



Engaging the “New” Traditional Graduate Student

Learn more:

targetx.com/graduate

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 1

The State of Higher Ed: Graduate Programs.... 2

Meet the New Traditional Graduate Student.. 3

Program Priorities for Busy Students..... 4

Finding Your Prospects..... 5

Reaching the New Traditional Student..... 7

Why it Matters..... 8

Tips for Engagement..... 9

How Can We Help?..... 11

Introduction

The face of higher education in the United States has changed markedly in the recent past. The profile of the “typical” college student has moved beyond the enthusiastic 18 - 24 year old young adult lazing on a grassy quad. It's now possible to complete a degree and rarely, if ever, set foot on a campus, and it is far more likely that a student will be 34 than 24.



Graduate school degrees and certificates are seen as paths to success and advancement. But recruiting practices have not kept pace with the new realities of graduate students. Competition for students is fierce and potentially lucrative, yet, many college admissions offices utilize recruitment practices designed to attract only traditional students to their programs.

How can your institution maximize the changing landscape of higher education to attract the best students for your graduate programs?

This e-book will present a picture of the “new normal” of university enrollment and outline strategies to cultivate successful engagement with your institution’s target audience.

The State of Higher Ed: Graduate Programs

- The most popular graduate program areas are in business, education, and health sciences.
- About 1/3 of all first-time graduate students were enrolled in master's degree or graduate certificate programs in business and education.
- The degree focus areas point to an important reality of today's students: The pursuit of a graduate credential is commonly career-related.
- 33% of the American population has a bachelor's degree. Only 9.3% of adults over 25 have a master's degree. The potential market for graduate students is vast.

Council of Graduate Schools; U.S. Census Bureau

Meet the New Traditional Graduate Student

According to the *Council for Graduate Schools*, this is what the current graduate student population looks like:

01

Average Age is 33

Older than traditional college students, many graduate students spend a few years working and enter graduate programs with some experience under their belts!

02

Largely Female

Women are outpacing their male counterparts — earning nearly two-thirds of graduate certificates, 58.4% of master's degrees, and 51.8% of doctorates in 2017.

03

Prefer Online

More students are choosing online programs — which makes keeping these students engaged with their programs especially important (and challenging).

04

Outcomes Oriented

These students think beyond their degree and are focused on the impact earning a degree might have on the goals they have for their careers.

05

Multiple Responsibilities

Graduate students are busy! Many of them have family responsibilities and work full time — meaning they think of themselves as employees first and students second.

Program Priorities for Busy Students

Trends in graduate enrollment often have direct correlation to changes happening beyond academia, *Inside Higher Ed* explains the priorities of graduate and professional students when selecting a program:

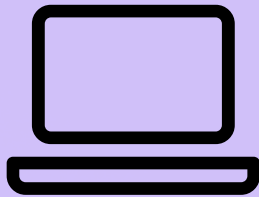
- **Cost/affordability:** Fewer employers offer tuition reimbursement
- **Professional advancement or pathway available** related to degree
- **Program quality:** Includes real-world application of program content and faculty with recent, on-the-job experience
- **Time to completion**



Inside Higher Ed, "Key Trends in Graduate and Professional Education"

Finding Your Prospects

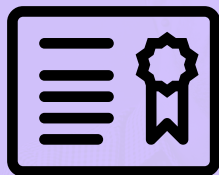
How do you find and attract the new traditional students right for the programs on your campus?



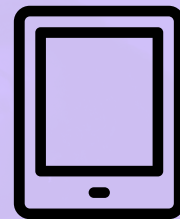
Consider flexible and time-efficient options that meet your students where they are, such as webinars



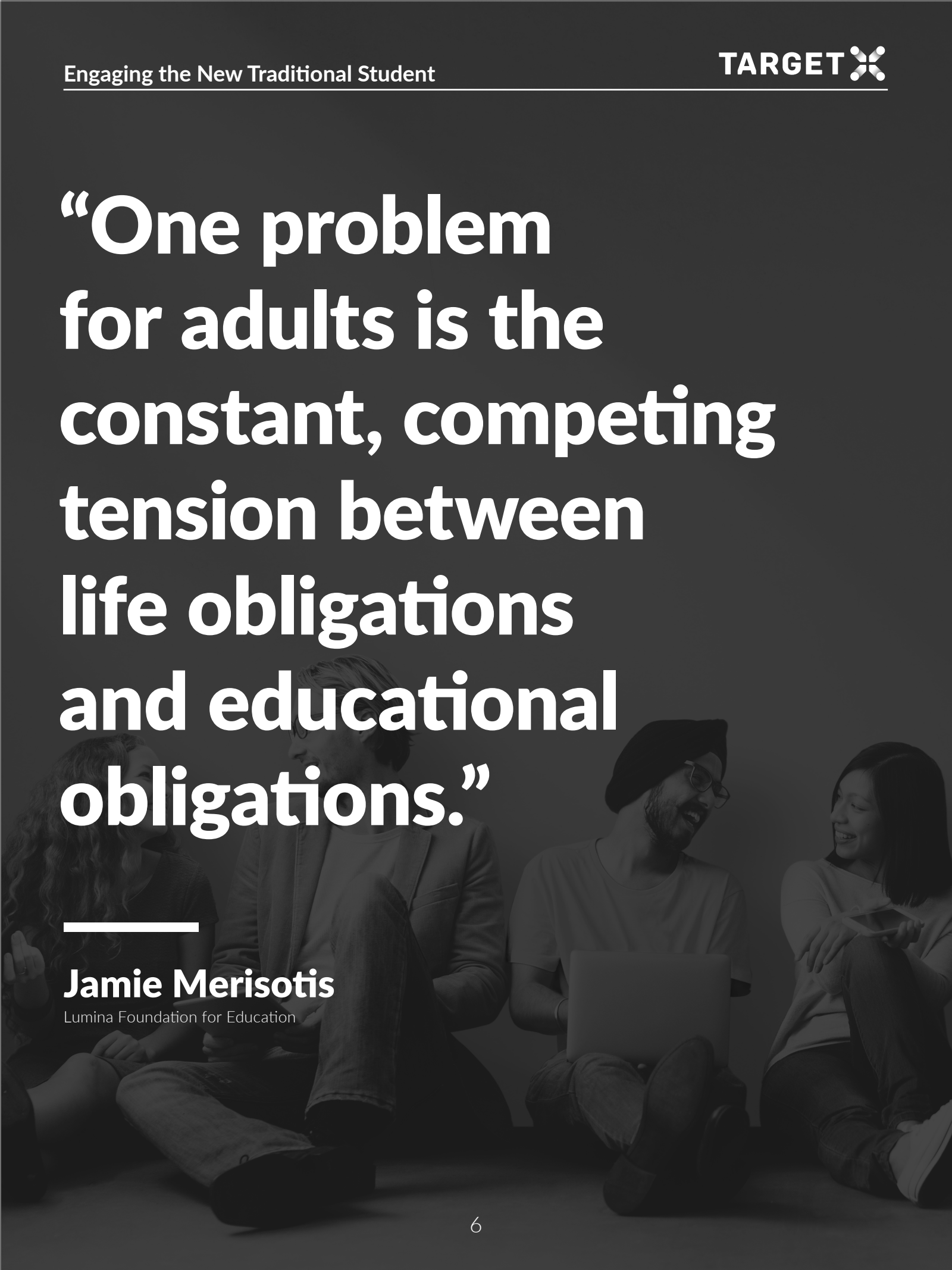
Highlight the professional and financial gains for enrolled students upon program completion



Profile faculty connections to and experience in the degree's industry



Have a robust social media presence with content designed to attract your target population



**“One problem
for adults is the
constant, competing
tension between
life obligations
and educational
obligations.”**

Jamie Merisotis

Lumina Foundation for Education

Reaching the New Traditional Student

The new traditional student is busy with work, family, and life. They value flexibility and efficiency.

Meet them where they are. Capitalize on how they prefer to communicate and create content that speaks to their program interests, needs, concerns and life situations.

| Why it matters

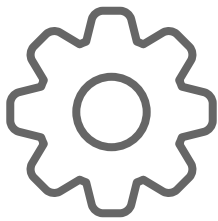
Realizing that non-traditional students equal non-traditional recruitment methods requires creating a robust recruitment and engagement strategy.

Tips for Engagement

New traditionals are less motivated towards enrollment, partly because they have more responsibilities at work, at home, and financially.

Because of their unique characteristics, they may be more vulnerable to challenges that affect their health, stress levels, and ability to persist to enrollment or graduation. The choice to return to school is often a stressful and frightening one. Therefore, the new traditionals need more cultivation and support.

In order to turn prospects into enrolled students, graduate programs need to:



Keep it simple and accessible.

Long or complicated information requests, applications, and financial aid forms may intimidate new traditionals. Keep it simple, streamlined, and easy to access. For example, students should not have to pinch and squeeze on their mobile phone to access information or fill out forms and their work should be automatically saved.



Provide plenty of personalization.

All students are individuals with unique needs and desires. As much as possible, they should be treated as such. Generic, bulk emails that are transactional don't work, nor do static websites that don't appeal to a wide diversity of interests and programs.



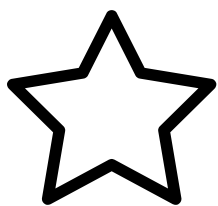
Nurture, nurture, nurture.

Research indicates that once a prospect visits a college website, they'll stay in the consideration phase for an average of two months or for as many as 18 months. For new traditionals, that phase can be even longer. Ensure you maintain personalized, touch points with these prospects for as long as it takes to convert.



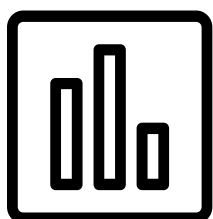
Appeal to “fit.”

Regardless of age, all students ask themselves if they will “fit in” at a particular institution. Graduate programs need to approach their websites, social media, and outreach with that question in mind. For example, a working mother is probably not going to see herself on a campus with a website that highlights athletics or doesn't easily provide the information important to her, such as scheduling and cost.



Focus on “high-potential” prospects.

With many students to cater to over a longer cultivation period and the need to personalize and nurture new traditionals to be successful, it can be unrealistic to do so for every single prospect. Use the information you have on prospects to narrow down those who are most likely to enroll with strong supports and who are the best fit for your institution. Then, focus on them.



Measure and optimize.

Make sure that you are getting a return on your outreach and recruitment investments. See which campaigns and strategies have had the most impact and optimize those, while scaling back on those that are wasting resources.

How Can We Help?

Student-centric solutions for higher ed.

Prospective graduate students are anything but traditional — which means you need a non-traditional solution for engaging them in meaningful ways. Our suite of recruitment and retention solutions help colleges and universities engage with their best-fit students and make it easy for them to apply through solutions designed with students in mind.

Engage Your Students

Our solutions make it easy to reach students where they are — and in the way they want to be communicated with. Send targeted emails and text messages through the CRM and engage with students in Schools App, a private, mobile social community.

Make it Easy to Apply

Our mobile-first Application makes it easy for students to complete their application from anywhere, on a mobile device or computer. The student-first interface allows students to stop and start the application and submit on any device when they're ready.

Calculate ROI

Our tools give you the ability to track students from their very first interaction with your institution — giving you visibility into what messages, events or advertisements are most effective. And makes it easier for you to calculate what it truly costs to enroll a student.

Interested in learning more?

>> targetx.com/graduate



Engaging the “New” Traditional Graduate Student

Learn more at:
targetx.com/graduate

TARGET 