Engaging Students to Drive Persistence

In this document, you will find an introduction to student engagement strategies, the components of successful engagement, and a template for creating one for your own institution as you transition into impactful online education.
What is an engagement strategy and why should you create one?

Engagement strategies are ongoing detailed outreach campaigns which utilize multiple communication channels to drive action and build loyalty. They provide students with the content they need to make informed decisions and, therefore, lessen student confusion and the strain on your institution’s resources.

Successful engagement strategies aim to:

• Provide access to resources
• Point students to the correct support systems when questions arise
• Build loyalty to, and emphasize credibility of, an institution
What channels can be used to create an engagement strategy, and when should you use them?

Engagement strategies should be implemented across all communication channels that you have access to. These channels should be used in conjunction with one another to enforce a cohesive message.

All channels can be used for all purposes, but best practices are below.

To nurture student relationships, build consistent messaging, and boost institutional loyalty use:

- Email
- Online advertisements (i.e. banner ads on social networks).

To provide in-depth information, use:

- Phone calls
- Web sites or landing pages

To drive immediate action, use:

- Phone calls
- Texts
When and how to provide outreach.

Throughout an academic year, you should frequently communicate with students to build loyalty and provide evergreen resources. You may choose to do this via email and online advertisements.

However, milestones will arise in which you ask students to take an action, at which point, the tone of your message and the delivery of your content will change. During these times, you can lean on all channels to ask a student to complete an action.

Examples of Milestone Moments

- Registering for classes
- Paying a tuition bill
- Preparing for graduation

During these Milestone Moments, determine the action you want a student to take and why they may not be taking that action. Then, rely on all channels to provide resources and content that counteract common student concerns.

You may also choose to engage with your students over celebratory milestones, such as graduation, academic breaks, ends of terms, etc.
When and how to provide outreach.

Determining your timeline.

When action is not required of students, determine how frequently you would like to communicate with students, based on the resources you have available. For example, you may choose to send a weekly newsletter with institutional updates.

When an action is required of students, rely on institutional data to determine the average length of time students generally require to take said action. Based off of that data, you may create an outreach calendar that designates when certain channels will be used.

Developing CTAs.

During Milestone Moments, all channels used should rely on the same Call to Action (CTA), as to not confuse or misdirect students.

Major decisions are made up of small choices. If you’re asking a student to take a major action, it is helpful to break up the action into smaller sub-steps to make it easier and less daunting.
Example

Scenario: a current student needs to register for classes

Step 1 - Ask the Important Questions

What do we want the student to do?
Register for classes, preferably as soon as registration opens.

What usually prevents students from registering for classes?
- They don't know how
- They don't know which classes to sign up for
- They’re confused by the LMS

How long does it usually take students to register?
The registration period is four weeks long, and most students are registered within three weeks.

What resources do we have on-hand that will help students register?
- YouTube tutorials
- Academic advisors

What is the CTA you will ask them to do?
- Primary: Register
- Secondary: Call, if you need help

Step 2 - Develop a Game Plan and Implement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What channel are we using?</th>
<th>When will we use it?</th>
<th>What will we say?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>1 week prior to registration opening, we will begin a weekly email calendar.</td>
<td>Provide resources that will help them register. Ask them to register now by clicking on the link in their email, or call an academic advisor for help.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Advertisements</td>
<td>Daily display, beginning when registration opens.</td>
<td>Ask them to register now by clicking on the link in the ad.</td>
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<td>Phone Calls</td>
<td>3 days before registration ends.</td>
<td>Ask them to register over the phone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texts</td>
<td>1 day prior to registration open 1 day prior to registration close</td>
<td>Ask them to register now by clicking on the link in the text, or call an academic advisor for help.</td>
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Template

Step 1 - Ask the Important Questions

What do we want the student to do?

What usually prevents students from taking the action?

How long does it usually take students to complete the action?

What resources do we have on-hand that will help students complete the action?

What is the CTA you will ask them to do?

Step 2 - Develop a Game Plan and Implement

<table>
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Questions?

If you want additional insights on this or any other topic related to your online transition, reach out and let us know!

Contact: Carly Pace
Strategic Partnerships
801.651.2544
newfutureinfo@helixeducation.com