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our Digital Solutions Team

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CONSULTATION

Randolph-Macon College

Connecting with Students in a Pandemic

Each year, Randolph-Macon College attracts students to its campus with its commitment to developing their minds and characters to set them up for successful futures. The college's faculty and staff walk with students as they grow in active learning, ethical leadership, career preparation, cultural understanding, and community involvement.

The Randolph-Macon enrollment team brought in a great class last year by strategically leveraging their new ideas and partnerships. This year looked to be another strong recruitment cycle as the team once again implemented new strategies, including utilizing new digital marketing efforts with Encoura.

Randolph Macon's Director of Admissions, Erin Slater, described the decision to pivot their focus to digital marketing this year. "Digital marketing with Encoura Digital Solutions has certainly been worth the reallocated investment. It gave us a significant boost on top of the email campaigns that we had already been doing, so that we can now interact with students on their mobile devices, including all of the hours they spend on social media."

Challenges

- Local community college closures negatively affected transfer recruitment
- Students & families reconsidering college plans in light of a pandemic

Solutions

- Encoura® Digital Solutions: Next-Gen Custom Audience Targeting
- Digital Solutions: YouTube
- Digital Solutions Advising
- Integrated Digital Solutions with existing email communications

Benefits

- Campus visit numbers exceeded expectations
- Increased first-year student application generation
- Overall enrollment increased from previous year

Shifting Strategies

Slater shared that her team quickly saw a lot of success while working with Digital Solutions at the beginning of the year. Digital Solutions provides flexible and complete digital marketing services for enrollment offices, offering a turnkey solution from initiation and conception--through creative design--to project closure, while providing detailed reporting each step of the way.

“We saw that our geofencing for transfer students was successful. We targeted Virginia community colleges since we have articulation agreements between them and Randolph-Macon,” she stated. However, as community colleges across the nation closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Slater and her team had to re-evaluate their recruiting strategy going forward.

“We’ve executed a lot of Next-Gen Custom Audience Targeting [personal platform advertising] which improved both our high school visits and application generations. The combination of using digital marketing solutions in tandem with our existing email campaigns has yielded incredibly strong results,” Slater explained.

Part of the Family

An additional strategy that the Randolph-Macon team implemented in response to the pandemic’s effect on recruitment efforts was amplifying communication to families, due to the large role that parents and mentors play in helping students make their college decisions. Slater explained, “The Digital Solutions team helped us to pivot our strategy away from geofencing and decide to instead drive parents to our website to assure them that we are taking their students’ safety very seriously. Through this, we learned that being limited to virtual communication doesn’t prevent us from building those crucial relationships with families. In response, we saw more families than we expected visiting campus this summer.”

The college’s communication with students and their families played a key role in student enrollment decisions. “At the end of our Spring digital campaign, we continued marketing to both students and their parents in order to have a strong yield. As a result, we hit our enrollment goals despite being in the middle of a pandemic,” Slater stated.

In addition to campus visits, Randolph-Macon College’s outreach to whole families resulted in stronger numbers of applications



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than the prior year and a lower number of students who chose to melt. “Although we saw less students interested in transferring amidst a pandemic, we were able to reach our goals through an increase in first-year applications,” Slater shared.

Partnering Successfully

Slater also recounted how one of the most valuable aspects of working with her Digital Solutions team partners who want the Randolph-Macon team to make its incoming class just as much as they do.

She described how her partner brings strategic insight as well as a readiness to help however and whenever the Randolph-Macon team needs it. “My Digital Solutions Rep brings big-picture strategies, revealing what she sees in the market and how we should pivot our recruitment accordingly based on the ever-changing landscape. She also helps me identify where our efforts are being successful and how we can continue to grow.”

In addition to contributing market insight and recommendations, Slater shared that her Digital Solutions partners equip her team with the ability to seamlessly add new resources to boost its recruitment strategy. “We just added YouTube services this year to our marketing plan. My reps can take the video and ideas that I have and fit them into our strategy in a way that makes it fool-proof for us to execute.”

Slater and her team are already working with these partners on new strategies to recruit their next class. Although faced this year with an unprecedented pandemic that rattled enrollment strategies across the country, Randolph-Macon College was able to boost its own campaign efforts with Digital Solutions to see increased enrollment and strong relationships with incoming students and families. With new marketing plans already in the works for the upcoming season, Randolph-Macon plans to continue to leverage its partnership with Encoura to bring in additional strong classes in the future.



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