

**College and University Admission and Enrollment Management Practices  
for Undergraduate Freshman Inquiry Generation**

**Report of Key Findings**

Eighth Edition

Edward M. Gillis  
Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management  
Executive Director of Admission  
University of Miami

June 2009

## **I. Executive Summary**

More than 400 colleges and universities admissions officials shared their Student Search experiences through the 2009 Admission and Enrollment Management Practices Study. Here's a summary of what they reported.

### **Continued Importance ...**

In the challenging year of 2009, Student Search continues to be important in achieving enrollment objectives for 90.6% of survey responders (a score of 4 or 5 on a 5-point importance scale). The important enrollment objectives pursued through Search in 2009 include more applications (73.5%), more enrollments (55.6%), more geographic diversity (56.4%), higher academic qualifications (54.9%), greater ethnic diversity (48.7%), and greater net revenue (33.1%).

Search responders provided more than 10% of all deposits for fall 2009 for two-thirds of the institutions tracking this data, and ...

- ... more than 20% of all deposits for 43% of institutions
- ... more than 30% of all deposits for 23% of institutions
- ... more than 50% of all deposits for 8% of institutions

### **2009 Search Performance**

The average Search volume reported this year is 11% greater than 2008, an increase to 103,550 from 93,266. The overall Search response rate declined by 10% (to 10.5% from 11.6% in 2008); it took more students to produce the same number of inquires in 2009.

### **New to the Study in 2009**

This year for the first time the survey asked for information about Senior Search and social media. The use of Senior Search (contacting high school seniors not already in your Inquiry Pool) was reported by 40 responders this year with very interesting results. The median experience reported produced 5,400 inquires, with 1,000 applications (an 18.5% conversion rate), and 155 deposits. The mean (average) results were even greater. In the current environment highly desirable students can be contacted relatively late and still apply and deposit at high rates.

Some use of social media for generating inquiries is reported by 56.4% of responders, ranking it between college fairs and advertising in terms of popularity. Many things are being tried, but the social media are not yet viewed as important to meeting enrollment goals, with less than 1% viewing the use of social media as their most important approach, and only 10.8% viewing the use of social media as one of their top three tactics. Most current uses of social media occur after an inquiry is generated.

### **Opportunities to Improve Search Results**

Effective executions of these six Search strategies lead to significantly better results. The strategies and the difference they make in average response rates are:

<b><u>Search Strategies</u></b>	<b><u>Response Rates</u></b>	
	<b>With</b>	<b>Without</b>
Incentives to respond	11.7%	6.9%
Early contact with students (within 14 days)	13.0%	8.3%
Persistent contacts (more than five)	11.1%	9.2%
Multiple communication channels	10.5%	6.4%
Sophomore Search	11.3%	8.1%
Testing to confirm or improve strategies	12.0%	9.2%

## II. Trends in Student Search Practices and Outcomes

The following pages provide year-to-year comparisons of results for many of the Search practices and outcomes reported in this annual study of undergraduate freshman inquiry generation.

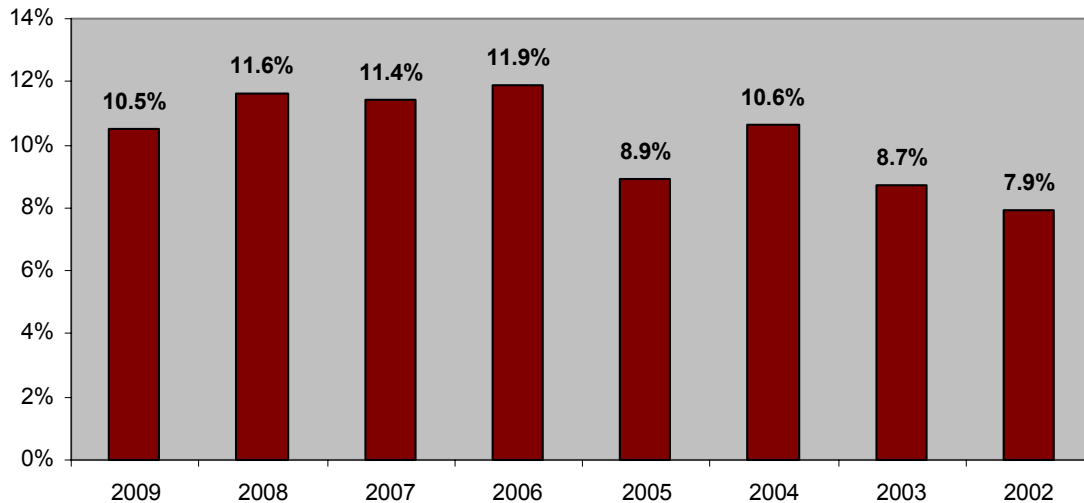
### Student Search Participation

The percentage of institutions using Student Search to generate inquiries has increased since the study was first conducted in 2002 but has remained consistent over the last several years.

	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
Yes	90.6	91.2	90.8	92.9	89.9	91.3	87.4	84.0
No	9.4	8.8	9.2	7.10	10.1	8.7	12.6	16.0

### Response Rates

Average response rates have fluctuated from 2002 to 2009. Please note that the methods for collecting data with which to calculate average response rates have varied over the years (e.g., in previous years, participants reported actual response rates, or indicated the approximate response rate they achieved within a range of percentages). Since 2006, response rates were calculated by dividing the number of unique responders by the number of unique students contacted, as reported by participants.



### Importance of Search

Compared to 2007, slightly fewer 2008 participants indicated Search was important in the grand scheme of their recruitment activities. Percentages from 2009 are similar to findings in 2008.

	2009	2008	2007
Important	46.9	46.8	50.3
Somewhat important	44.0	43.3	42.3
Neither important nor unimportant	5.4	4.8	3.6
Somewhat unimportant	3.2	4.5	3.3
Unimportant	0.4	0.6	0.6

### Satisfaction with Search

While most participants reported satisfaction with Search in 2007, 2008, and 2009, a higher percentage of participants in 2009 than in 2008 indicated they were dissatisfied with their Search.

	2009	2008	2007
Satisfied	65.6	70.9	72.2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12.3	13.3	11.5
Dissatisfied	22.1	15.8	16.2

### Areas of Dissatisfaction

While the primary area of dissatisfaction with Search year-to-year is low response rates, participants indicating dissatisfaction with the cost of Search and enrollments resulting from Search have grown in numbers since 2007.

	2009	2008	2007
Response rates were too low	96.7	96.0	87.3
Search is too expensive	53.3	46.0	38.2
Students do not enroll	36.7	32.0	14.5
We were unable to determine the value of Search to our overall enrollment efforts	36.7	20.0	20.0
We could not track or account for results	26.7	12.0	12.7
Students are not admissible	5.0	2.0	1.8

### Testing

The percentage of institutions using testing to improve the effectiveness of their Search continues to decrease.

	2009	2008	2007	2006
No	71.3%	70.1%	67.2%	63.8%
Yes	28.7%	29.9%	32.8%	36.2%

## Objectives

A greater number of student enrollments has been the most important objective for enrollment managers for the past four years. Increasing the number of applications and achieving a stronger academic profile for the entering class have been primary objectives as well.

<b>First Most Important</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>
More enrollments	36.1%	34.0%	37.7%	42.8%
More applications	18.0%	14.5%	16.6%	--
Stronger academic profile of entering class	12.8%	14.2%	13.0%	17.3%

## Communication Channels

The percentage of institutions using email increased in 2008 and 2009 after leveling off from 2006 to 2007; use of email dramatically increased from 2002 to 2003 and showed more moderate increases in 2004 through 2009; use of telephone was significantly greater in 2009 than in all previous years.

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>
Mail	96.2%	96.5%	98.1%	98.8%	97.4%	98.9%	99.2%	81.0%
Email	93.6%	89.0%	82.4%	84.7%	71.9%	73.1%	67.8%	34.0%
Telephone	27.2%	21.9%	15.4%	19.7%	12.0%	21.2%	18.0%	16.0%

## Outside Assistance

Results from the past four years show higher Search response rates for institutions using vendor services.

<b>Study Year</b>	<b>Used Vendor Response Rates</b>	<b>Did Not Use Vendor Response Rates</b>
2009	11.8%	10.2%
2008	11.8%	10.0%
2007	12.2%	6.7%
2006	12.2%	10.8%

In light of this finding, it is noteworthy that fewer institutions reported they did *not* use outside assistance in 2009.

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>
Did not use a vendor for Student Search	22.6%	36.0%	21.6%	13.8%

### **III. Overview of the Study**

The 2009 Admission and Enrollment Management Practices Study represents the eighth annual survey of admission professionals in the U.S. that focuses on undergraduate freshman inquiry generation. The primary purposes of the study are:

- To provide an important standard for admission and enrollment management practices for undergraduate freshman inquiry generation
- To serve as a single, highly informative source for admission professionals in four-year, undergraduate institutions across the country
- To determine the current state of Search programs and recent response trends among undergraduate recruitment programs at U.S. colleges and universities

NOTE: While the study is intended to reflect current practices and outcomes of freshman inquiry generation among colleges and universities in the U.S., it is important to recognize that the institutions represented in the study are likely to be more experienced in various Search practices than those not included. Schools that do not conduct formal Search campaigns, those that have shifted to an online-only approach to student recruitment, and those that achieve lower response rates are simply less likely to participate. Consequently, readers should be aware that the results presented may have a bias reflecting Search programs that are more successful than the “true” average.

#### **Research Methods**

The study was conducted via an electronic survey and included questions regarding the importance of Student Search in meeting enrollment objectives, specific objectives set for the 2008-2009 Search cycle, the use of lists, measurement and tracking of responses, how the economy is affecting Search, the use of social media for undergraduate recruitment, and the use of vendor services for Search-related tasks.

On May 20, 2009, a pre-notification email message was sent to top enrollment managers and admission executives nationwide announcing the study and inviting them to complete an electronic survey regarding their undergraduate freshman inquiry generation.

The survey was delivered to 1,304 prospective participants – one individual per institution – on May 28, and several reminder messages were sent to follow up with non-responders. Data collection ended on June 15, 2009. In total, 438 key decision makers with enrollment management responsibility at colleges and universities nationwide participated in the survey, for an overall response rate of 33.6%.

Completed surveys were received and tabulated by University Research Partners, the research division of Royall & Company.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> While Royall & Company assisted in the design and execution of the survey, the company did not use individual-level response data for any purpose other than what was required for this report. Strict confidentiality and privacy were maintained throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

## **Sample Characteristics**

The participants represented schools with undergraduate enrollments ranging from 115 to over 35,000 students and included a mix of private (66.8%) and public (33.2%) institutions located in suburban (45.3%), urban (32.4%), and rural (22.3%) areas. The sample is geographically diverse, with 48 states and the District of Columbia represented (11.6% in New England; 22.4% in the Middle States; 20.8% in the South; 26.7% in the Midwest; 6.2% in the Southwest; and 12.1% in the West).

- The majority of participants are from colleges and universities that:
  - are private (66.8%)
  - are moderately selective (63.2%)
  - are secular (69.8%)
  - have an average annual tuition of \$22,142 – private schools only
  - have an average in-state tuition of \$4,466 and an average out-of-state tuition of \$12,318 – public schools only
  - have an undergraduate enrollment of 1,001 - 5,000 students (53.8%)
  - have a freshman class of 1,000 or fewer students (67.3%)