

DMS Education

H1 2019 HIGHER EDUCATION INQUIRY GENERATION REVIEW

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About The Data In This Report

The data used for this report is derived from aggregated higher education industry inquiries processed through and stored within [Sparkroom®](#) technology. Sparkroom is owned by [Digital Media Solutions™, LLC](#) and is used by the DMS Education managed services team and licensed by a long list of higher education marketers to centralize marketing and lead data. All conversion data is based on last-click attribution. The data has been normalized to account for changes that do not reflect inquiry generation trends, altering previously published statistics in some cases. For additional details, see the disclosure at the end of this report.

Overview

The *H1 2019 Higher Education Inquiry Generation Review*, published by DMS Education, covers trends in the inquiry generation and student acquisition activities of higher education institutions for the period of January 2017-June 2019, with an emphasis on January-June 2019 (H1 2019).

The following topics are featured:

- Inquiry volume trends
- Media channel trends
- Third-party media costs
- Degree-level distribution
- Program distribution
- Appendix: Conversion rate trends

The objective of this report is to provide a snapshot of education-specific marketing evolution and highlight trends to help marketers better understand and adapt to the continually changing landscape.

Report Highlights

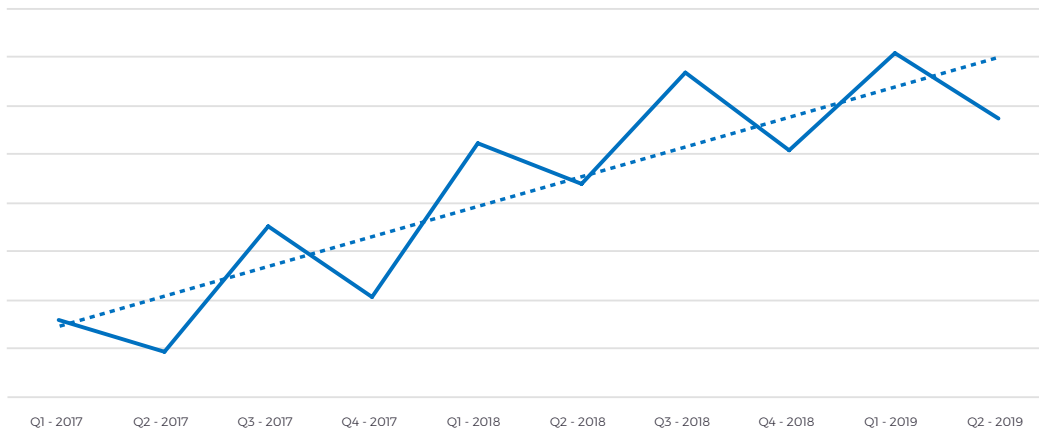
- Inquiry volume continued to climb in H1 2019, particularly for online programs, with online volume up 2.9% half-over-half (HOH) and 10.8% year-over-year (YOY).
- Bachelor’s degrees held the dominant share of inquiry volume in H1 2019 at 33.8%, ranking highest of all degree levels for online programs at 33.6% share of volume (SOV) and second-highest for campus-based programs at 34.2% SOV. Bachelor’s degree inquiries provided 50.1% of all conversions in Q1 2019.
- The only new category to enter the top five higher education category list in H1 2019 was mechanic and repair technology. Bumping general technology down, mechanic and repair technology programs had the largest HOH (28.7%) and YOY (27.1%) volume gains of the top five categories.
- Overall conversion rates were down quarter-over-quarter (QOQ) in Q1 2019 but were up YOY. QOQ declines were most significant for campus-based programs (down 21.1%) and first-party channels (down 14.4%).

H1 2019 Inquiry Volume Trends

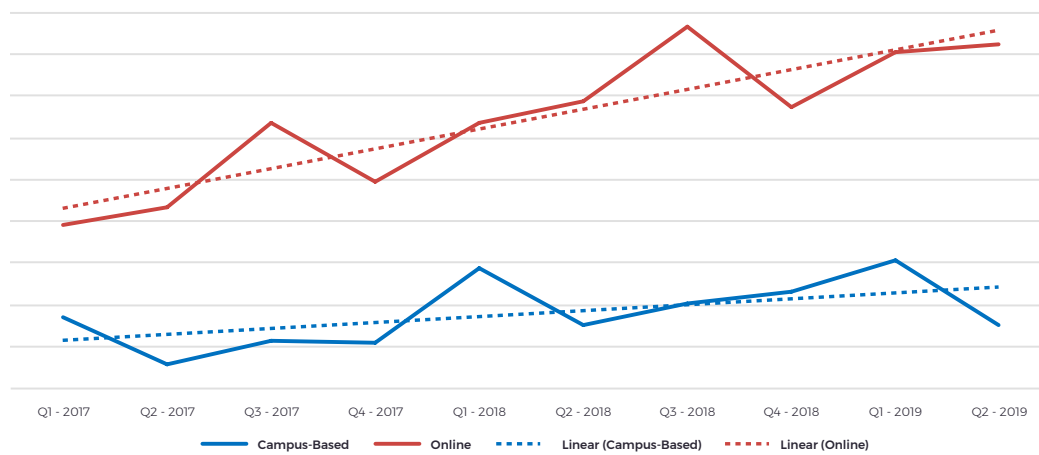
- Since 2017, overall inquiry volume maintained an upward trend, despite fluctuations due to seasonality, driven heavily by growth for the online program format.
- H1 2019 online volume increased by 2.9% compared to H2 2018 and was up 10.8% year-over-year.

Change In Inquiry Volume By Program Format		
Inquiry Volume By Program Format	H1 2019 vs. H2 2018 Change	YOY Change
Inquiry Volume Across All Formats	2.15%	6.73%
Campus-Based Program Inquiry Volume	1.01%	0.86%
Online Program Inquiry Volume	2.88%	10.77%

Inquiry Volume – All Formats – By Quarter, 2017-Q2 2019

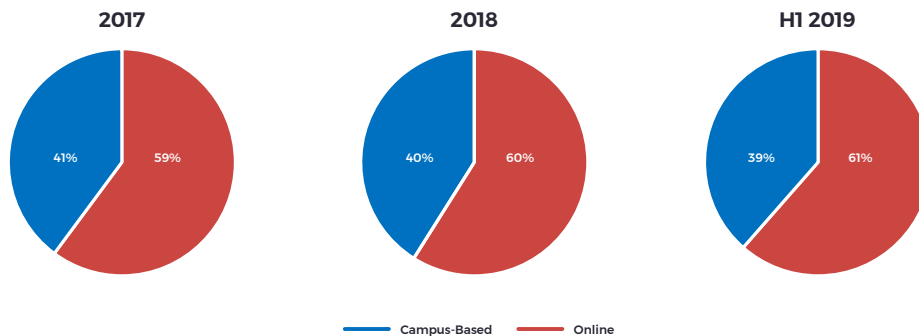


Inquiry Volume – Campus-Based vs. Online Programs – By Quarter, 2017-Q2 2019



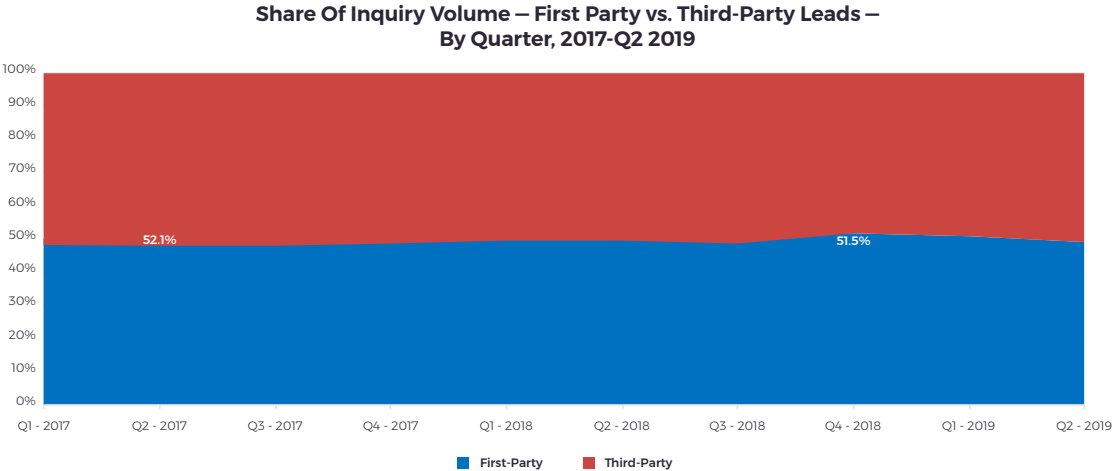
- The gap between program format volume continued to widen during the past two and a half years. In H1 2017, online volume was 34.6% higher than campus-based volume, while in H1 2019 the difference had increased to 59.5%.
- Recent growth also occurred at a faster pace for online programs versus campus-based programs. H1 2019 campus-based volume was relatively flat, only growing by 1.0% half-over-half (HOH) and by 0.9% YOY.

Campus-Based Program vs. Online Program SOV – 2017 vs. 2018 vs. H1 2019



H1 2019 Media Channel Share Of Volume

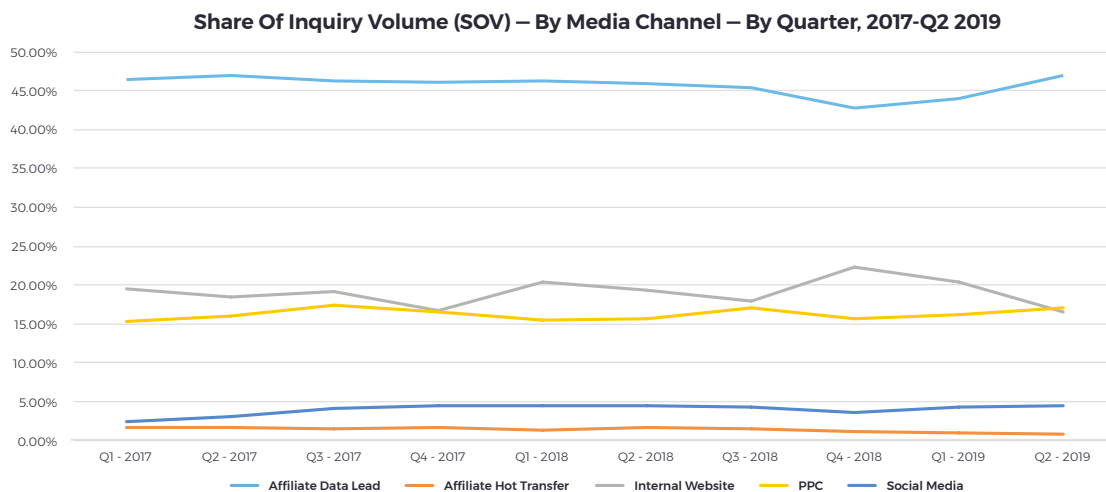
- The share of inquiry volume was nearly evenly split between media formats in H1 2019, with third-party leads at 50.1% and first-party leads at 49.9%.
- First-party SOV reached a high of 51.5% in Q4 2018, before dropping to 50.9% in Q1 2019 and then falling to 48.8% in Q2 2019.
- Third-party SOV reached a high of 52.1% for two consecutive quarters in Q2 2017 and Q3 2017.



- Affiliate data leads held the highest SOV of all media channels in H1 2019, growing 7% over H2 2018 and increasing 6.1% YOY.
- Internal website had the highest SOV for first-party channels in H1 2019, dropping 4.3% HOH and remaining flat YOY.
- Despite dropping 12.3% in H1 2019 compared to H2 2018, affiliate PPC had significant growth YOY, increasing by 34.1%.
- PPC also increased substantially on the first-party side. Holding the second-highest SOV of first-party channels in H1 2019, PPC had a 16.6% SOV, increasing 4.9% HOH and spiking 14.2% YOY.

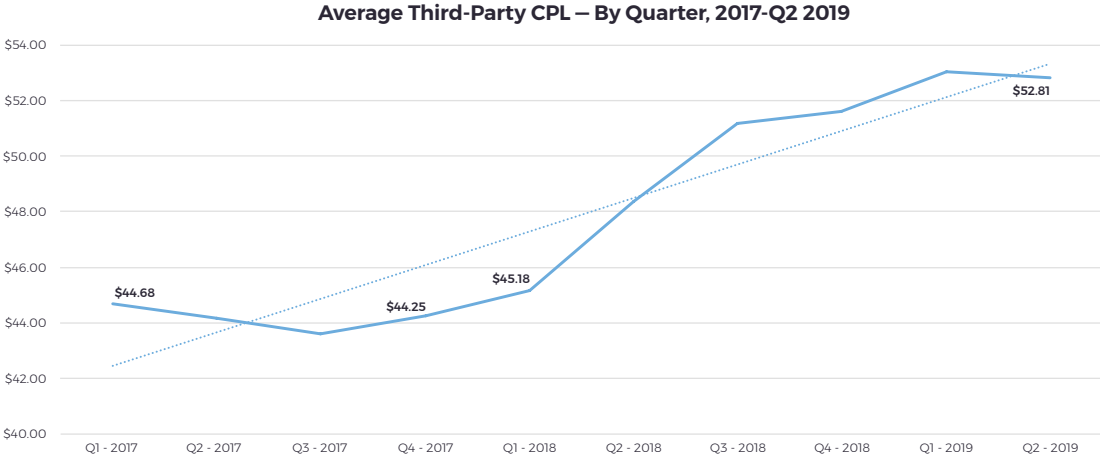
H1 2019 Media Channel Share Of Volume			
Media Channel	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Third-Party Channels	50.14%	4.28%	6.48%
Affiliate Data Lead	45.51%	7.03%	6.10%
Affiliate PPC	3.73%	-12.27%	34.09%
Affiliate Hot Transfer	0.90%	-31.35%	-36.50%
First-Party Channels	49.86%	3.35%	8.32%
Internal Website	18.51%	-4.25%	-0.01%
PPC	16.61%	4.90%	14.16%
Social Media	4.39%	13.79%	6.65%
Offline Media	2.42%	6.12%	9.85%
Event	1.75%	14.73%	57.40%
Email	0.84%	3.26%	38.17%
Referral	0.55%	12.65%	13.53%
Display	0.23%	0.28%	49.06%
Inbound Phone	0.22%	-0.85%	57.87%
PPC Inbound Call	0.09%	-4.30%	-23.58%
All Other Internal	4.24%	19.12%	5.29%

- **Top first-party channel in terms of volume:** Internal website – 18.5% SOV
- **First-party channel with greatest HOH SOV growth:** Event – SOV up 14.7%
- **First-party channel with greatest YOY SOV growth:** Inbound phone – SOV up 57.9%
- **First-party channel with greatest HOH SOV drop:** PPC inbound phone – SOV down 4.3%
- **First-party channel with greatest YOY SOV drop:** PPC inbound phone – SOV down 23.6%



H1 2019 Third-Party Media Costs & Share Of Spend

- The average cost per lead (CPL) across all third-party channels was \$52.93 in H1 2019, up 3% from \$51.38 in H2 2018 and 13.2% higher than the H1 2018 average of \$46.75.
- The average CPL for third-party leads held fairly steady throughout 2017, beginning at \$44.68 in Q1 2017 and landing at \$44.25 in Q4 2017, before rising significantly in 2018 from \$45.18 in Q1 up to \$51.61 in Q4.
- The average third-party CPL climbed even higher this year, increasing to \$52.81 in Q2 2019.



- Affiliate hot transfers had the highest average CPL of third-party channels in H1 2019 at \$83.47, up 0.9% from \$82.73 in H2 2018 and down 2.3% from \$85.40 in H1 2018.
- With the largest YOY change, affiliate data leads had the second-highest average CPL within third-party channels in H1 2019 at \$52.51, up 3.4% from \$50.81 in H2 2018 and 15.2% higher than the H1 2018 average of \$45.58.
- Affiliate PPC had the largest HOH spike in average CPL, increasing 24.7% from \$37.53 in H2 2018 to \$46.79 in H1 2019 and up from \$40.87 in H1 2018.

H1 2019 Third-Party Channel CPLs			
Third-Party Channel	H1 2019 Average CPL	HOH Change	YOY Change
Affiliate Hot Transfer	\$83.47	0.90%	-2.26%
Affiliate Data Lead	\$52.51	3.35%	15.19%
Affiliate PPC	\$46.79	24.68%	14.48%

- Increasing 10.6% HOH and 22.3% YOY, affiliate data leads maintained the dominant share of third-party spend in H1 2019.
- Affiliate hot transfers experienced the only declines within the third-party channels both HOH and YOY in H1 2019.
- With the largest increases in share of spend within the third-party channels, affiliate PPC share of spend grew significantly in H1 2019 both HOH (by 47.1%) and YOY (by 84.7%).

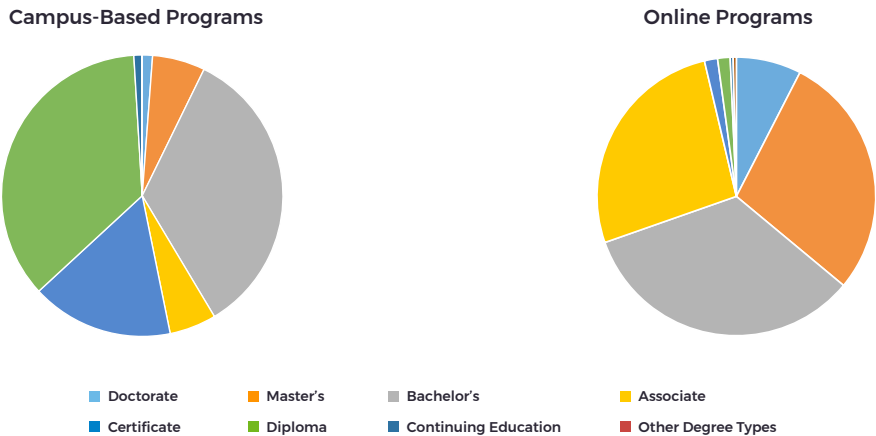
H1 2019 Third-Party Channel Share Of Spend			
Third-Party Channel	H1 2019 Share Of Third-Party Spend	HOH Change	YOY Change
Affiliate Data Lead	94.27%	10.62%	22.29%
Affiliate Hot Transfer	3.02%	-30.70%	-37.62%
Affiliate PPC	2.71%	47.08%	84.74%

H1 2019 Degree-Level Distribution Trends

- Combined, the bachelor’s and master’s degree levels represented 54.2% of all leads generated in H1 2019.
- Bachelor’s degrees held the dominant share of overall inquiry volume in H1 2019 at 33.8%, ranking highest for online programs at 33.6% and second-highest for campus-based programs at 34.2%.
- Master’s programs had the second-highest overall SOV at 20.4% in H1 2019, and ranked second for online programs at 28.5% but only fourth for campus-based programs with a 6.1% SOV.
- Volume was up HOH in H1 2019 for all degree levels except associate, with continuing education growing most significantly.
- Inquiry volume increased YOY in H1 2019 for five out of eight degree levels, with only certificates, continuing education and “other” decreasing.

H1 2019 Degree-Level Share Of Volume			
Degree Level	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Doctorate	5.25%	6.16%	14.34%
Master's	20.38%	5.54%	17.07%
Bachelor's	33.81%	0.47%	17.39%
Associate	18.99%	-0.34%	2.47%
Certificate	6.87%	2.36%	-5.86%
Diploma	13.90%	17.20%	12.14%
Continuing Education	0.55%	78.91%	-4.17%

Share Of Inquiry Volume By Degree Level – Campus-Based vs. Online Programs – H1 2019



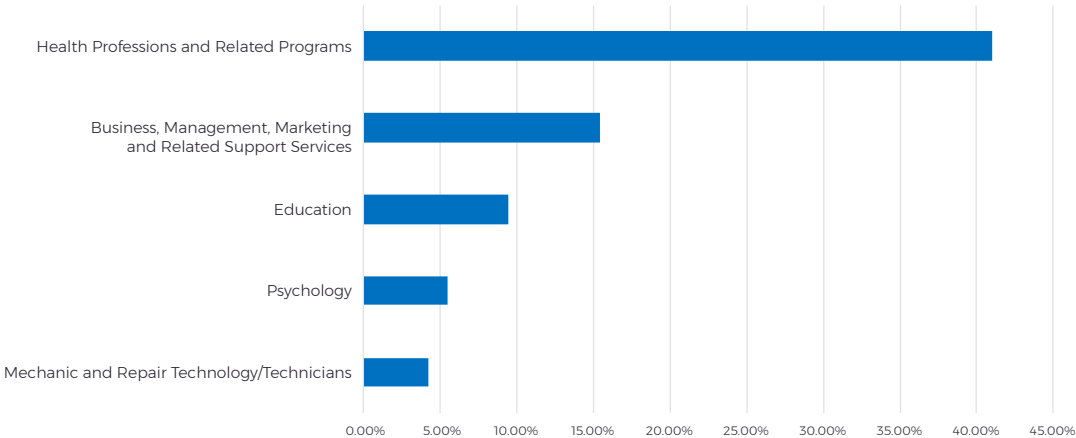
- The top program overall, Business Administration and Management, General appeared in the top five list for several degree levels in H1 2019, ranking highest for doctorate and master's degrees, and second-highest for the bachelor's level.
- With the highest YOY growth for master's degrees, Psychology, General maintained a strong presence across all higher degree levels, ranking third for doctorate and master's programs and ranking fourth for bachelor's degrees.
- Despite a minimal HOH drop, Nursing/Registered Nurse (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN) ranked the highest for bachelor's level programs and the second-highest for master's level programs.
- Led by Medical Office Assistant/Specialist, four of the top five associate programs were in the healthcare category in H1 2019.
- With over 40% YOY growth, Welding Technology/Welder ranked highest for the certificate degree level.
- Medical/Clinical Assistant ranked first for diplomas with HOH growth of 39.4% and YOY growth of 48.2%.

Top 5 Programs By Degree Level (Ranked By H1 Volume)	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Doctorate			
Business Administration and Management, General	0.79%	2.63%	0.24%
Educational Leadership and Administration, General	0.52%	9.71%	0.70%
Psychology, General	0.52%	5.62%	14.90%
Nursing Practice	0.46%	11.85%	53.28%
Organizational Leadership	0.30%	-2.30%	1.77%
Master's			
Business Administration and Management, General	3.74%	-0.56%	1.59%
Nursing/Registered Nurse (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN)	1.42%	2.74%	18.28%
Psychology, General	0.87%	-2.88%	20.87%
Education, General	0.78%	-0.31%	-3.18%
Health/Health Care Administration/Management	0.72%	-10.59%	11.43%
Bachelor's			
Nursing/Registered Nurse (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN)	6.37%	-2.22%	6.32%
Business Administration and Management, General	4.05%	11.42%	48.36%
Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design	2.47%	14.75%	3.35%
Psychology, General	1.98%	-4.48%	29.37%
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder	1.47%	18.50%	13.45%
Associate			
Medical Office Assistant/Specialist	3.52%	2.66%	7.86%
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder	3.49%	-3.04%	-15.14%
Human Services, General	2.10%	2.54%	-11.75%
Pharmacy Technician/Assistant	1.85%	30.68%	89.24%
Health/Health Care Administration/Management	1.18%	-33.13%	-32.49%
Certificate			
Welding Technology/Welder	1.84%	39.08%	40.50%
Medical/Clinical Assistant	0.78%	5.80%	-24.81%
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor	0.41%	-14.61%	-15.92%
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder	0.27%	0.13%	-14.05%
Nursing, Other	0.26%	8.41%	9.91%
Diploma			
Medical/Clinical Assistant	2.27%	39.37%	48.22%
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	1.94%	36.55%	36.89%
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	1.22%	28.36%	26.71%
Office Management and Supervision	0.97%	-22.15%	-40.87%
Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention and Treatment Professions, Other	0.81%	19.87%	34.95%

H1 2019 Program Distribution Trends

- The top program category overall in H1 2019 with a 41.0% SOV, health professions and related programs maintained its number one position for both the campus-based and online formats. The health category SOV was more than three times as high (45.8%) as the second-place business category (12.2%) for campus-based programs and more than double the business SOV for online programs.
- The number three program category overall in H1 2019 with a 9.4% SOV, education experienced the most significant HOH volume growth of the top five online categories.
- Psychology volume remained relatively flat HOH with a 5.5% SOV in H1 2019, but the category was up significantly with 19.3% volume growth YOY.
- Surpassing technology and new to the top five program categories in H1 2019, mechanic and repair technologies/technicians had a 4.2% SOV across formats with the largest HOH (28.7%) and YOY (27.1%) overall volume gains of the top five categories.

Top 5 Program Categories – Share Of Inquiry Volume – H1 2019



Top 5 Program Categories By Program Format (Ranked By H1 2019 SOV)	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Campus-Based			
Health Professions and Related Programs	45.80%	3.50%	3.36%
Business, Management, Marketing and Related Support Services	12.17%	-3.40%	-1.18%
Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians	11.78%	28.69%	27.22%
Precision Production	7.37%	30.17%	35.48%
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities	4.09%	16.14%	11.16%
Online			
Health Professions and Related Programs	38.38%	2.42%	11.85%
Business, Management, Marketing and Related Support Services	17.24%	0.40%	14.49%
Education	13.89%	19.88%	15.11%
Psychology	7.70%	1.83%	18.17%
Public Administration and Social Service Professions	4.75%	12.07%	2.90%

Top Health Programs

- The number two program overall, Nursing/Registered Nurse (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN) led the health category in H1 2019 with an 8.1% SOV.
- Health/Health Care Administration/Management ranked fourth for the health category with a 3.3% SOV, and it was the only top five health program with a decline in volume both HOH and YOY.
- Rounding out the top five for the health category, Medical/Clinical Assistant had the largest HOH and YOY volume increases within the top five.

Top 5 Health Programs (Ranked By H1 2019 SOV)	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Nursing/Registered Nurse (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN)	8.14%	-1.31%	8.19%
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder	5.44%	1.48%	-9.06%
Medical Office Assistant/Specialist	3.78%	2.02%	5.83%
Health/Health Care Administration/Management	3.29%	-17.65%	-11.38%
Medical/Clinical Assistant	3.12%	28.16%	18.85%

Top Business Programs

- The top overall program, Business Administration held a 9.3% SOV in H1 2019, with inquiry volume growing by 19.5% YOY.
- Falling from the number 16 overall program to 26th overall, Office Management and Supervision ranked third within the business category with a steep volume decline of 40.9% YOY.
- Ranked fourth in the business category, Accounting experienced the most significant YOY growth of the top five business programs in H1 2019, with volume increasing by 37.5% over H1 2018.

Top 5 Business Programs (Ranked By H1 2019 SOV)	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Business Administration and Management, General	9.30%	3.86%	19.46%
Organizational Leadership	0.97%	3.50%	4.35%
Office Management and Supervision	0.96%	-22.15%	-40.87%
Accounting	0.94%	4.10%	37.45%
Business/Commerce, General	0.52%	21.76%	-12.40%

Top Education Programs

- All of the top five programs in the education category experienced volume increases both HOH and YOY in H1 2019.
- Curriculum and Instruction had the highest HOH volume increase of the top five education programs with 33.8% growth.
- Elementary Education and Teaching had the highest YOY growth within the top five at 29.9%.

Top 5 Education Programs (Ranked By H1 2019 SOV)	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Early Childhood Education and Teaching	1.93%	11.30%	6.16%
Education, General	1.52%	24.24%	19.47%
Elementary Education and Teaching	1.06%	11.01%	29.92%
Educational Leadership and Administration, General	1.02%	8.65%	1.69%
Curriculum and Instruction	0.41%	33.77%	23.88%

Top Psychology Programs

- The fifth-ranked program overall, Psychology, General led the psychology category in H1 2019 with a 3.5% SOV, growing by 24.5% YOY.
- Counseling Psychology grabbed the number two spot within the psychology category, despite a 23.3% decline in volume YOY, the most significant decrease of the top five psychology programs.
- Three of the top five psychology programs experienced YOY volume growth greater than 20% YOY in H1 2019.

Top 5 Psychology Programs (Ranked By H1 2019 SOV)	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Psychology, General	3.50%	0.57%	24.51%
Counseling Psychology	0.31%	6.14%	-23.33%
Clinical Psychology	0.25%	7.12%	23.27%
Forensic Psychology	0.24%	19.89%	37.80%
Industrial and Organizational Psychology	0.21%	-3.54%	3.52%

Top Mechanic And Repair Programs

- Like education, all of the top five programs in the mechanic and repair category increased in volume both HOH and YOY in H1 2019.
- The number 12 overall program, HVAC led the mechanic and repair category with a 2.1% SOV in H1 2019, with substantial volume growth both HOH and YOY.
- The Autobody/Collision and Repair program experienced the most dramatic growth of the top five mechanic and repair programs, increasing 62.5% HOH and 88.9% YOY.

Top 5 Mechanic And Repair Programs (Ranked By H1 2019 SOV)	H1 2019 SOV	HOH Change	YOY Change
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	2.10%	29.94%	27.37%
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	1.21%	28.67%	26.71%
Diesel Mechanics Technology/Technician	0.21%	5.29%	1.08%
Autobody/Collision and Repair Technology/Technician	0.16%	62.51%	88.94%
Heavy/Industrial Equipment Maintenance Technologies, Other	0.05%	15.97%	5.61%

Additional Program Category & Program Statistics

Program Categories With YOY Growth > 30%	YOY Change
Leisure and Recreational Activities	107.73%
High School/Secondary Diplomas and Certificates	104.40%
Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness Studies	64.33%
Communication, Journalism and Related Programs	61.02%
Visual and Performing Arts	58.30%
Natural Resources and Conservation	51.97%
Engineering Technologies and Engineering-Related Fields	50.31%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	45.17%
Social Sciences	35.68%
Communications Technologies/Technicians and Support Services	34.29%
Philosophy and Religious Studies	30.13%

Program Categories With YOY Decline > 20%	YOY Change
Construction Trades	-98.27%
Transportation and Materials Moving	-35.05%
Family and Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences	-23.85%

Rank	Top 50 Programs (Ranked By H1 2019 SOV)	H1 2019 SOV	H2 2018 Rank
1	Business Administration and Management, General	9.30%	1
2	Nursing/Registered Nurse (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN)	8.14%	2
3	Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder	5.44%	3
4	Medical Office Assistant/Specialist	3.78%	5
5	Psychology, General	3.50%	6
6	Health/Health Care Administration/Management	3.29%	4
7	Medical/Clinical Assistant	3.12%	7
8	Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design	2.45%	9
9	Criminal Justice/Police Science	2.23%	8
10	Welding Technology/Welder	2.22%	12
11	Human Services, General	2.14%	10
12	Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	2.10%	14
13	Pharmacy Technician/Assistant	2.00%	13
14	Early Childhood Education and Teaching	1.93%	11
15	Education, General	1.52%	18
16	Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	1.51%	15
17	Health Information/Medical Records Administration/Administrator	1.46%	19
18	Medical Insurance Specialist/Medical Biller	1.23%	17
19	Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	1.21%	24
20	Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General	1.13%	20
21	Nurse/Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant	1.10%	25
22	Elementary Education and Teaching	1.06%	21
23	Educational Leadership and Administration, General	1.02%	22
24	Graphic Design	0.99%	40
25	Organizational Leadership	0.97%	23
26	Office Management and Supervision	0.96%	16
27	Accounting	0.94%	26
28	Dental Assisting/Assistant	0.88%	32
29	Electrical and Electronics Engineering	0.87%	27
30	Music, General	0.84%	36
31	Communication, General	0.81%	33
32	Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, and Treatment Professions, Other	0.80%	31

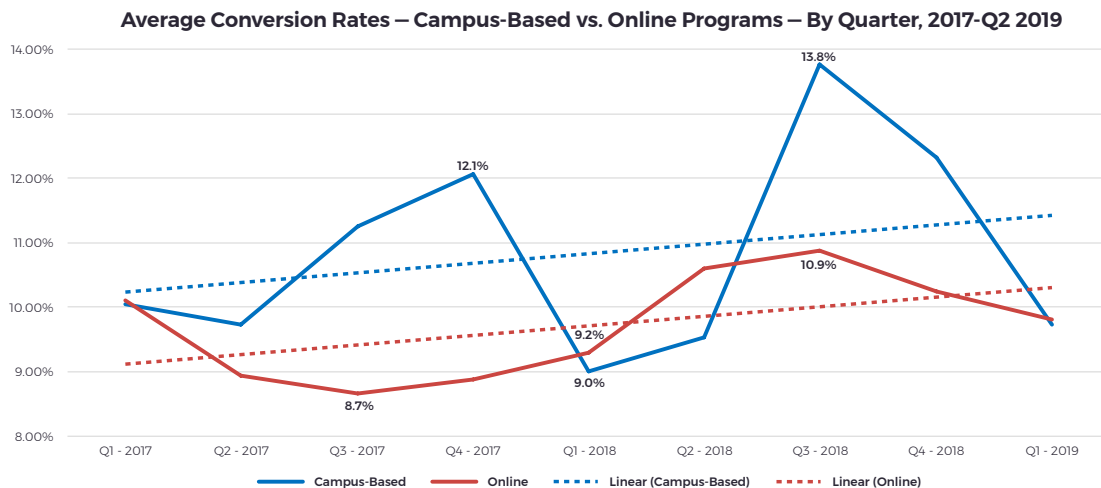
Rank	Top 50 Programs (Ranked By H1 2019 SOV)	H1 2019 SOV	H2 2018 Rank
33	Information Technology	0.71%	29
34	Behavioral Sciences	0.66%	35
35	Marriage and Family Therapy/Counseling	0.64%	42
36	Computer Systems Networking and Telecommunications	0.63%	41
37	Bible/Biblical Studies	0.61%	34
38	Christian Studies	0.61%	38
39	Computer Systems Analysis/Analyst	0.61%	28
40	Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training (LPN, LVN, Cert, Dipl, AAS)	0.58%	45
41	Mental Health Counseling/Counselor	0.57%	43
42	Animation, Interactive Technology, Video Graphics and Special Effects	0.55%	60
43	Business/Commerce, General	0.52%	51
44	Divinity/Ministry	0.50%	39
45	Computer Programming/Programmer, General	0.50%	30
46	Substance Abuse/Addiction Counseling	0.50%	37
47	History, General	0.48%	44
48	Marketing/Marketing Management, General	0.48%	48
49	Nursing Practice	0.46%	52
50	Accounting and Finance	0.44%	53

Appendix – Conversion Rate Trends

- The appendix focuses on conversion rate (CVR) trends in Q1 2019. Due to lack of maturity, Q2 2019 conversion data was not included within this report.
- Despite being up YOY, the average CVR was down QOQ for both programs formats in Q1 2019. The CVR decline was felt most significantly on the campus-based side, with the average CVR down 21.1% compared to Q4 2018.

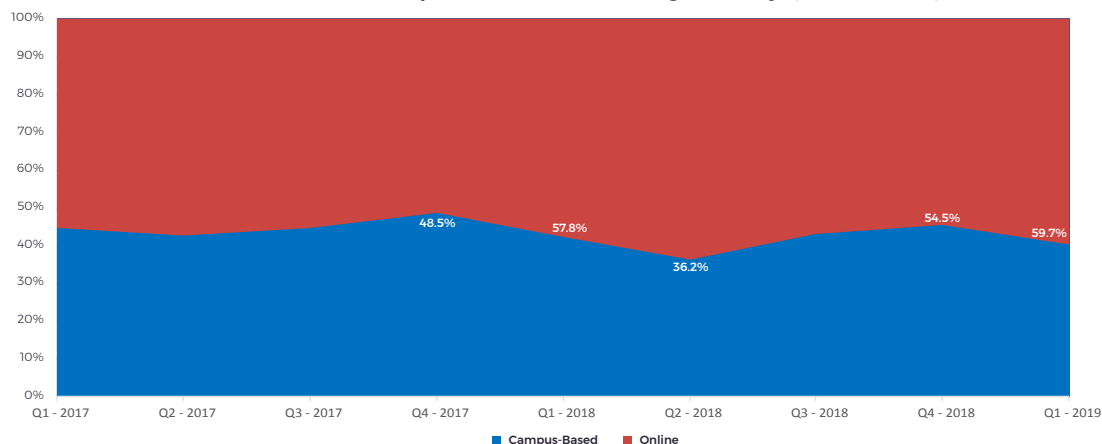
Q1 2019 Average CVR By Program Format			
CVR By Program Format	Q1 2019 CVR	QOQ Change	YOY Change
Campus-Based Programs	9.82%	-21.07%	7.97%
Online Programs	9.78%	-4.26%	5.62%

- The average CVR was down QOQ for both the campus-based and online formats in Q1 2019, but increased for both formats YOY.
- Although the conversion rates for both formats fluctuated throughout the reporting period, the average CVR for campus-based programs varied more widely over the past two quarters.
- Campus and online conversion rates both hovered just over 10% in Q1 2017 and then took divergent paths, with campus CVR climbing to 12.1% in Q4 2017 before dropping to 9.0% in Q1 2018.
- Online CVR fell to 8.7% in Q3 2017, and then bounced back slightly to 9.2% in Q1 2018.
- The average CVR for both formats peaked in Q3 2018 with campus-based programs reaching 13.8% CVR and online programs reaching 10.9%, before falling for the next two quarters and nearly converging again in Q1 2019 with campus-based CVR at 9.7% and online CVR at 9.8%.



- The online share of conversions (SOC) was 59.7% in Q1 2019, up from 54.5% the previous quarter and 57.8% the previous year.
- The SOC for campus-based programs peaked in Q4 2017 at 48.5% and fell to a low point of 36.2% in Q2 2018.

Share Of Conversions – Campus-Based vs. Online Programs – By Quarter, 2017-Q1 2019

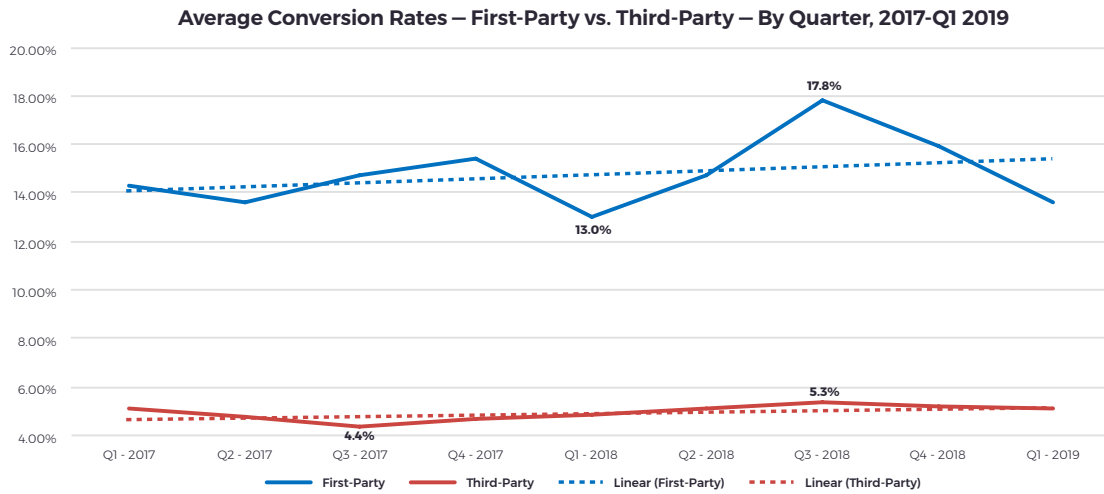


Media Channel Performance Trends

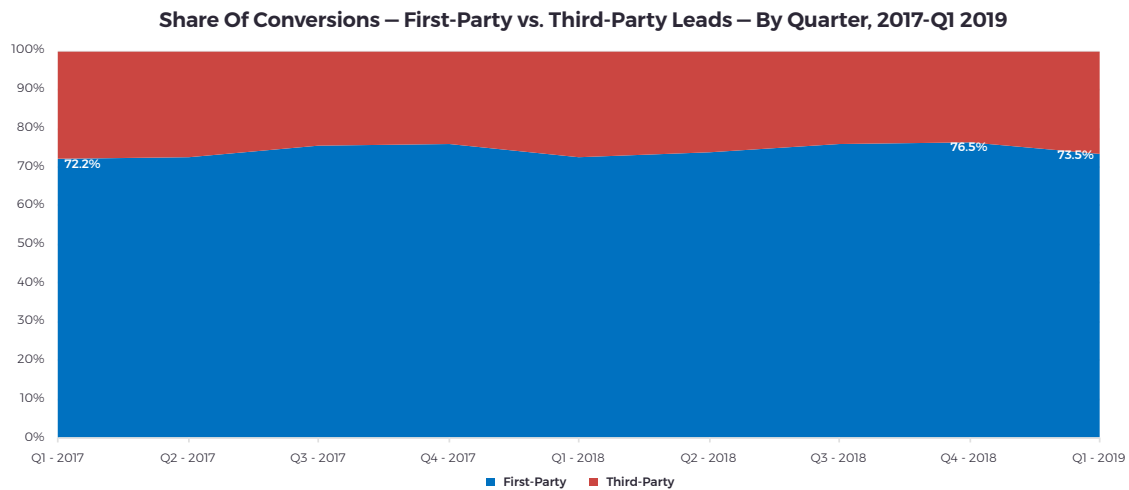
- The overall third-party channel average CVR was 5.1% in Q1 2019, down 1.8% from the previous quarter, but 5.8% higher than Q1 2018.
- Similarly, the first-party channel average CVR of 13.6% in Q1 2019 was also down QOQ (by 14.4%) and up YOY (by 4.9%).
- Affiliate hot transfers were the top-performing third-party channel in Q1 2019 with a CVR of 12.4%, up 16.3% from the previous quarter, but down 18.3% YOY.
- Inbound phone performed best for first-party channels with a 23.7% average CVR, down slightly from Q4 2018, but up a whopping 47.1% YOY.

Q1 2019 Average CVR By Media Channel			
Media Channel	Q1 2019 CVR	QOQ Change	YOY Change
Third-Party Channels	5.09%	-1.82%	5.80%
Affiliate Hot Transfer	12.35%	16.33%	-18.33%
Affiliate PPC	9.18%	-3.91%	4.80%
Affiliate Data Lead	4.55%	-0.31%	7.18%
First-Party Channels	13.63%	-14.40%	4.87%
Inbound Phone	23.65%	-2.43%	47.06%
Internal Website	18.40%	-14.06%	13.01%
Offline Media	15.63%	7.03%	7.48%
Referral	15.21%	-0.54%	-15.75%
Email	14.67%	-16.19%	-49.20%
PPC Inbound Call	13.08%	4.80%	19.01%
PPC	10.35%	-11.92%	1.73%
Social Media	6.76%	9.48%	74.83%
Event	4.38%	-32.45%	-79.24%
Display	3.49%	20.22%	53.80%
All Other Internal	13.11%	-18.05%	7.04%

- The first-party average CVR fluctuated more dramatically than the third-party average CVR during the reporting period, with a low point of 13.0% in Q1 2018 and a peak of 17.8% in Q3 2018.
- The third-party average CVR also reached its peak during Q3 2018 at 5.3%, one year after it fell to its low point of 4.4% in Q3 2017.

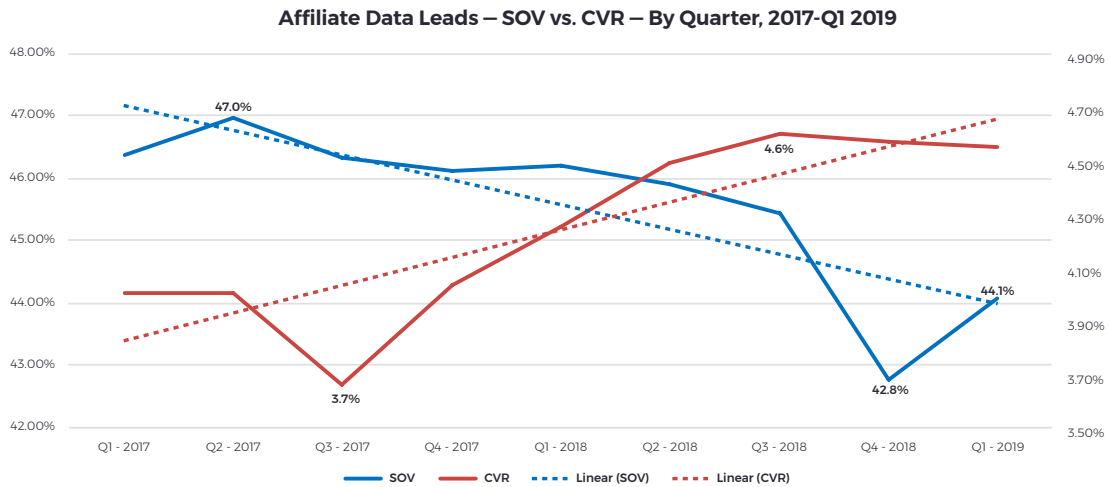


- First-party channel SOC fluctuated slightly during the reporting period, with a low point of 72.2% in Q1 2017 and a peak in Q4 2018 of 76.5%.
- In Q1 2019, the SOC fell to 73.5% for first-party leads.



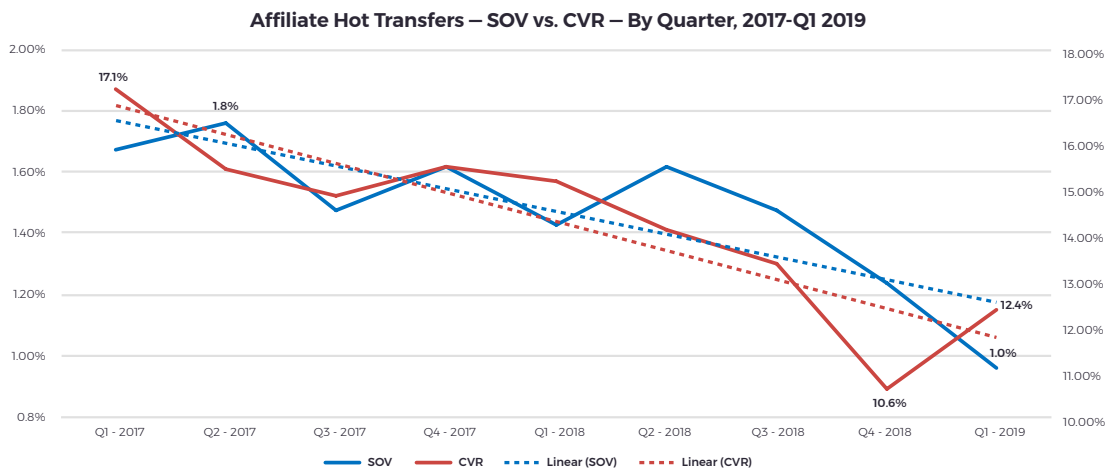
Affiliate Data Lead Performance

- The affiliate data lead SOV declined from a high of 47.0% in Q2 2017 to a low of 42.8% in Q4 2018, before bouncing back slightly to 44.1% in Q1 2019.
- Conversely, the average CVR for affiliate leads increased significantly during the reporting period from a low of 3.7% in Q3 2017 to a high of 4.6% in Q3 2018.



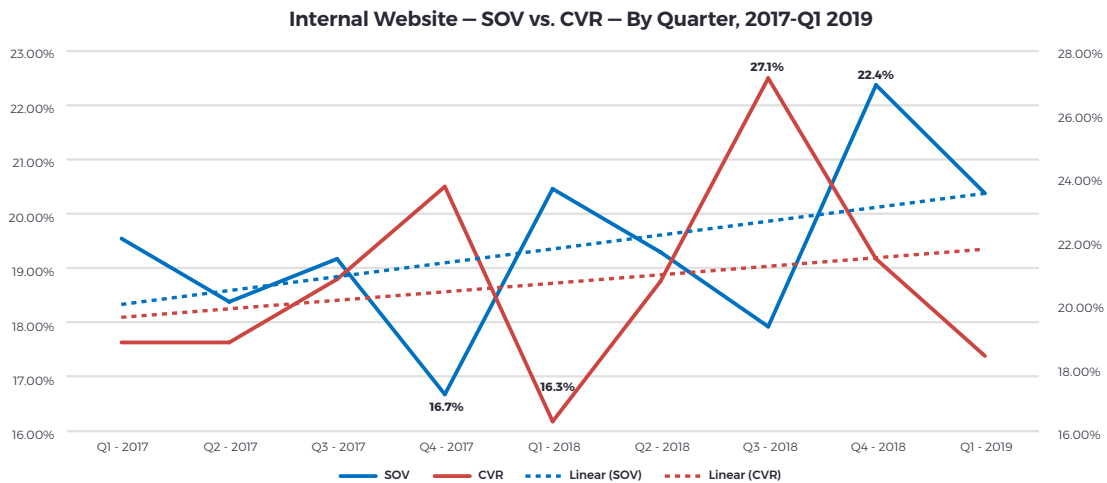
Affiliate Hot Transfers Performance

- Both the SOV and average CVR declined for affiliate hot transfers during the reporting period.
- The SOV peaked for affiliate hot transfers in Q2 2017 at 1.8% before falling to a low point of 1.0% in Q1 2019.
- The average CVR decreased fairly steadily from the Q1 2017 high of 17.1% to a low of 10.6% in Q4 2018, before it bounced back slightly to 12.4% in Q1 2019.
- We anticipate continued SOV growth if the average CVR continues to rise.



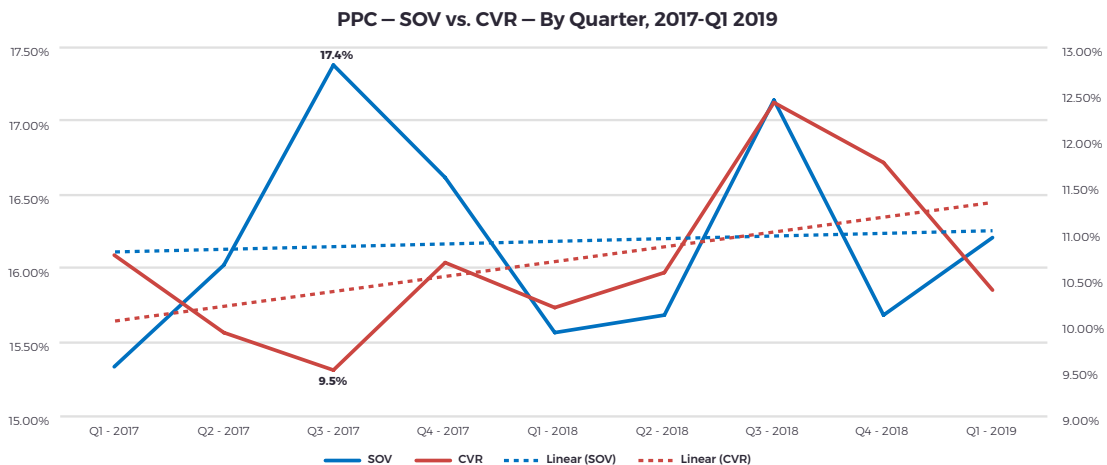
Internal Website Performance

- Both the internal website SOV and average CVR ebbed and flowed throughout the reporting period.
- Internal website SOV reached a low point in Q4 2017 at 16.7% and then climbed to a peak of 22.4% in Q4 2018.
- The average CVR for internal website leads fell to a low point of 16.3% in Q1 2018 before it spiked to a peak of 27.1% in Q3 2018.
- The SOV and CVR changes for the internal website channel perfectly show how volume increases can impact lead quality.



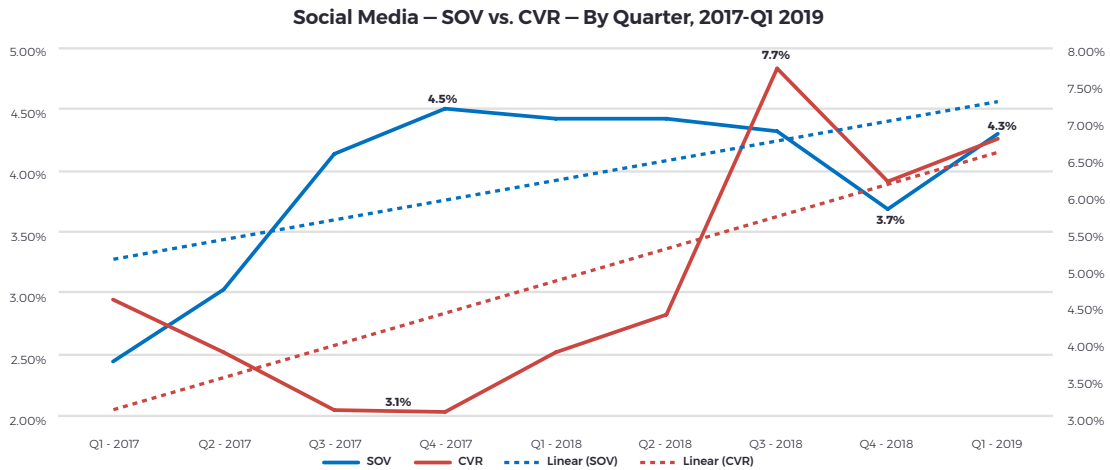
PPC Performance

- During 2017, the SOV and average CVR for PPC leads followed divergent paths with SOV peaking at 17.4% in Q3 2017, while average CVR fell to its lowest point of the reporting period (9.5%) during the same quarter.
- In 2018, the SOV and CVR followed relatively parallel paths, climbing in Q2 and Q3 before falling again in Q4 2018.
- Despite fluctuations, the overall trendlines for PPC SOV and CVR during the reporting period were up.



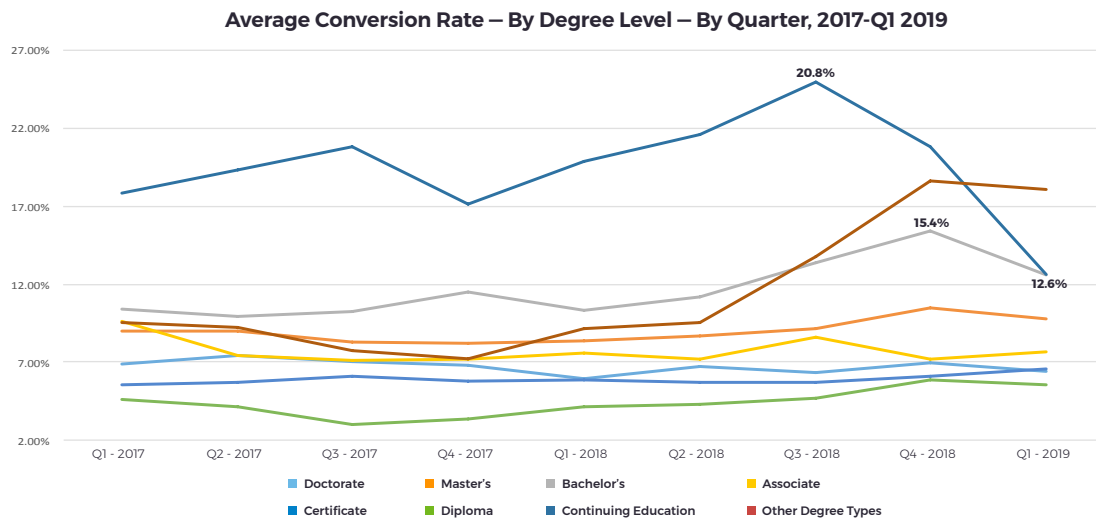
Social Media Performance

- The social media SOV climbed throughout 2017, reaching its peak of 4.5% in Q4 2017. The SOV then remained relatively flat for the first three quarters of 2018 before it dropped to 3.7% in Q4 2018 and then increased to 4.3% in Q1 2019.
- After bottoming out at 3.1% in the second half of 2017, the average CVR for social media leads jumped dramatically to a high point of 7.7% in Q3 2018.
- With both CVR and SOV trending upward, it seems that education marketers have figured out how to turn social media into a viable lead generation channel.

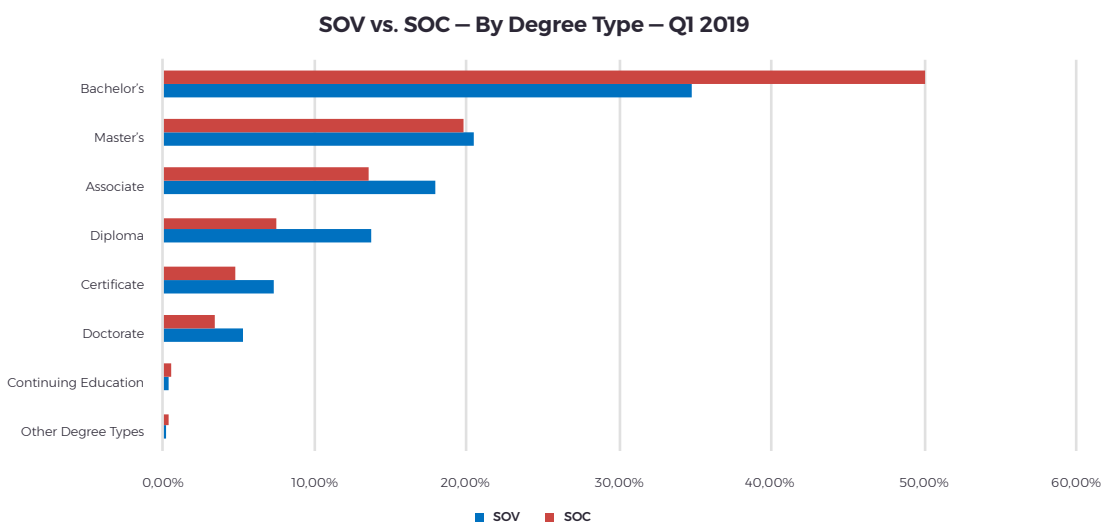


Degree-Level Performance Trends

- The bachelor-level CVR peaked in Q4 2018 at 15.4%, before dropping to 12.6% in Q1 2019, placing it behind “other” degree types for the second-best performance in Q1 2019.
- The CVR for doctorate, master’s, diploma and other degree levels all grew in Q4 2018, followed by a dip in Q1 2019, directly contrasting the overall volume trends seen during those quarters.
- Continuing education had the highest CVR for most of the reporting period, before dropping from 20.8% in Q4 2018 to 12.6% in Q1 2019.

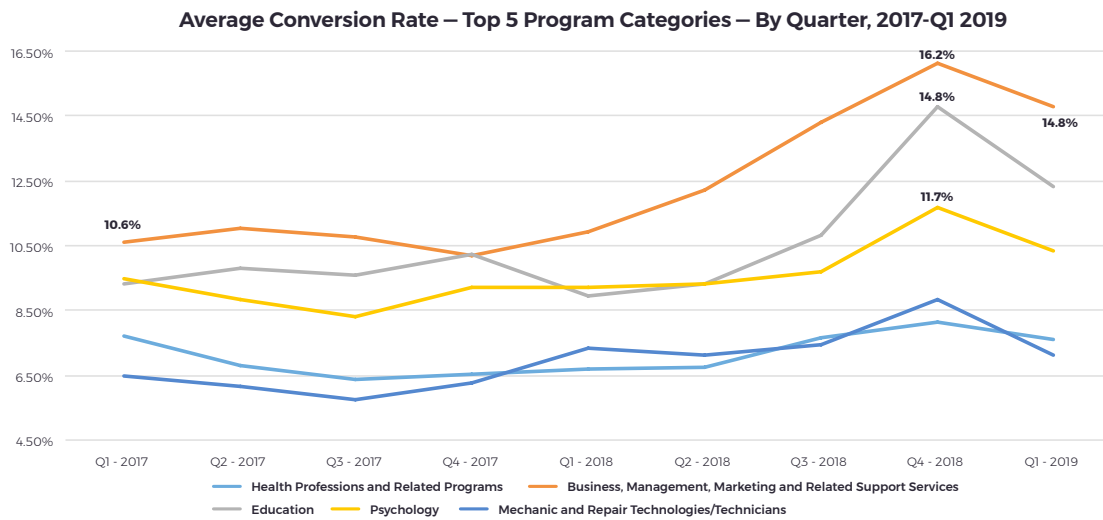


- Significantly outperforming all other degree levels, bachelor’s degrees provided the dominant share of conversions in Q1 2019, representing 50.1% of all conversions, with only 34.7% of overall volume.
- Despite having the strongest CVR for most of the reporting period, continuing education only provided 0.6% of conversions due to its low volume.

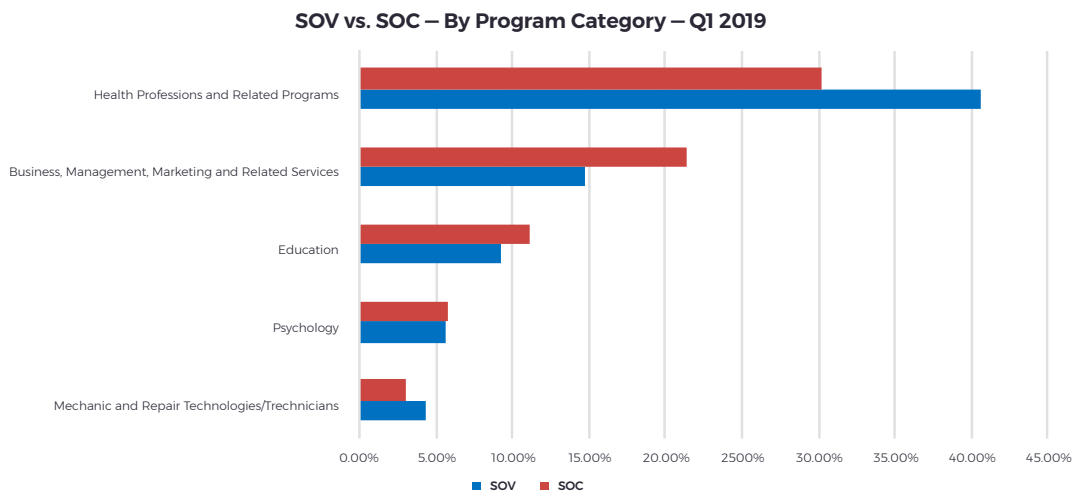


Category Performance Trends

- The business category had the highest average CVR throughout the reporting period, beginning at 10.6% in Q1 2017 and shooting up to 16.2% in Q4 2018, before dipping to 14.8% in Q1 2019.
- The education and psychology categories followed closely behind, spiking to 14.8% and 11.7% in Q4 2018, respectively, before dipping in Q1 2019.
- The mechanic and repair and health categories lagged further behind, with average CVRs hovering in the 6.5%-8.5% range throughout the reporting period.



- With its significant SOV of 40.6%, health was the largest driver of conversions with a 30.2% share in Q1 2019, despite its relatively lower conversion rate.
- With only a 14.8% SOV the business category represented 21.5% of all conversions.
- The health and mechanic/repair categories were the only two categories on the top five list to provide larger shares of volume than conversions.



Additional Q1 2019 Conversion Statistics

Programs within each top program category with a CVR above 10% in Q1 2019:

- Accounting
- Autobody/Collision and Repair Technology/Technician
- Business Administration and Management, General
- Counseling Psychology
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Diesel Mechanics Technology/Technician
- Educational Leadership and Administration, General
- Elementary Education and Teaching
- Nursing/Registered Nurse (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN)
- Psychology, General

Conversion Rates (CVR) By Program & Program Category	Q1 2019 CVR	QOQ Change	YOY Change
Health Programs			
Nursing/Registered Nurse (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN)	11.49%	-16.07%	11.29%
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder	6.52%	7.88%	-3.37%
Medical Office Assistant/Specialist	5.76%	8.37%	-13.99%
Health/Health Care Administration/Management	7.91%	0.90%	31.77%
Medical/Clinical Assistant	4.21%	4.44%	58.54%
Business Programs			
Business Administration and Management, General	16.27%	-7.33%	28.47%
Office Management and Supervision	3.42%	21.59%	240.59%
Accounting	22.38%	-3.20%	37.84%
Organizational Leadership	7.01%	-17.71%	-4.48%
Business/Commerce, General	6.92%	-51.40%	-58.26%
Education Programs			
Early Childhood Education and Teaching	9.09%	-18.00%	25.44%
Education, General	8.54%	-12.83%	29.03%
Elementary Education and Teaching	21.02%	-14.81%	41.85%
Educational Leadership and Administration, General	11.21%	-19.92%	3.40%
Curriculum and Instruction	10.96%	-24.58%	13.37%

Conversion Rates (CVR) By Program & Program Category	Q1 2019 CVR	QOQ Change	YOY Change
Psychology Programs			
Psychology, General	11.58%	-14.18%	28.11%
Counseling Psychology	11.86%	-17.66%	-28.68%
Forensic Psychology	6.03%	17.87%	-5.51%
Clinical Psychology	8.84%	11.48%	66.45%
Industrial and Organizational Psychology	4.21%	-28.78%	-26.73%
Mechanic and Repair Programs			
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	5.12%	-4.78%	41.48%
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	8.78%	-29.67%	-19.46%
Diesel Mechanics Technology/Technician	13.41%	-16.85%	-12.69%
Autobody/Collision and Repair Technology/Technician	10.14%	-29.32%	-39.90%
Heavy/Industrial Equipment Maintenance Technologies, Other	8.74%	4.33%	2.79%

Program Categories With Q1 2019 CVR > 12%	Q1 2019 CVR
High School/Secondary Diplomas and Certificates	79.58%
Foreign Languages, Literatures and Linguistics	26.42%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	26.37%
Transportation and Materials Moving	24.13%
Social Sciences	22.16%
Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies	21.65%
Mathematics and Statistics	19.20%
Physical Sciences	18.47%
Natural Resources and Conservation	15.16%
History	14.88%
Philosophy and Religious Studies	14.66%
Business, Management, Marketing and Related Support Services	14.23%
Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Related Protective Services	14.14%

Program Categories With Q1 2019 CVR < 5%	Q1 2019 CVR
Family and Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences	3.25%
Architecture and Related Services	3.03%
Construction Trades	2.93%
Area, Ethnic, Cultural, Gender and Group Studies	2.51%
Military Technologies and Applied Sciences	1.22%

Definitions & Acronyms

- **Cohort:** A cohort refers to the time period during which the lead was received. For this report, we pulled data for leads received by institutions during the period of January 2017-June 2019. If a lead was generated prior to January 2017 but converted during the 2017 to June 2019 period, it was not included in this report.
- **Conversion:** An inquiry that achieved an application, enrollment or start milestone is considered a conversion. All conversions are measured as part of their original inquiry cohort. For example, an inquiry received in September and converted in October counts within September's total conversions and not within October's conversion count.
- **CPC:** Cost per click
- **CPL:** Cost per lead
- **CVR:** Conversion rate
- **Degree level:** Degree level refers to the magnitude of requirements and/or time to complete a program. The highest degree level is doctorate. The most in-demand degree level is bachelor's, typically representative of a four-year degree.
- **First-party inquiry:** An inquiry generated using a school's brand directly, whether via a school's own website, display advertising, social media, offline channel or other branded source. Unless otherwise noted, pay-per-click inquiries are also in this category.
- **HOH:** Half over half
- **Inquiry:** A request for information from a student prospect. Used interchangeably with "lead."
- **Maturation:** Maturation refers to the process of leads completing their enrollment lifecycle, with a conversion at the end of that period. In general, it is assumed that it takes three months for leads to be fully mature, but a portion of leads convert before and after that three-month period.
- **Media channel:** The modes used to reach consumers are referred to as media channels. These include paid media channels (such as paid search and display advertising) and earned or owned media channels (such as website and email).
- **MOM:** Month over month
- **PPC:** Pay per click
- **Program:** A program is one program type within a CIP group. Because higher education institutions at times use different names to refer to the same basic program, the program categorization may not precisely match a program's actual name at a school. Program requirements and components are used to assess programs and determine the best program alignment.
- **Program category:** A program category is a group of programs categorized together due to their similarities by the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). These classifications support tracking and reporting of program demand and performance. [Click here to view all of the CIP codes.](#)
- **QOQ:** Quarter over quarter

- **QOQ:** Quarter over quarter
- **SOC:** Share of conversions. Unless otherwise noted, this is calculated as a percent of all conversions generated for the period.
- **SOV:** Share of volume. Unless otherwise noted, this is calculated as a percent of all leads generated for the period.
- **Third-party inquiry:** An inquiry generated by a third-party advertiser. Pay-per-inquiry vendors/affiliates fall within this definition. Third-party inquiries come from a variety of channels, including paid and organic search, email, display and social media. The main difference between third-party and first-party inquiries is that, for third-party inquiries, vendors are controlling the media spread and message.
- **YOY:** Year over year

About DMS Education

Since 2002, [DMS Education](#) has been supporting the higher education industry, including traditional and for-profit colleges, trade schools, community colleges, boot camps, continuing education providers, OPMs and agencies. We understand the education consumer and their journey, and we use robust targeting and routing logic to deliver predictable volumes of inquiries at scale to our school partners.

[Digital Media Solutions™](#) (DMS) is the fastest-growing independent digital performance marketing company. We help our clients accelerate growth by deploying diversified and data-driven customer acquisition solutions that deliver scalable, sustainable and measurable marketing results. Our precision performance marketing solutions connect the right consumers with the right offers at the right time to achieve the marketing objectives of our clients. At DMS, we are continually innovating to provide new and emerging media and technology solutions that minimize waste and maximize results across the most competitive industries.

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Data Disclosure: The data in this report is comprised of a set of inquiries processed by [Sparkroom®](#) performance marketing technology during the period of January 1, 2017 through June 30, 2019, utilizing aggregated data normalized to remove all school-specific information and trending.

Ideal for marketers focused on driving results through online channels, Sparkroom is the campaign management technology used by the DMS managed services team, but it was built for self-service campaign management and is designed to help marketers grow while controlling their cost of acquisition.

The dataset used for this report includes more than 350 campus locations and nearly 1500 programs. Data was aggregated into standard categories/subjects using the CIP classification system. Inquiries processed by Sparkroom performance marketing technology are derived from a variety of sources, with approximately one-half coming from third-party channels and one-half from branded marketing efforts, such as school websites, paid search campaigns and social media campaigns. Because school demand plays a factor in inquiry generation, there is the potential for related bias within the report findings.

Data was pulled on July 8, 2019. Although lead cohorts continue to mature indefinitely, we assume cohorts to be mature after a period of 90 days. Therefore, the Q1 2019 lead cohort was considered mature at the time of the data pull.

This data is provided for informational purposes only. While every attempt is made to ensure accuracy, errors may arise.

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