



# The Capture Manifesto

RECRUITMENT **REIMAGINED**

**capture**

**CAPTURE HIGHER ED**

2303 River Road, Suite 201 // Louisville, KY 40206

[www.capturehighered.com](http://www.capturehighered.com) // 502.585.9033



# Manifest Capture

A combination of the 17th century Italian word *manifestare* and the Latin *manifestus*, a manifesto literally means a “public declaration of that which is obvious.”

Student recruitment in higher education is broken. There, we said it.

At Capture Higher Ed, we believe that it is time to acknowledge that the model being sold to universities for marketing to prospective students is not working, and it hasn't for a while. Given the significant challenges facing American higher education, our field deserves better than the current menu of options being presented. Capture exists to collaborate with like-minded thinkers to create a sustainable recruitment model that mutually benefits both our partner institutions and the students they recruit.

First however, it is imperative to draw attention to some key facts about the state of enrollment management in higher education:

## Declaration of Facts

- 1 The trajectory of higher education recruitment is unsustainable.**
- 2 The recruitment model being sold to colleges and universities in the United States is predicated on:**
  - a a 19th century purchase funnel**
  - b waste**
- 3 Innovation in higher education recruitment is now at a “horse versus locomotive” tipping point where the best of the old traditional techniques cannot keep pace and *new methods must be embraced.***

## Declaration 1:

### **The trajectory of higher education recruitment is unsustainable.**

- We are doing more and getting less. While enrollment pipelines are getting larger, with the average search pool growing 36% since 2008, results are diminishing. As of the May 1 national response deadline, 61% of colleges missed their enrollment targets and 32% were still recruiting applicants after May 1, many of whom had already committed to other institutions according to a 2014 Inside Higher Ed survey.
- We are also paying more and getting less. While it now costs 33% more to recruit an enrolled student than it did in 2005, yield on admitted students continues a decade-long downward trend from 50% in 2005 to 36% in 2015 according to NACAC's annual State of College Admissions report.
- A Moody's Investors Service report noted that 2015 growth in net tuition revenue is the slowest it has been in a decade.
- The average discount rate, as reported by NACUBO, reached 48% for first-time, full-time freshmen in 2014, up from 38% a decade ago.
- A 2015 Inside Higher Ed and Gallup report found that 88% of university CFOs are placing the highest emphasis on increasing enrollment to solidify university revenues. In the same study, 1 in 4 CFOs at private non-profit universities believe their institutions will face closure in the foreseeable future.

## **Declaration 2(a):**

**The recruitment model being sold to colleges and universities in the United States is predicated on a 19th century purchase funnel.**

- The “purchase funnel” was originally created in 1898 by Elias St. Elmo Lewis when he theorized that a consumer progresses through the following states in the buying process: attention, interest, decision, and action (i.e., the “AIDA” funnel).
- Also created in 1898: the flashlight, the filing cabinet, and the answering machine. Go ahead, Google it.
- While current consumer research and behavioral economists consistently note that such a linear approach inaccurately describes the student decision journey, the funnel is still widely used as a means of measuring progress toward enrollment goals and communication planning in higher education.
- Capture instead utilizes the combination of big data techniques and the Student Decision Journey® that infuses adolescent psychology and consumer research to more accurately contextualize a prospective student’s engagement with an institution.

## **Declaration 2(b):**

**The recruitment model being sold to colleges and universities in the United States is predicated on waste.**

- On average, nearly 9 out of 10 acquired search names will not respond to marketing by the purchasing college or university, based on data published in the Gillis 2014 Admission and Enrollment Management Practices Study. This same study found that, on average, colleges send six outbound communications to each non-responding student lead.

### **Declaration 3:**

**Innovation in higher education recruitment is now at a “horse versus locomotive” tipping point where the best of the old traditional techniques cannot keep pace and new methods must be embraced.**

- On August 28, 1830, the 1st American-built steam engine (nicknamed Tom Thumb) reportedly competed in a race with a horse-drawn carriage on a 13-mile section of track between Baltimore and what is now Ellicott City. The Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) line as it was known, ran alongside a set of tracks that featured the horse-drawn carts that had been the conventional transportation option on rails dating back to Europe in 1807.
- While the engine reportedly could only top out at 18 mph (10 mph slower than a good horse), and while the horse reportedly took an early lead, the steady engine overtook the horse when it eventually tired.
- The part of the story that is less discussed is why the challenge reportedly began in the first place. According to historical accounts, the horse-cart driver mockingly challenged the new rail technology most likely out of fear. Within a year of this famous contest, all horse-drawn carts were replaced with steam engines on the B&O line.
- Capture believes that higher education recruitment sits at a similar “horse versus locomotive” moment in history where the accepted methods of reaching enrollment goals can no longer compete with the new tools and data techniques of the modern century.
- Capture exists to bring these new tools, along with new data and new thinking, to an honorable profession that deserves better than resistant old ideas as a means to address the considerable challenges it faces.

## Articles of Manifesto: Myths Capture Rejects

### 1 You have to spam students to get them to respond.

**a Capture response:** The challenges faced by higher education will not be resolved by simply buying more names and sending more emails. Capture's strategy utilizes modern technology and data tools that measure student engagement with greater sophistication than the one-size-fits-all deluge of mail and email approach. We believe this spamming approach cheapens an institution's brand, is less effective, and in the long run is not fiscally sustainable.

### 2 Completion of the inquiry form is the most important call-to-action.

**a Capture response:** Just because a student completes an inquiry form does not mean that he/she is interested. At Capture, we have found that students engage with institutions in a variety of ways, and by measuring and modeling those pathways, we can provide a more nuanced view of a student's interest in your school. Stop using conversion rates and start measuring engagement.

### 3 You have to buy names to make your class.

**a Capture response:** Search marketing certainly has its place, but we have found that a strategy balancing both inbound and outbound communications is more effective. We believe that in the information age, the sharing of personal information is the most prized asset someone controls. The sharing of such a valuable gift must be earned through the exchange of deeply relevant information. We have found that large and small colleges alike have significant inbound marketing potential if provided the right tools. Our tools allow for one-to-one engagement with students who are already interested in your institution's brand, and can do so at scale.

**4 The stealth applicant is real and represents a problem for colleges.**

- a Capture response:** The notion of a stealth applicant is a relic of a less sophisticated enrollment approach. Just because a student does not complete an inquiry form does not mean they are disengaged with a college's brand. Using Capture's tools, an institution can begin to capitalize on the natural inbound interest students are demonstrating right now on its website.

**5 The funnel is still a viable model for understanding an institution's pipeline.**

- a Capture response:** The funnel is dead. Capture utilized the latest adolescent psychology and consumer engagement research to develop the Student Decision Journey<sup>®</sup> that more accurately describes the true ebb and flow of student decision making.

## Declaration of Existence

Capture Higher Ed exists to change the game by placing the power to directly engage with students back in the hands of universities and colleges. We are an eclectic group of techies, data wonks, higher education professionals, and marketing mavens that endeavor everyday to realize a new vision for higher education enrollment. We exist to build up the self-sufficiency of our clients by eliminating the distance between the university and its natural and ever-present inbound population of mission-fit students. Our environment of continual innovation promotes the creation of a powerful technological enrollment management engine that achieves real-time and actionable breakthroughs for our clients.

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ii. More Pressure Than Ever: The 2014 Survey of College and University Admissions Directors. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/more-pressure-ever-2014-survey-college-and-university-admissions-directors>

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iv. Announcement: Moody's: Annual tuition survey forecasts weakest college and university revenue growth in a decade. [https://www.moody.com/research/Moodys-Annual-tuition-survey-forecasts-weakest-college-and-university-revenue--PR\\_313032](https://www.moody.com/research/Moodys-Annual-tuition-survey-forecasts-weakest-college-and-university-revenue--PR_313032)

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# Contact

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**Thom Golden, Ph.D., Vice President of Data Science**

**Email: [tgolden@capturehighered.com](mailto:tgolden@capturehighered.com)**

**Twitter: [@Doctor\\_Thom](https://twitter.com/Doctor_Thom)**

- 14-year career in higher education, expertise in enrollment management, strategic marketing, psychometrics and developmental psychology
- Former Senior Associate Director, Vanderbilt University



**Steve Huey, Chief Executive Officer**

**Email: [shuey@capturehighered.com](mailto:shuey@capturehighered.com)**

**Twitter: [@StevenHuey](https://twitter.com/StevenHuey)**

- Proven leader in high-tech industries, expert at integrating new technologies
- 10 years experience leading higher education firms
- BA Finance and Accounting, Miami University; MBA, Emory University



502.585.9033 | [WWW.CAPTUREHIGHERED.COM](http://WWW.CAPTUREHIGHERED.COM)