



Case Study: The College of Charleston

Small Recruitment Spend on
GRE® Search Service Yields Big Results



"It was a heck of a return on our investment!" said Susan Hallatt, former Director of Graduate Admissions at The University of Charleston, SC at the College of Charleston (UCSC).

"A good revenue-to-cost ratio for marketing is 5:1, meaning that for every dollar you spend, you're doing well if you generate \$5 in revenue," she added. "Well, this was 50 to 1! We spent \$388 for 646 prospect names. Of those, we got eight applications and two enrollments ... absolutely worth the investment!"

What was the source of Hallatt's enthusiasm? The success her team achieved for one of their master's programs with just a small investment in the GRE® Search Service.

The team works in the College of Charleston's graduate school with about 30 programs that use various recruitment strategies to attract prospective students. They have found the GRE Search Service to be an extremely effective tool in their recruitment toolbox.



Susan Hallatt,
Former Director of
Graduate Admissions

Challenge: Efficiently recruit the right prospective students for multiple graduate programs.

ROI Status: Return on investment (ROI) was low for social media, as the audience reached wasn't necessarily interested in graduate school. ROI for career and graduate fairs varied, as some participants were interested in grad school — but not necessarily the programs that UCSC most needed to promote.

Solution: The GRE Search Service. Success was quick and measurable, thanks to a combination of the GRE Search Service providing qualified, interested contacts and UCSC having a plan to engage them via a targeted email campaign strategically tailored to prospects.

Results: The ROI for the GRE Search Service investment was 50:1, achieving UCSC's goal of efficiently recruiting the right graduate prospects.

Targeting an Interested Audience

"We do social media, and we have videos on YouTube®, but they're expensive, and we don't know if they're really reaching the right people," Hallatt said. "On social channels, you can target by age and by the fact that they have an undergraduate degree, but that doesn't mean they're interested in grad school. They might click through to our website, but it doesn't mean they apply. And the average click-through rate for social is like 0.30%, and we're supposed to be happy when we achieve that."

Conversely, Hallatt said that with the GRE Search Service, the team was able "to track with 100% certainty" that the person who enrolled came from the GRE Search Service. And when the school sent those contacts an email, the click-through rate was about 30%.

"That's a huge difference. It's a different ball game when you're targeting an interested audience."

Planning Pays Off

The team has made purchases at both the school and program levels. The difference between programs that were more and less successful was the amount of forethought that went into the purchase, and then how the contact information was used afterward.

"It's not just about buying the names," Hallatt said. "It's about doing the work as well. You can't buy the names and then just let them sit. You need to have a plan for how you're going to engage those prospects."

For example, the team developed a communications strategy to increase enrollment for three programs struggling to meet their enrollment goals. They made an institution-level GRE Search Service purchase for the contact information for 3,445 prospective applicants who might be interested in those programs. Then they developed an initial email that mentioned the top attributes of all three programs. As prospective students responded to the email, the team was able to narrow



down each prospect's area of interest, and all subsequent communications focused more narrowly on the specific program of interest to that applicant.

For a modest spend of \$2,067, the three programs received 23 application submissions and seven enrollments. Assuming each student would bring a minimum of \$10,000 to the school, Hallatt calculated that the effort yielded a 20:1 revenue-to-spend ratio.

The ROI Speaks for Itself

For larger mailings, the team uses its customer relationship management system to automate the process. The benefit of doing so is that the system yields data that team members use to talk to program directors and their president when they plan the budget.

"Data helps ... defend the spend," Hallatt said. "It's hard to argue with solid results."

"I haven't purchased a list from GRE Search Service yet where we haven't gotten at least a few applications and one enrollee," she continued. "We've seen a positive return within just one cycle, and the ROI speaks for itself."

For more information about the GRE Search Service, visit holisticadmissions.org/recruitment.

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