

**COMING BACK BETTER—**  
COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING  
FOR THE NEW HIGHER ED LANDSCAPE



cognitive marketing

## **BEYOND REOPENING— HOW STUDENTS' SENTIMENTS DRIVE RECRUITMENT MARKETING STRATEGIES**

This year is a defining moment for the college-age generation. In these challenging times, at an increasingly rapid pace, students absorb new crises, navigate the unknown, and reconsider what's next for their education. Through surveys, town halls, and other forms of outreach, colleges have gained insights about students' sentiments and life situations to use to prepare for the reopening of campus.

**These same findings can also guide the development of enrollment marketing strategies and messaging.**

The Cognitive Marketing *Student Sentiment Cluster Analysis & Recruitment Marketing* service studies how the COVID-19 pandemic (and other current events) have affected students across several dimensions: Personal health and safety. Finances. Adjusting to new instructional models. Facing college life with fewer opportunities for traveling, socializing, and participating in athletics and other club activities. We organize these responses into distinct clusters of people who share demographic and other lifestyle characteristics. The resulting audience segmentation matrix provides the basis for messaging strategies and marketing plans focused on student recruitment.

**BEFORE YOU SHARE  
YOUR STORY, LISTEN  
TO THEIRS.**

**The Cognitive team can help you understand where students' heads and hearts are right now, so that your communications with them—and with prospective students—reflect the range of mindsets and emotions they're experiencing. In turn, this will build a bridge of trust and confidence that will carry through the student recruitment process.**

# HOW IT WORKS

AUDIT EXISTING RESEARCH & CONDUCT NEW SURVEY (IF NEEDED)

ANALYZE THE RESULTS

SET CONTENT STRATEGY

IMPLEMENT MARKETING PLAN

Our *Student Sentiment Cluster Analysis* is based on a statistical methodology that analyzes survey response data and organizes respondents into segments. Whether we analyze your existing data or collect fresh data from our own survey, this form of research illuminates the current attitudes of each segment. When combined with market research data and the predictive models used by admissions, our analysis informs the creation of personas (the composite descriptions of a cluster) and their respective buyer's journey through the admissions funnel. These tools then guide the creation of content and messaging that forms the basis of an effective recruitment marketing campaign.

## OPTION A: WE COLLECT FRESH DATA



## OPTION B: WE ANALYZE & USE EXISTING DATA

Through an emailed survey, we reach out to current students to understand their particular life situation and gauge their sentiments regarding attending college and explore:

- How COVID affected their family and home life
- The state of their physical and mental health
- Concerns and outlook of their financial position
- The value they place on a college degree.

In the way the survey is structured, we will identify the concerns students have and what their intended actions will be going forward. Groups will emerge based on shared sentiments. (See Areas of Inquiry graphic below.)

And, because the survey will also ask for a range of demographic information, we will be able to describe within any given group the demographic and lifestyle characteristics they share. (See Demographic Clusters table below.)

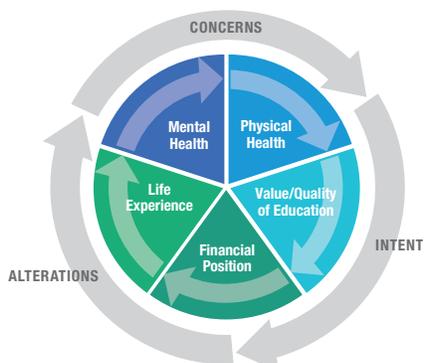
Many institutions have completed research into student sentiments around returning to campus and on the effects of COVID. We will review your survey instruments and the responses, and identify opportunities for conducting a cluster analysis through cross-tabulation techniques.

We'll produce a brief assessment of your available data, which will determine if:

- Deeper analysis is possible from existing data. In which case, we'll deliver a deep-dive report featuring cross-tabulations and a cluster analysis.
- Deeper analysis isn't possible. In which case, we'll review your objectives with you, develop and conduct a custom survey for your institution.

### AREAS OF INQUIRY

Five areas of inquiry about a student's life situation will be explored. We will also study how these circumstances affect students' plans for college attendance.



### DEMOGRAPHIC CLUSTERS

The information provided will be analyzed against each of these demographic categories, allowing us to understand the differing needs of specific student groups.

Age	Gender	Race	Year
Financial Aid Needs	Family College History	Home State	Housing
Major	Full-Time Part-Time	Home is: Urban Suburban Rural	Type of High School



## ANALYZE THE RESULTS & BUILD PERSONAS

Our findings will reveal sentiments that are shared within a distinct cluster of students. For instance, we may see that there is a segment of students whose major concern has to do with a fear of contracting the coronavirus or another segment who are not willing to substitute in-person classes with courses delivered online. We'll learn things such as how many students:

- Intend to stay home but still earn their degree through online classes
- Prefer a mix of online courses and campus living
- Want to resume campus life entirely
- Are considering alternatives to attending a college altogether.

For each cluster, we will map out the demographic and lifestyle characteristics they share so that personas can then be prepared for each group.



## BUILD A RECRUITMENT MARKETING PLAN

Just like a great admissions counselor, a college's recruitment marketing campaign must be responsive to a student's needs. Content must resonate with the individual prospective student, and show that the college is empathic. Today, especially, high school students and their parents want an open line of communication—both in-person and across digital channels—with the people at the colleges they are considering.

Building this resonant content requires a deep understanding of each segment of your prospective student pool, the level of understanding that the Cognitive Marketing Student Sentiment Cluster Analysis provides. With that, a communications team can apply their best level of creativity to the creation of stories of your brand that will build a bridge of trust with your future students.



## AMPLIFY YOUR BRAND & CONNECT WITH YOUR FUTURE STUDENTS

The most effective form of marketing connects the stories of your brand to what is in the hearts and minds of your future students. Trust Cognitive Marketing to collaborate with your enrollment and marketing teams to develop messaging that connects your institution with future "right fit" students.

Cognitive team members, Josanne DeNatale, President, and Ann O'Grady, Research Director, lead this service implementation. **For a custom quotation and to discuss the steps of the process, contact Josanne DeNatale at (585) 230-7283 or at [josanned@cogmark.com](mailto:josanned@cogmark.com).**