high-performing schools responded, with a special focus on strategies that promise to deliver continued impact after COVID-19.

### **How to Boost Yield in a Digital-First World**

In this podcast, Anna Masica, a Senior Partner Success Manager at EAB, is joined by Wellesley College Dean of Admission Jessica Ricker to discuss a growing challenge for enrollment professionals everywhere—how to boost yield in a digital-first world. This podcast explores ways to blend the best of traditional, face-to-face recruiting events with newer alternatives such as virtual tours and digital welcome centers.

## Blog posts

- [Prevent summer melt by avoiding these five common texting mistakes](#)
- [18 more ideas for engaging admitted students](#)
- [Staying the course: enrollment marketing strategy during the coronavirus crisis](#)
- [4 lessons to improve yield in an uncertain enrollment season](#)





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