

encoura™

Case Study



California Baptist University

Higher Ed with a Higher Purpose

Hailed as one of the top private Christian colleges and universities in Southern California, California Baptist University (CBU) works to help students find their purpose by providing a Christ-centered educational experience that integrates academics with spiritual and social development opportunities. In the process of earning a bachelor's, master's, or credential program in Riverside, San Bernardino or online, CBU students are challenged to become individuals whose skills, integrity, and sense of purpose glorify God and distinguish them in the workplace and the world.

Perhaps those are among the reasons why CBU is growing so rapidly. According to the Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU), CBU is outpacing the national average of similarly-sized private colleges and universities with its impressive 8.5%, 10-year total growth rate.

Dean of Admissions Taylor Neece gave an additional perspective on why CBU is performing so well, "CBU is in the unique position to be able to offer all of the resources, facilities, faculty, sports programs, and academic programs—including engineering, architecture, and aviation—of a large, D1 school, with the small, close-knit, family-like feeling of a small, private school. That gives our institution broad appeal."

Neece, who has been with CBU for 11 years, started out as an undergraduate admissions counselor, then went on to become director of the recreation program. From there, he held director roles in both graduate and undergraduate admissions before landing in his current role as Dean of Admissions—a role he has held for the last 2+ years.

Challenge

Use an omnichannel, data-centric approach to build brand awareness in outer markets without breaking the bank.

Solution

Encoura™ Data Lab, Smart+™ Predictive Model, Digital Marketing

Benefits

- The ability to hone in on the specific geographic areas that are most likely to deliver positive results
- A predictive model that allows CBU to focus on the students most likely to enroll
- A holistic outreach approach that effectively uses traditional and digital marketing
- A true partner invested in CBU's success

The Long Game

If CBU wasn't hitting its enrollment goals, there would undoubtedly be escalating pressure on Neece and his team. But just because you're hitting your current goals doesn't mean you can rest on your laurels. Their challenge is to figure out how to keep growing both now and into the future. As a result, they are taking a slightly different approach to recruiting—one that involves a longer-term strategy focused on building brand awareness outside of their primary markets.

Neece said, "I can't just hope we'll continue to hit our enrollment goals or assume they won't change over time. Hope is not a strategy, and we have to think strategically."

CBU's primary, secondary, and tertiary markets are all in California, but its outer markets are where they want to focus. Neece said, "We believe CBU is a good fit for many students outside of California—they simply don't know about us yet."

Unlike a quick, one-year focus to attain a current or new enrollment number, building brand awareness takes time and requires

Neece explained, "Encoura Data Lab has helped expand our reach into those outer markets without forcing us to try to hit all the other 49 states. It has informed where we should focus."

Neece continued, "Encoura Data Lab is helping us penetrate those outer markets more deeply and target them with more precision. It has also helped us hone our travel to those areas, so we're sure to hit the most likely targets and not waste time or resources elsewhere."

Predicting the Future CBU Student

Another way in which Encoura Data Lab helps is through more precise targeting using the Smart+ Predictive Model. Smart+ can accurately—up to eight times more accurately—predict which prospective students are likely to enroll in your institution, giving institutions who use it a distinct edge. Perhaps even more importantly, clients of Smart+ make their purchase after running the model, so they only purchase what they need. This allows the CBU enrollment team to focus on a smaller number



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many touchpoints, both digital and traditional. It's a long game that takes time and patience.

That's one reason why Neece and his team are excited to have ACT | NRCCUA on their side. With solutions that include Encoura Data Lab and its apps, they are able to be more data-centric and purposeful in their outreach so they can achieve their goals.

of students, so they don't waste time and resources targeting the wrong prospects.

Neece said, "The Smart+ Predictive Model is the data point that rules all for me. Smart+ helps me simplify what can be a complicated process of finding the right prospects. It informs our decisions about which students to try to market to."

Digital Techniques to Soften the Soil

With the lofty goal of expanding their brand presence and marketing reach into far-flung outer markets, Neece and his team know they must take an integrated approach to outreach that includes both traditional and digital methods. While their approach is decidedly holistic, Neece remarked on the importance of digital, saying, “It’s a digital world and we need to be in it because that’s where students are.”

Invested in Our Success

Rounding out his remarks on ACT | NRCCUA’s partnership and service levels, Neece spoke specifically to the communication levels he experiences with ACT | NRCCUA. He said, “One clear distinction in working with ACT | NRCCUA is the service and ongoing communication we receive. And it’s not just the frequency of communication, it’s that our conversations are productive. I really appreciate that.”



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Geofencing is among the many digital tactics the CBU team leverages to try to command the attention of prospective students. They geofence some of their “medium” performing high schools with the goal of softening the soil before a visit. Then, they continue to geofence for a week afterwards with different calls-to-action.

Geofencing is one of the many digital areas in which ACT | NRCCUA excels. Neece said, “The ACT | NRCCUA team works to inform us about what is working or not and give us new ideas and ways to execute our digital ads. In some cases, it makes more work for them, but they still suggest new ideas and seek input from us. That’s super helpful.”

Neece then added, “There are a lot of digital agencies out there, and no doubt many of them are proficient. But what I really appreciate about ACT | NRCCUA is the service component. In an environment where a lot of the options are similar, ACT | NRCCUA’s service sets them apart.”

Not only does Neece take advantage of monthly calls with his ACT | NRCCUA team, he goes one step further in leveraging their expertise. He said, “We invite our regional director to our campus to help us devise our outreach strategy. She is directly involved in putting our entire media plan together. ACT | NRCCUA is a true partner and each of the individuals I work with is really invested in the success of CBU.”

There are as many enrollment challenges as there are higher education institutions. But whether an institution is trying to build its class, shape its class, expand its reach, or hone its focus, ACT | NRCCUA has a solution and service level that will help enrollment offices make the most informed decisions. Neece concluded, “ACT | NRCCUA has a deep and wide understanding of the higher ed space. It comes in alongside institutions to help reach their goals no matter what they are trying to do.”