Persona Development Guide

Purpose of the Tool

To create a persona of your institution's core student segment to help ground the audit in the student's perspective

We recommend starting with a single persona of a representative full-time, first-time student.

What Is a Persona?

Personas are general representations of students that can help an institution understand students' college selection behaviors by diving deeper into their specific needs, goals, and challenges.

- A persona can represent a general group of students (Gen Z students) or a specific segment (African American males).

- Personas can guide institutions as they tailor interactions with specific student segments.

Creating a Persona

Effective personas are based on actual behaviors of students (e.g. where students go for information) rather than speculation or assumptions.

- Depending on your institution, you could have 1-2 personas, or as many as 10. Start small with one persona of the typical student at your institution or of the student that you wish to recruit.

Directions

1. Review the sample profile to understand the type of information that creates a persona.
2. Gather the information:
    - Conduct interviews with both prospective and current students. Ask them questions to determine their *enrollment experience*: their perception of an institution, developed cumulatively as they travel along the enrollment funnel and interact with each and every part of the institution.
    - Examine CRM data, admitted student surveys, and other research to find trends in how students find and consume communications.
3. Compile findings using the Persona Template (p 17).
4. Distribute the persona(s) to the participants of the Communication Audit. Refer to the persona(s) regularly during the workshop to prioritize student needs and behaviors.

Gen Z Student Persona Example

Name: Madison

Madison is part of the first wave of Gen Z students, born between 1997 and 2014, moving through the enrollment funnel. She is a digital native and her information gathering, communication preferences, and influencers reflect this.

Demographics

Age: 18

Gender: F

Race: White

Background

Location: Dallas, TX

Family income: $70k

High School: West Dallas High

Academic Profile

GPA: 3.4

SAT: 1,150

Determine the what: personal and professional goals

Madison is preparing for a successful career as an environmental engineer and is hoping to graduate with little debt.
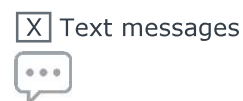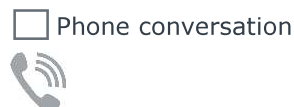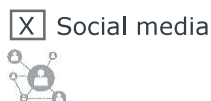
Determine the why: personal motivations

Madison is driven by the possibility of someday working at a climate change non-profit

Key influencers: who drives college section decision

Parents play a significant role in guiding her decisions. Madison's digitalized way of life makes her highly aware of and interested in her peers' road to College.

Barriers to achieving goals

- Concerned that SAT scores aren't high enough to gain admission into top engineering programs
- Perceives community colleges as low-quality and lacks of awareness of transfer opportunities
- Feels like the institution doesn't genuinely know her

Messages that help overcome barriers

- High quality of college engineering program and experiential opportunities
- ROE of transfer degree
- Personalized communications from admissions staff

Student Voice

- "Will this help improve my chances of getting in to UT?"
- "I'm afraid of being lost in the crowd. I really want to stand out."

Preferred Communication Channels
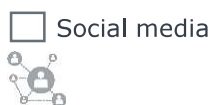
[X] Email   [X] Social media   [ ] Phone conversation   [X] Text messages   [X] Letters

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Persona Template

Name:

1-2 sentence summary

Determine the what: personal and professional goals

_____

_____

_____

Determine the why: personal motivations

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_____

Key influencers: who drives college section decision

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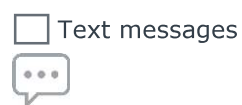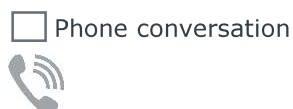
Demographics
Age:
Gender:
Race:

Background
Location:
Family income:
High School:

Academic Profile
GPA:
SAT/ACT:

Barriers to achieving goals

Messages that help overcome barriers

Voice of the Student

Preferred Communication Channels

☐ Email

☐ Social media

☐ Phone conversation

☐ Text messages

☐

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.