



Randolph-Macon College

Enrolling with the Right Mindset

Nestled in the scenic town of Ashland, Virginia, Randolph-Macon College (R-MC) is a small, private, liberal arts and sciences college with a rich culture of community. Faculty, staff, and alumni invest in developing the mind and character of students to prepare them for successful lives.

Randolph-Macon has a strong and unique reputation for equipping its students with mentorship and career preparation. The college launched the EDGE Career Center in 2011 to give students a tangible means to apply their education. This EDGE program now provides networking, internships, self-assessments, and career skills which allow R-MC to confidently offer a Four-Year-Degree Guarantee.

One of the best aspects of the college, according to Tennille Brown, Director of Enrollment Operations at Randolph-Macon, is enjoying the best of both worlds. Students enjoy the unique experience of being at a small institution while also always having a lot happening on campus. From Division III sports to Greek life to over 80 student organizations, the campus is thriving with activity and mentorships – a perfect college for students seeking to grow academically, professionally, and socially.

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

These exciting student and academic opportunities inspired college marketing direction as the Randolph-Macon admissions team sought to increase the college's brand

Challenge

- Senior search and email deliverability
- Need to increase brand awareness
- Optimizing communications with prospective students

Solution

- Encoura™ Enrollment Services
- Encoura Digital Marketing Strategies
- Eduventures® Research & Advisory Services
- Eduventures Student Mindsets™

Benefits

- A robust inquiry pool from data-centric predictive modeling
- Determined market viability and successfully launched new Cybersecurity program
- Received increased number of email response rates and better student engagement
- Ability to reach ideal prospective students earlier in the recruitment cycle

awareness. However, after sending forth various emails to promising prospective students last year, the team realized that students were not seeing those messages.

Vice President for Enrollment David Lesesne explained, “We discovered that we were having problems with the algorithms for inbox placement in Gmail. A lot of our early communications -- unfortunately -- ended up in the promotions folders, rather than the primary inboxes.”

A STRONG YIELD

Due to the email error, rather than relying on the numbers game to see a large pool of inquiries turn into applicants, the R-MC team had to yield strategically. Lesesne shared, “We had to figure out how to convert better with a smaller pool of applicants. It helped immensely to have the data analytics from the Encoura™ platform. In the end, we were able to get a much better class.”

Brown explained how that team has played a key part in achieving a strong yield while facing communication obstacles. “The representatives were quick to jump in to help when we were having email challenges.”

Lesesne agreed that the support was invaluable. He added, “Last fall, when we had just begun to discover why we were far behind our goal, our Enrollment Services representative had the perspective to help us understand that we weren’t the only ones experiencing those challenges. He also went above and beyond by joining our board meeting to give a broader perspective of the situation to our board members.”

Director of Admissions Erin Slater elaborated, “Our ACT | NRCCUA representatives are deep in the research and are able to digest information quickly and see things that we may miss. Even when we don’t have a meeting scheduled, they reach out to ensure that we have seen any updates in our recruiting data or trends.”



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The Encoura platform is enrollment technology exclusively for ACT® | NRCCUA® members. Included in Encoura Data Lab are numerous applications including Class Planner™, Enrollment Lens™, Eduventures® Research, and Enrollment Analytics designed to equip higher education institutions to strategically recruit and yield their best prospective students.

In addition to using Encoura Data Lab, Randolph-Macon’s partnership with ACT | NRCCUA also provides them with support from the Encoura Enrollment Services team.

The Randolph-Macon enrollment team values having a true partner who goes through the highs and lows with them. Lesesne expressed, “What I appreciate the most is that our ACT | NRCCUA reps take the time to understand our goals and challenges. They are just as invested in our work as we are. They were just as unhappy as we were when our results weren’t looking as positive as we hoped and they were willing to dig in. When we have successes, they share in that as well.”

ACCOMPLISHING THE MISSION TOGETHER

Lesesne is now determined to reach more students with the ACT | NRCCUA team and Class Planner. “As we go forward this year, we’ve built a more robust inquiry pool. We are getting in front of students earlier with more targeted lists, including searching for sophomores and juniors.”

The VP again emphasized the value he finds in working with ACT | NRCCUA. “Our partnership with ACT | NRCCUA helps us to fulfill our mission by finding the right-fit students. We can also communicate the expectations and challenges of our school to set up success for students who enroll.”

Along with email, R-MC communicates to prospective students through digital marketing with the tools and advising of ACT | NRCCUA Digital Services. Lesesne shared how this has enabled them to enhance brand awareness while reaching students where they are spending the most time – on their phones. “With ACT | NRCCUA Digital Services, we have clearly seen a vast improvement from last year in our prospective student response rate,” he stated.

LAUNCHING INTO NEW AREAS

In addition to Encoura services, the Randolph-Macon admissions team also works with the research division of ACT | NRCCUA to find their best-fit students. Eduventures® Research and Advisory Services provides proprietary research, analysis, and advising services to enrollment teams to support decision-making throughout the student lifecycle.

One way that R-MC worked with their Eduventures representatives was to determine how to most successfully launch a new program –Cybersecurity. “The Eduventures team helped us determine market viability for our program and then get in front of interested high school students in a more targeted way,” explained Lesesne. “This research helped us

afford similar niche programs and reach the right students for them.”

A second approach that R-MC and the Eduventures team used to recruit strategically was research generated from the Eduventures Survey of Admitted Students™. Eduventures surveyed students who had been admitted to R-MC in 2019 to find out more about how they compared Randolph-Macon to other institutions where they were accepted. “We’ve already gotten some great takeaways to better understand students we are doing well with and students we have more opportunities to reach,” Lesesne revealed.

SET YOUR MIND TO IT

The R-MC team members also shared how they look forward to working with ACT | NRCCUA with the new Eduventures Prospective Student Mindsets™. These six research-derived Mindsets pinpoint the goals and desires that prospective students have for their upcoming undergraduate education. Institutions can use them to enhance both recruiting and the student experience.

Lesesne shared, “The mindsets Eduventures developed sparked one of the early ‘aha’ moments for us. This helped us to find other like-minded students and to communicate with them with their specific priorities in mind. It gave us a refined strategy for utilizing all the different tools that Encoura Data Lab provided.”

Slater revealed that she most values the school comparison data that the Mindsets research provides. “By looking at our competition, we are able to compare our strengths and our weaknesses and identified where growth opportunities lie. This has helped us better reach the right students.”

Lesesne added, “It allows us to learn what we need to be saying to each student. It is so valuable to be able to have a focused and timely conversation with students based on their specific mindsets.” He continued by expressing gratitude for gaining this understanding of students’ goals and aspirations. “Mindsets provide us the



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opportunity to communicate early with the student about the postsecondary areas that they are passionate about - not just about an academic program. For example, if they are interested in grad school, then we now see the benefits of sharing early in the recruitment cycle about our amazing undergraduate research opportunities." Lesesne elaborated that before having information about the Mindsets, they would communicate information such as these research opportunities later in the admissions process; whereas, now if his team knows that's top of mind to the student, they can connect initially with the student about that topic.

LOOKING AHEAD

The admissions team at Randolph-Macon looks forward to using these Student Mindsets to better segment communication with prospective students in the upcoming year. Lesesne described, "We are excited to see if applying these Mindsets leads to higher response rates with students. Aligning student profiles with the research that matches communication preferences is going to be incredibly powerful."

Looking ahead to the next recruitment cycle, the Randolph-Macon enrollment team knows that it is now better equipped than ever to invest in developing the mind and character of students to prepare them for successful lives, even before they enroll.