



# University of Northwestern

## Partnering with a Shared Heart for Students

A faith-based liberal arts university located in Minnesota's Twin Cities, University of Northwestern promises students more than just a degree—they'll find their missions while attending one of the most beautiful campuses in the Midwest. In addition to the academic excellence, purpose, and beauty offered to incoming classes, the university's prospective students want assurance of health and safety—a common concern among college bound students over the past year.

Vice President for Enrollment Management at Northwestern, Erick Klein, shared that faith integration and strong leadership at the institution has created the trustworthy culture that attracted their past and current student bodies. In order to connect and engage with students in the midst of their questions, Klein and his team turned to a long-time partner, ACT | NRCCUA, for traditional marketing and digital engagement support and to further drive enrollment success. The research, knowledge, and strategy brought from the partnership has been invaluable to the Northwestern enrollment team.

### Getting the Facts

Klein explained how one of the biggest benefits of the partnership with ACT | NRCCUA has been the quality research provided by the Eduventures team. He has taken advantage of the institution-specific research, national summits, and weekly industry analyses offered by the organization to equip his team with the best thought leadership and data to serve students.

Eduventures' student research is conducted through student surveys reflecting the largest student voice panel in the country—ensuring institutions have the best data available to reflect how students are truly thinking and behaving.

### Challenge

- Student concerns about college amidst the pandemic
- Harder to reach students who are being flooded with virtual communications

### Solution

- Encoura Data Enabled Enrollment Services
- Smart+ Predictive Model
- Eduventures Research

### Benefits

- Highly accurate list of prospective students who would enroll at Northwestern
- Data-backed email communication strategies to optimize student email open rates and engagement
- Faculty equipped with admitted student data to engage incoming class
- Professional development from top thought-leaders across the country

“Eduventures research has been key for us to better understand students,” Klein elaborated. “If you’re looking at your admitted students, of course you want to know what the differences are between students who decided to attend your institution and those who didn’t. That’s some of the most powerful research that I have been able to use to unite the campus behind recruiting efforts. It has helped our faculty to understand what our admitted students are seeking and how they can better support enrollment with outreach to those students.”

## Setting a Strategic Focus

In addition to Eduventures Research, Klein expressed gratitude for the high-quality value of the products and services accessed through their partnership with Encoura Enrollment Services.

As one of the initial adopters of Encoura’s Smart+ Predictive Model—a proprietary algorithm that predicts which prospective students are likely to enroll in a specific institution—the Northwestern team has seen



Of all the vendors that we’ve worked with, the heartbeat of the Enrollment Services team is to try to serve its partner and students—especially as the organization’s leadership continues to work to get more students connected to their best colleges.



While the institution-specific research has helped unify the campus’s recruiting strategy, the annual conferences have also provided great professional development for Klein and his colleagues. “I really appreciate the Eduventures Summit. I completely stopped going to other conferences because I truly believe the Eduventures Summit is the best one. I even invited my number one competitor in enrollment, who is a friend, to attend—that’s how much I believe in it. What I value most about it is the opportunity to pull people together to think about how we need to be coming at education each year. Speakers at the event see the future of education from the forefront of thought leadership.”

Northwestern’s staff has also benefited from the weekly industry analyses released by Eduventures, called Wake-Up Calls, that are emailed to subscribers. Klein described, “I’ll send the Wake-Up Calls to our CFO or to our Provost. It’s a resource I use often with our senior leadership because it is insightful for high-level conversations we’re having about where we need to go as an institution.”

the true value over the years of strategically targeting which prospective students to reach by filtering data through this model. “I don’t know why any school would consider inquiries without a predictive model these days, because it wastes a ton of money and time. The Smart+ Model has been key for us to know which students to pursue,” Klein expressed.

Once the Northwestern team has narrowed its focus of which prospective students would be the best fit for the institution, it places confidence in the Encoura Enrollment Services team to optimize communication to those students—both with traditional and digital marketing efforts. Klein explained, “Feedback on subject lines, A/B testing, and the ability to track open rates has been incredibly useful, rather than throwing campaigns out there and hoping they work. There’s an ability that the Enrollment Services team gives us to see data, interpret it, and make strategic changes accordingly that has helped maximize our strategies.”

While the Northwestern team is still building its fall class, Klein is happy with what the

partnership with ACT | NRCCUA has helped to achieve. “Our admitted student numbers are up this year. We want to continue to drive quality all through the funnel and look to be on track there, so we are in regular conversations with the Enrollment Services team to explore different markets to further build our class.”

Conversely, with ACT | NRCCUA, we’ve been able to have stability with our recruitment, even amidst the pandemic,” Klein shared.

This has also led Klein’s team to have confidence when moving forward with strategies generated between Northwestern



I can’t think of a time when we haven’t moved forward with a recommended strategy given to us by the Enrollment Services team. Whether it’s feedback on subject lines or groups of students we should reach out to, I can be sure that it’s based on strong data and a broad view of the industry. It extends our knowledge and reach.



Klein explained that the partnership success has largely rested on the strong foundation of trust that he has with his Encoura consultants. “I have always found my Enrollment Services rep to be someone who I trust first and foremost. She has tremendous knowledge and works to find what solution would honestly work best for our institution. My rep is very insightful, has great advice whenever I reach out, and has created a team around her that brings the same strengths. Of all the vendors that we’ve worked with, the heartbeat of the Enrollment Services team is to try to serve its partner and students—especially as the organization’s leadership continues to work to get more students connected to their best colleges.

This foundation of trust and reliability has also caused ACT | NRCCUA’s results to stand out from other partners that have worked with Northwestern. “In the past with other vendors and products, there were seasons where our communication flow wasn’t working.

and ACT | NRCCUA. He explained, “I can’t think of a time when we haven’t moved forward with a recommended strategy given to us by the Enrollment Services team. Whether it’s feedback on subject lines or groups of students we should reach out to, I can be sure that it’s based on strong data and a broad view of the industry. It extends our knowledge and reach.”

As the partnership between the two grows, Northwestern looks forward to continuing to apply ACT | NRCCUA research and services to its enrollment strategies to engage and care for students interested in the institution. Klein concluded, “The ACT | NRCCUA team does a great job teaching us how to use Encoura Data Lab. There is even more to take advantage of in the platform than what we are currently using and I look forward to my team leveraging it to the fullest in the upcoming year. We are also looking forward to growing in the digital space as we recently starting working with ACT | NRCCUA Digital Solutions.”