



Guilford College

Masters of Marketing for the Institution

Located in Greensboro, North Carolina, Guilford College sits on a beautifully scenic, wooded, 349-acre campus. Offering a practical and transformational liberal arts education, its small class sizes and caring faculty provide its students with hands-on learning experiences and critical problem-solving skills that help them to thrive in their post-college careers and lives.

Arlene Wesley Cash joined Guilford College in 2015 as the Vice President for Enrollment Management after a long history serving other higher ed institutions in enrollment leadership positions. She was looking for a college with a mission she could really get behind, as well as a great place to live. She found both in Guilford.

Guided by its Quaker roots and principles, the campus culture is built around 7 Core Values of Community, Diversity, Quality, Excellence, Integrity, Justice and Stewardship. Cash said, "We want to make sure that students are moving these values into their lives in different ways. For example, our value of Diversity is not just about diversity of culture, religion, race, etc., but about diversity of thinking. It's about being respectful and open to hearing, understanding and integrating different ways of thinking into our lives."

Cash went on to say, "Every school is going to tell you they have a beautiful campus and a great faculty that are experts in their fields. But what makes Guilford different is that we're bringing students together and finding out who they are, what their passions are and what they want to do with their educations - even before they come."

Challenge

- 50% down on applications from home state
- Less than 6 months to recover and reach enrollment goals

Solution

- Encoura™ Data Lab with the Declared Student Connection and Legacy Student Locator® Modules
- Omnichannel Enrollment Services

Benefits

- Miraculously met enrollment goals even after being 50% behind
- Identified a long-term partner to help with enrollment management and marketing efforts going forward

Another part of Guilford's appeal is the youthful, vibrant city where it's located. As the third largest city in North Carolina, Greensboro has 40,000 college students in the area, is rich in the arts, has fabulous restaurants and boasts a progressive, socially aware community. Cash said, "Greensboro is a place where I love living. It has this incredible small-town community feeling, but with a big-city attitude."

Things that Make You Go, Hmmm...

When Cash arrived at Guilford, she quickly noticed a downward turn in North Carolina-based applications and yield. As one of the few states realizing an upward trend in high school graduates, she found that downward trend odd and supported the admissions team's focus on

we discovered we were down on our North Carolina applications by 50% compared to the prior year. And North Carolina is our bread and butter. When we realized we were that far off, we were very concerned."

No Time for Delay

One thing was for sure, an intervention needed to happen right away. There wasn't time to waste talking to multiple vendors to cobble together a plan. The school needed an integrated, multi-layered solution to address the issues and get back on track, and it was needed fast.

Cash confirmed, "I wanted a partner who had the comprehensive capabilities needed to turn things around, and who cared enough about Guilford to put their best people on the job."



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local schools and reacquainting counselors with the Guilford brand. The following year, one of its major feeders of NC applications had difficulty with the early distribution of applications. As a North Carolina-based private school, Guilford had a lot of dependency on this program which helps the high school students in the area connect with the various scholarship options in the state. That program had some technical issues that delayed Guilford's ability to connect with students who had inquired about the school. When this contributed to a lag in NC-based applications, Guilford began to feel the heat.

"We didn't realize the problem was as big as it was until February," said Cash. "That's when

That's when she called NRCCUA®. Guilford already had a relationship with NRCCUA, but it had previously been limited to name buying. Cash, however, had heard that its capabilities had expanded and was hopeful it could help.

NRCCUA immediately set up a meeting with the Guilford team to understand exactly what the problem was and why it was happening. Cash said, "This was an emergency and the team treated it that way. That's what true partners do. They don't say, 'Well we can only do so much - you're just one of our many customers.' Even though NRCCUA has a lot of customers, the team made us feel like we were the most important."

Finding the Best-Fit Students

Both teams were ready to hit the crisis head-on and started working immediately with a focused, coordinated effort. As a first step, they accessed NRCCUA's Encoura Data Lab and began targeting names from the Legacy Student Locator and Declared Student Connection Modules. The Declared Student Connection Module identifies students who previously stated an interest in attending

to do that, and then were able to show us how to specifically find students who had shown an interest in a Quaker education. They thought of that for us, and then helped us actually do it.”

Once inside of Data Lab, they also noticed there was more to see than just what the state of North Carolina had to offer them. Cash noted, “This was our first foray into using Data Lab, and our primary focus was to correct the issue we were having in North Carolina. Once we were in there, though, we noticed there were regions where we had some historical



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Guilford in the myCollegeOptions® survey, which is distributed to high school students across the nation. The Legacy Student Locator Module identifies students with family members who previously attended or were currently attending Guilford. NRCCUA then shared its SMART+™ predictions that accurately project the likelihood of students to apply and enroll.

Cash said, “We weren’t necessarily looking for more names, but the right students to target. We wanted students with connections to Guilford and who seemed like the right fit for our school.”

Logic would tell you that if you need more applications and more enrollments, then buying more names makes sense. However, most institutions that go with that approach end up wasting time, energy and resources trying to reach students that aren’t a good fit. Instead, each institution needs to hone in on the right students for their schools. Cash agreed, saying, “NRCCUA told us, ‘If you are a Quaker school, why not reach out to students who are Quaker?’ They were the first ones who told us

activity. There was a clear indication that with a little outreach, we could turn those areas into high yielding regions as well.”

In addition, since the profiles of students who attend Guilford are as unique as the college itself, Cash was looking for prospective students that might not fit the “typical college applicant” profile. She said, “One thing I’ve always valued about NRCCUA is the organization’s commitment to providing access to students who might not normally have been going to college or who might be looking at different kinds of colleges.”

She continued, “NRCCUA isn’t about handing over reams of data, but about showing how colleges and universities can use the data to provide a better future for all students. That’s important to me. Just like I chose Guilford College because of the heart and the values of the college, I chose NRCCUA because of the heart and values of the organization.”

Strategic Outreach

Once they had the names of students they wanted to target, NRCCUA worked with the Guilford team to build an outreach strategy and plan. Cash said, “We had a whole plan that included outbound phone calls and emails - we didn’t even have our CRM system set-up yet, so we needed help with everything.” They also retargeted students whose interest had seemed to wane and were able to reactivate their interest.

From there, NRCCUA monitored progress with the Guilford team with weekly check-ins.

Together, they looked at every initiative to see what was working and what wasn’t. NRCCUA would suggest stopping a campaign that wasn’t delivering, and show ways to enhance those things that were working.

Cash said, “It was a true partnership. They don’t just give you the fish; they teach you how to fish. They don’t just give you the data; they teach you how to use it. If you work with NRCCUA, you will be a better professional because of your relationship with the people who work there.”

The Results Are In

After showing up 50% down in February, Guilford rallied and ended up coming in only 1 student short of its original, lofty goal. Cash said, “The outcome was incredible - there we were, less than half of our goal after a banner year the year before, and we caught up. That just doesn’t happen. It only comes from when you have a focused partner helping you reach your goals.”

They didn’t know they were out of the woods until well into June, but they knew all along they had no choice but to make their class. Not making it simply wasn’t an option. But without help - the right help - they knew they would have to make some difficult decisions, and they’d be working through the summer enrolling their class while also developing relationships with the next class. Cash said, “Higher ed institutions need a partner who’s going to work with them on their specific goals and help them master the tools that will allow them to bring in the students that are right for their schools. There are plenty of vendors out there that will promise you lots and lots of names and beautiful brochures, but what you really want is help becoming the master of marketing for your institution. That’s what NRCCUA does.”



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