



# How to Increase Enrollment By Better Understanding Prospective Graduate Students

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**We help schools support students from enrollment to graduation and beyond**

> Find and enroll your right-fit students

> Support and graduate more students

➤ **ROOTED IN RESEARCH**

**7,500+** Peer-tested best practices

**500+** Enrollment innovations tested annually

➤ **ADVANTAGE OF SCALE**

**1,500+** Institutions served

**3.7 M+** Students supported by our SSMS

➤ **WE DELIVER RESULTS**

**95%** Of our partners continue with us year after year, reflecting the goals we **achieve together**

> Prepare your institution for the future



# Northern Arizona University in Brief



## NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY



A public research university in Flagstaff, Arizona with a total enrollment of ~31,000 students

### NAU Graduate College

- 125 graduate degree and certificate programs
- \$3M in graduate assistantship and tuition waiver funding
- 4,223 students enrolled

↳ **+5.7% growth in enrollment since 2018**



# 1 Understanding Today's Graduate Students

## 2 Designing Student-Centric Programs

## 3 Diagnostic Activity

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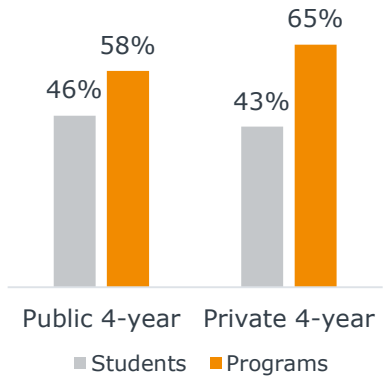


# Graduate Competition Is Increasing

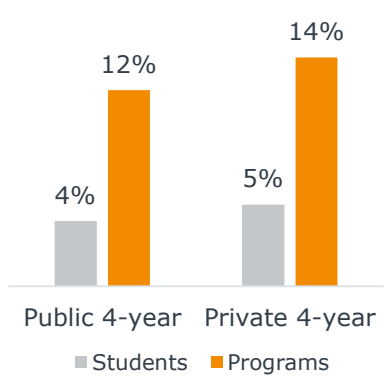
Program Growth Outpacing Student Growth, Driving Up Recruitment Costs

## Growth in Graduate Programs vs. Students

**Online Graduate**  
2013-2017, EAB Research



**Ground-Based Graduate**  
2013-2017, EAB Research



**Explosive Program Growth Wreaking Havoc on Recruiting Expenses**



**226%**

Increased **cost per click** for graduate programs from 2009-2014

# The Imperative for Student-Centric Programs



## Understanding the Adult Learner Mindset



What **motivates** adult learners to apply and enroll?



What **factors** do adult learners value when **choosing** programs?

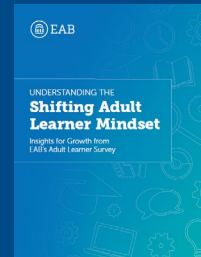


What **prevents** interested students from applying?

## Roadmap: Three Themes from EAB's Research

*Survey of current and prospective students of graduate, bachelor's degree completion, online, and certificate programs<sup>1</sup>*

- 1 Adult learners require a **return on their education**.
- 2 Adult learners are **extremely pragmatic**.
- 3 Adult learners **require flexible options**.



1) Students considering or currently enrolled in graduate programs comprised 69% of all survey respondents.



# Understanding the Role of Cost Concerns

## EAB SURVEY FINDINGS

### Financial Factors Are Key

#### In Motivating Students:

61%

of students named **career or financial factors** as their main reason for pursuing a degree or certificate

#### ...And Deterring Them:

#1

Factor that prevents interested prospects from enrolling is **cost**

## NAU CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE

### Facing the Realities of Our Expensive Location

#### Cost of Living in Flagstaff Is High

17% Higher cost of living in Flagstaff than national average, with especially high housing costs

### How We've Adapted to Address Cost Concerns



Created accelerated master's programs and two master's level competency-based programs



Adjusted assistantship stipend levels, reexamined tuition waiver allocations



# Eliminating Unnecessary Enrollment Hurdles

## EAB SURVEY FINDINGS

### Adult Learners Seek Convenience and Speed When Applying

64%

of applicants and enrolled students applied to **2 or fewer schools**

40%

of participants who planned to enroll or were currently enrolled had **not taken an admissions test**

53%

of students completed their application in **two hours or less**

## NAU CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE

### How We've Streamlined Our Admissions Processes



**Assessed All Admissions Requirements**



**Condensed Application Turnaround Time**





# Meeting Students' Need for School-Life Balance

## EAB SURVEY FINDINGS

### Students Seek Enrollment Options that Fit with Their Busy Lifestyles

1 in 2

prospects considered **online options** when researching programs

45%

of participants who want to enroll in the future say **family and work commitments** are the top reason they're **not currently** pursuing a program

## NAU CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE

### How We're Expanding Flexible Offerings

- Prioritizing investment in programs targeting growth
- Pivoting messaging strategy away from mountain campus experience solely
- Reconsidering the role of statewide campuses



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Diagnostic Activity

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# A Compiled List of Factors to Assess

## Creating Academic Programs That Are Competitive and Marketable

### Top Factors to Consider When Evaluating Your Program

<i>Category</i>	<i>Considerations</i>
 <b>Degree Name</b>	Does degree name resonate in the market place? Do concentrations/specializations increase attractiveness?
 <b>Market</b>	Admissions requirements should consider career changers as well as career enhancers.
 <b>Program Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credits</li> <li>• Courses</li> <li>• Time to Complete</li> <li>• Starts</li> <li>• Terms</li> <li>• Prerequisite(s)</li> <li>• Delivery</li> </ul>
 <b>Tuition</b>	Evaluate list price against that of competitors
 <b>Selectivity</b>	Evaluate average test scores against those of competitors
 <b>Residency</b>	Evaluate residency against that of competitors, consider students studying at a distance

# Finding the Data to Assess Your Programs

## Sample Analyses for a Public University in the Midwest

### IPEDS Degree Conferrals

#### Degree Conferrals *Master's in Nuclear Engineering*

	Avg % Change 2013-2017
National	-6.6%
Regional	-5.4%
Statewide	-6.9%

#### Assessment



Red

### Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook

#### Projected Occupational Growth *Master's in Biomedical Engineering*

		% Change in Job Openings 2016-2026
National	Engineering Managers	5.5%
	Biomedical Engineers	7.2%
Statewide	Engineering Managers	6.0%
	Biomedical Engineers	8.5%

#### Assessment



Yellow

### IPEDS Online Program Growth

#### Online Programs Offered *Master's in Mechanical Engineering*

	Avg % Change 2013-2017
National	13.0%
Regional	5.1%
Statewide	12.5%

#### Assessment

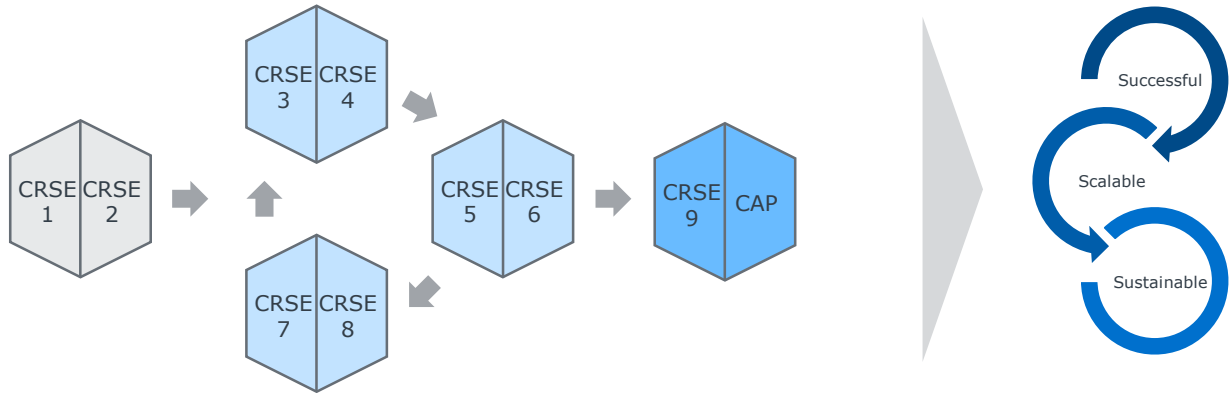


Green

# Successful Curriculum Models Must Be Scalable

Part-Time Scheduling Accommodates Adult Learners and Financial Aid

## Sample Curriculum Model



## Considerations

- Does the curriculum model align to program outcomes and sequencing?
- Will the model allow for multiple entry points?
- How will faculty and instructional resources align to the model?
- Can the model be accommodated by the institution's academic calendar?

# Snapshot of NAU's Institutional Journey

## From Faculty-Centered to **Student-Centered**

- Alternative credentials and badging
- Online delivery, flexible starts
- Application review processes
- Challenging aging disciplinary paradigms



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# Adult Learner Program Planning Diagnostic



## Adult Learner Program Planning Diagnostic

Does Your Program Design Support Graduate and Online Enrollment Growth?

Adult Learner Recruitment

### Program Planning Diagnostic

Good graduate enrollment in a competitive environment, academic leaders must take into account related to program design, admissions requirements, academic resource allocation, and more, all to help graduate program leaders assess their own program planning practices and identify initiatives in support of growth goals.

#### It is designed to evaluate the following questions:

Does the program offerings and structure align with adult learners' enrollment motivations (e.g., through flexible offerings, career outcomes, and a streamlined admissions process)?  
 Program design informed by your market position and competitors?  
 Program structure designed to use resources efficiently and support listing growth?

	Agree					Total Observations (Elements you have already implemented, want to integrate into your current work, experimental tactics, etc.)
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Curriculum Design</b>						
Offerable courses to students desiring to study						
Program evaluates course online courses, considers all full-semester courses.						
<b>Relevance</b>						
Program is offered with real-world skills.						
<b>Flexibility</b>						
Program evaluates full-time/intermediate.						
Program evaluates tuition competitiveness.						
<b>Risk</b>						
Program evaluates "offer" risks to ensure fit (e.g., through labor supply).						
<b>Ability</b>						
Program assesses and provides at least 10 days of advance notice to students to anticipate necessary modifications to their personal/professional schedules.						

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## Key Takeaways

- 1 Be **student-centric** in program structure and design
- 2 Ensure decisions are informed by your **market and competitors**
- 3 **Align resources with demand** to optimize for growth



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