



Accelerated enrollments using a three-pronged approach—with outstanding success

George Washington University School of Business | business.gwu.edu | Washington, DC



The George Washington University School of Business (GWSB) sets high standards for its suite of online and in-person Professional MBA programs: from the caliber of its candidates, to the excellence of its program—and to the capabilities of a prospective partner. So when the institution decided to embark on an accelerated enrollment conversion initiative, it turned to Blackboard.

Partnership Results:

30%

Increase in submitted applications

2,243%

Net ROI from engagement campaign

10%

Increase in enrollments for Spring/Summer terms

Building a plan

The ultimate goal of the initiative was to improve the conversion of prospective students—beginning with the upcoming year’s class. The institution knew that it needed an experienced partner to help them achieve this vision.

“In order to meet our aggressive enrollment goals, we wanted to work with a company with expertise and experience with in the arena,” said Jason Garner, Sr. Assoc. Dir. of Graduate Admissions. “But we also wanted to make sure that we had a true partner, one that we could really engage in a conversation with us, one that would really listen to us and act as an extension of our team. We weren’t just looking for a vendor. We were looking for a partner with whom we could collaborate. We found that partner in Blackboard.”

GWSB and Blackboard worked closely to identify four key objectives around which they’d build an accelerated plan:

1. **Develop a robust enrollment strategy** for optimal lead nurturing.
2. **Increase student engagement** by expanding staff availability and frequency of communication.
3. **Increase enrollment funnel conversion** through application completion.
4. **Drive revenue and enrollment** for Spring 2016 and into Fall 2016.

Once these objectives were solidified, both teams began to champion the path forward.

A three-pronged approach

Working closely with their counterparts at GWSB, Blackboard crafted a comprehensive game plan that would meet the school's key objectives. The plan had three major elements:

Engagement campaign

The engagement campaign was designed to both re-engage with students who had become inactive as well as reach out to new prospective students. Given the desire to boost enrollment quickly, the campaign was fast-tracked, reaching out to over 3,500 individuals within a two-week period to gauge who was still interested in the Professional MBA programs. In addition, Blackboard provided updated contact information back to GWSB from the campaign—a great value-add that GWSB wasn't expecting.

Communications plan

Blackboard created a thorough communications plan that optimized GWSB's level of prospect engagement. A suite of nurturing emails was developed that follow best practices, incorporate mobile responsiveness functionality, and use content marketing tactics such as infographics, outcomes data, and social media. Each communication is now tied to a specific stage of the enrollment funnel. While GWSB was looking to quickly generate increased enrollment, the school also recognized that the professional audience for their program takes longer to decide on a program than does the traditional, two-year, on-campus MBA student. Consequently, the communication plan was adjusted to span a 16-month long period.

Enrollment services

Acting as a seamless extension of GWSB, Blackboard enrollment advisors helped move prospects from the "lead" stage to the "completed application" milestone. GWSB advisors then stepped in to help guide prospective students from "application" to "enrolled." By shifting the up-front lead-vetting burden to Blackboard (including fielding student support on nights and weekends), GWSB's advisors were then freed up to provide a higher level of service to admitted students.



Just six months into our partnership, we have either met or exceeded the four objectives we'd established at the project's outset. This is a real testimony to Blackboard's ability to quickly step in and understand those objectives, and to quickly devise and implement a game plan. We could not have gotten this far, this quickly if it had not been for our partnership with Blackboard. I'm really looking forward to continuing to develop and grow our partnership."

Jason Garner
Sr. Assoc. Dir. of Graduate Admissions, GWSB

Significant, quantifiable success

The results to date have been impressive. Working with Blackboard, GWSB has increased the volume, timing, and quality of its email communications. With more interesting content, better calls-to-action, and mobile design in mind, email open rates have improved.

Under its new enrollment initiative, GWSB is also spending more time on outbound calling to follow up on leads and develop a personal relationship with prospective students. Because of these efforts, GWSB has seen measurable results:

- **18% increase** in the number of applications submitted (Spring 2015 vs. 2016)
- **30% increase** in applications across the full academic year
- **10% increase** in enrollments for Spring and Summer terms combined
- **2,243% estimated ROI** on GWSB's investment in the initial engagement campaign

About Blackboard Enrollment Services

Blackboard's Enrollment Services drive enrollment and student persistence by helping institutions of all sizes optimize programs, marketing and enrollment investments; eliminate barriers to student success by scaling your team's resources; and offering a personalized support experience for students and faculty. To learn more, visit blackboard.com/student-services.

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