

CASE STUDY

Hampshire College rapidly rebuilds enrollment by 60%+ with Othot's predictive analytics



Hampshire College is a small, private liberal arts college in Amherst, Massachusetts dedicated to diversity and inclusion. Founded in 1965 to radically reimagine liberal arts education, its unconventional and innovative approach includes self-designed programs of study, rejection of traditional departments and majors, and narrative evaluations in lieu of grades and GPAs.

Today, Hampshire's first-time, first-year enrollment stands at 232 students after a freefall to 20 students three years ago. The college is currently poised to exceed 700 total enrolled students and to return to a student population of over 1,000 by 2025. According to Fumio Sugihara, Hampshire's Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, this plunge was the result of a 2019 decision by the former administration and board at the college to not enroll a first-year class as part of a stopgap plan to strengthen an unsustainable financial position.

Hampshire immediately lost a lot of staff members as well as students, he confided, and "a lot of the usable data that was stored in institutional memory."

"We needed a very quick way of getting at our data and making it usable for us to meet very unusual

circumstances — the imperative of rebuilding our admissions operation and our devastated enrollments," Sugihara shared.

Liaison's Othot solution proved to be the cost-effective and nimble partner Hampshire College needed, increasing enrollment by over 60% two years in a row — and counting.

A smart and secure approach to future solvency

As Liaison's data-science division, Othot's predictive modeling transforms data into helpful insights that colleges and universities use to drive enrollment strategies. These capabilities provided the solid foundation upon which Hampshire College started to rebuild — quickly and effectively.

"I knew I just needed our data contained, organized, and accessible, without expensive extras," Sugihara said. "I felt that Othot would accelerate our work at a really effective price point during this very fragile time in our history," he said.

As is the case in higher education, Hampshire College has always relied on tuition fees for its operations. With the significant drop in enrollment and the resulting dramatic shortfall in tuition revenue, the college needed to regain its headcount immediately to steady a very uncertain future.

"We were trying to rebuild our finances and become sustainable in the long term," Sugihara admitted. "I was confident that Othot could help us identify and enroll best-fit students."

Sugihara was right. Working with Othot, he and his Director of Financial Aid, Kristin Hmieleski, started using predictively-fueled outreach with dramatic results.

"After our first year with Othot in 2020, our enrollment jumped by 61% and the second year, by another 67%," he said. "We also saw 60% correlative growth in our application pool in those two years."

The return of enrollment normalcy has enabled Hampshire to focus on future-proofing its operations. This has included building the college's endowment to loosen the reliance on tuition while prioritizing DEI and best-class goals.

Stronger ROI with a more informed DIY

One of the things Hampshire College's Admissions team did "as a reasonable action in the face of a traumatic decision," Sugihara said, was to grow its search pool by purchasing a very large list — but mailing only to Othot-identified names within it.

"We can now give ourselves the most opportunity that we can afford," Sugihara advised. "It has been a significant efficiency."

This year, Hampshire was able to generate its financial aid modeling in-house. They looked at the Othot sensitivities to identify groups of students to:

- Do more financially to get increased yield
- Maintain the status quo with offerings
- Potentially distribute less in aid without sustaining any loss

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FUMIO SUGIHARA
*Dean of Admissions and
Financial Aid*
Hampshire College



"That was big for us," Sugihara said, "considering we weren't in the position to hire a consultant to develop a model. It was cool that we had what we needed staff-wise with Othot in the mix to create a very accurate model."

Sugihara knew that he could lean on the Othot team as well as its solution. He has been delighted by Othot advisors' ongoing guidance and committed consultative model.

"Othot's hands-on service model is unusual," Sugihara shared. "Usually after deployment, you're on your own."

Using data to deliver greater innovation

Today Hampshire College's enrollment is stable and poised for further growth, thanks to the insights that have become a fundamental part of their annual decision-making process. Sugihara said he relies on Othot daily for peace of mind.

"Choosing Othot has helped us make better decisions and tell our highly unique story better. Now, we're looking forward to the future." ■

Click here to schedule a demo or for more information on how Othot can improve your admissions process.

