

Retaining Transfer Students: A Rising Problem

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I read an [article on Medium](#) regarding enrollment management. Right from the first paragraph, the article hit me hard. “A campus can’t survive without the ability to enroll students or retain transfer students.” It goes on to explain, with lowered budget allocation and tuition discounting, the pressure is continually on to meet numbers.

How I interpreted this is- schools need to retain students, but they are forced to lower their standards to meet numbers. This tension leads to many students transferring in their first few years of school. The pressure to retain students is only increased with the [changes to NACAC’s Code of Ethics](#). Poaching students has become open-season and student retention will be more important than ever.

“If a student leaves, they must be replaced. There is a significant cost associated with finding a replacement, both in terms of money and time. For enrollment managers, the goal is simple, use data to admit students who are likely to thrive. Then, use more data to help retain them.”

Reasons for Lateral Transfers :

- Not the best fit for personal, social, residential, economic, or academic reasons
- The school student is currently attending does not have their majors or another school has a better program for that major.
- Student is homesick, or family is moving wants a school closer to them
- Tuition or living expenses are too high

While some of these reasons are unavoidable, not all are. By attracting the right type of student who will thrive at your school and continuing communication even after enrollment, you can eliminate some of these problems.

Attracting The Right Type of Student

Data First Marketing

Enrollment management isn't just about enrolling students; it's about enrolling the right type of student for retention. Likewise, [data-first marketing](#) isn't just using data, it's about using the right type of data.

It's important to keep in mind that data isn't one-size-fits-all. When looking at expert reports, take their advice with a grain of salt. Does this study fit your goals? Your school size? Your geographic region? Taking ideas from other reports is good, but putting context to their ideas is key to developing successful recruitment plans. Only by [assessing the strategies that will work at your institution](#) can you hope to enroll the type of student primed for well-rounded success.

Better Storytelling

One reason students transfer to other institutions is they didn't go to the school that was the best fit for them in the first place. By telling your unique story in your messaging, students will have a clear idea of who you are and what you have to offer. "Institutions should be more upfront with students about what the college experience will be like." Shiny, high-gloss, pictures schools send out to one story, but this image isn't always the whole picture.

It's an institution's job to make students proud to be a graduate of your institution before they even begin their first day. While pretty pictures make schools look good, they aren't the reason students attend through graduation. Authentic messaging gives students the best idea of what it will be like attending your school.

Reminding Students Why They Chose Your School

Continued Communication

Communication is front-loaded to students who have yet to enroll. "Colleges have such intricate communication plans for incoming students, yet they're haphazard at best when a student matriculates and officially steps foot on campus." In short, once a student enrolls, they are all but forgotten. However, this is a crucial time to ensure students don't transfer.

Fear of Missing Out

Students are your best ambassadors to get your message out in an authentic way. However, we can say the same thing about these students' friends who are attending other institutions. Schools must do a better job communicating with students, so they don't second-guess their decision based on schools their friends are attending.

[FOMO, or the "fear of missing out," happens when a person experiences fear or guilt based on the possibility that an event is happening nearby.](#) They thus miss out on a potential social experience, whether by choice or necessity. While FOMO does affect everyone, it is particularly prevalent among younger generations. This fact is in part due to their high usage of social media. You can't prevent a student from checking their social media or feeling FOMO. However, you can remind them why they chose your school originally.

[As it turns out, one of the best ways to fight FOMO is with FOMO.](#) Shift the fear from what they are missing out on to what they would miss if they left. Sending enrolled students reminders of on-campus events their peers will be attending will reinforce what they enjoy about attending your institution.

We're Here to Help

At YouVisit, we take a data-first marketing approach. We use our propriety data network to find the opportunity. Next, we work with you to develop a plan. Finally, we help execute that strategy to perfection. We have ten years of experience in the EDU space, being the digital marketing experts to over 600 clients.

If you have questions on who to target, when to target them, or how to tell your story, our team is here. We will not only help you meet your recruitment goals with the right type of student but help you retain transfer students.

<https://www.youvisit.com/learning-center/blog/retaining-transfer-students-guide/>