



Recruitment  
Reimagined

2303 River Road  
Suite 201  
Louisville, KY 40206

502.585.9033  
capturehighered.com

## Prior-Prior Year (PPY) is here – are you ready?

**Written By: Heather Mueller, Vice-President for Enrollment Solutions**

15-years student recruitment experience, formerly with enrollment management firm, Miller/Cook & Associates // [hmueller@capturehighered.com](mailto:hmueller@capturehighered.com)

The impact of prior-prior year’s overhaul of traditional recruitment timelines will be far reaching. With such a change, we understand that anticipating the effects of the new financial aid framework can be difficult and overwhelming.

To support your planning, we have outlined recommendations to prepare for the new timeline and its effects on your institution. We have divided our recommendations among three major categories: logistics, marketing, and projections.

### Logistics

One of the most immediate requirements is identifying which processes must be coordinated earlier and working with the responsible departments to ensure you are prepared for the earlier submission.

We recommend moving the timeline and coordinating efforts for the following activities:

#### **Collecting Transcripts:**

If you plan on packaging awards only after students have been accepted for admission, you’ll need to begin collecting transcripts in August in September. You’ll need to complete admission files much earlier than in the past.

#### **Aid Packaging:**

Previously a March activity, now your aid policy and packages should be ready by October. This means tuition, R&B, and fees all need to be finalized in October so that the financial aid team can start their conversations earlier, and, more importantly, push out award letters earlier.

You should expect an influx of stealth Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs). With earlier and more stealth submissions, you’ll want to use the information you receive immediately. Additionally the new timeline means students and their families can (theoretically) begin payment plans earlier. If you are prepared to implement payment plans as early as October, you will give students as many as 18 months to pay. This extended term is a win-win, giving students lower payments and more time to pay, while enabling you to begin receiving payments earlier, which will reduce award shopping and melt. Although this is an ideal situation, we understand the logistical impact this would have on your financial aid office and their current procedures.

#### **Yield Efforts & Sustaining Yield:**

Normally most yield efforts have been a spring activity, but now you will need to begin focusing on yield as early as October and continue for the next nine months. With an extended yield season, you will have to start thinking about

Capture is the premier  
data and technology  
thought-leader in higher  
education, providing  
critical recruitment  
knowledge, experience,  
and enrollments to its  
partner institutions.



Recruitment  
Reimagined

2303 River Road  
Suite 201  
Louisville, KY 40206

502.585.9033  
capturehighered.com

Capture is the premier  
data and technology  
thought-leader in higher  
education, providing  
critical recruitment  
knowledge, experience,  
and enrollments to its  
partner institutions.

continued engagement almost as soon as you begin your yield efforts. Minimizing melt will become a much longer and important focus in your marketing strategy, lasting from November through August.

## Marketing

You are losing 3-4 months to build your case for value, so the content and timing of your marketing activities extremely important. You will want to begin your marketing activities much earlier, shift your messaging, and segment your audience as much as possible to accommodate the new timeline.

We suggest the following considerations for your marketing activities:

### **FAFSA Communications:**

Begin your FAFSA marketing efforts as early as August, and try to get every one of your prospects to submit a financial aid application as soon as possible. Since you are sending your communications earlier in the decision journey, you will have a broader and larger audience, so it will be important to segment your marketing communications by specific populations. Know who's engaging, who you are influencing and how to tailor your messaging. Focus your resources on those most likely to apply.

For transfers, you can even include a new value proposition. Depending on when they are transferring and when they submit their financial aid information, you can issue awards for three semesters all at the same time, again understanding the impact on your financial aid office.

### **Sophomore / Junior Recruitment:**

One of the most important shifts in your recruitment activities should be prioritizing a strong sophomore and junior search strategy. Consider modifying your travel schedule, so you are spending time at college fairs and at high schools talking with sophomore and juniors. You will need to present them with the value propositions you have previously reserved for summer and fall senior communications. Starting these strategies earlier will give you extra time to build value, so by the time October in their senior year rolls around, you will have told a compelling story before net price enters the equation.

### **Talking about Price:**

With the courting period between admissions and aid packaging now gone, price will become a more specific conversation much earlier in the process and therefore, it is vital your recruiters are prepared for the conversation. Communicating why you are a good fit and a worthy investment should become an even larger part of the story you tell through your marketing materials and campus visits. You should be comfortable placing affordability before acceptance.

For parents, you will want to be very focused and provide rigid information like employment outcomes. When discussing student debt with parents and prospects, frame your conversation on debt as cost-deferred, not financial aid. Having outcomes on first year salaries vs. average amount of debt will be



Recruitment  
Reimagined

2303 River Road  
Suite 201  
Louisville, KY 40206

502.585.9033  
capturehighered.com

Capture is the premier  
data and technology  
thought-leader in higher  
education, providing  
critical recruitment  
knowledge, experience,  
and enrollments to its  
partner institutions.

extremely helpful during those conversations. Also, with the increase of stealth ISIRs, you will have more information on parents earlier than you have ever had before, so leverage that information and communicate holistically with families.

For messaging to your prospects, you do not have to focus so strongly on outcome statistics. Instead, you can leverage Gen Z's interest in non-traditional career paths and goals. Profile alumni who are doing meaningful work or forging their own path, and focus on the impact of your alumni more than their salaries.

### **Nurture Marketing:**

With the yield season extending, you will have a longer timeline to engage with accepted students, but you will also need to keep them actively engaged for a longer period of time. Utilizing focused, highly engaged marketing tactics will be key. All of your activities should include analytics, and the more real-time they are, the better. Use highly targeted advertising, monitor activity on your website, and incentivize early deposits. Ensure your counselors are readily available to answer questions or to reach out during peak engagement periods.

### **Projections**

As an industry, we do not exactly know how the FAFSA changes are going to affect applicant behavior, however, relying fully on your historic pipeline benchmarks may not be best. It will take some time to see how the behavior of prospects changes, which means it will also take time for us to have a new normal for our metrics and predictions. Until then, we recommend the following approaches to your projections.

### **Federal Aid:**

You will have three extra months after students file their FAFSA to know if they are interested in your institution. On the one hand, this added visibility can help drive your marketing tactics, but on the other hand, it complicates financial aid projections. We recommend you project a large amount of federal aid. While this may seem counter-intuitive, it's better than the alternative. If you assume a low amount of aid federal aid and it ends up being much higher, then you are overcommitted and can't reduce your package. With a high projection, you will have the option to add to the package if the amount of federal aid is lower than your projection.

### **Expected Family Contribution:**

Now that you will have EFC information based on actual 2015 tax returns, theoretically, your projections should be more accurate. However, with a longer timeframe, there's more opportunity that families' financial circumstances will change. The positive is that families will have more time to prepare for meeting college costs. But they will also have more time to appeal their packages. Ensure your appeals protocol is in place by October 15th and prepare your financial aid office for the possibility of increased appeals volume.



Recruitment  
Reimagined

---

2303 River Road  
Suite 201  
Louisville, KY 40206

---

502.585.9033  
capturehighered.com

### **Enrollment:**

Your enrollment projections will rely less on your historic cycle metrics and more on quality analytics. As mentioned above, your marketing activities, especially during yield management, should be analytics-based. Your predictive analytics should be fluid, accounting for new information as you receive it either through your marketing activities or through other channels.

### **Final Thoughts**

Because there are so many unknowns, it is tempting to take a wait and see stance on these FAFSA changes. But we believe institutions that don't make adjustments will be left behind as their competitors take advantage of the new timeline.

We encourage you to be aggressive, use as much real-time data as possible, and remember this first year will be the most difficult, but we're here to help.

If you have any questions or want to discuss the effects of PPY on your institution's current enrollment strategy, I'd love to chat with you.

Sincerely,

Heather Mueller

[hmueller@capturehighered.com](mailto:hmueller@capturehighered.com) // 502-585-9033

Capture is the premier  
data and technology  
thought-leader in higher  
education, providing  
critical recruitment  
knowledge, experience,  
and enrollments to its  
partner institutions.