

Emerging Technology Benchmarking Report

The Role of AI in Marketing and Enrollment Management in 2024

JUNE 2024



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Table of Contents

3	Overview
5	Executive Summary and Key Findings
6	Our Respondents
8	How Institutions of Higher Education are Using AI
9	AI and Emerging Technology in the Workplace
10	Current Practices in Marketing and Enrollment Management
22	Perceived Impact of AI Use
23	Concerns Around the Use of AI in Higher Education
25	Student Demands, Expectations and Preferences
25	Student Decision-Making Process and Timeframes
26	Impact on Higher Education
28	Recommendations for Marketing and Enrollment Leaders
30	About the Authors
31	Survey Methodology and Objective
32	Appendix: Key Responses by Institution Size
32	Perceived Opportunities by Institution Size
33	Impediments to Adoption by Institution Size

Overview

Over the past few years, artificial intelligence has surged, with businesses across all industries integrating new technologies into their workforce to optimize current processes and enhance efficiency.¹ According to data from Statista, the revenue generated from the global artificial intelligence (AI) software market is projected to reach 126 billion dollars by 2025.² Among the array of AI technologies embraced, chatbots have seen a rapid rise in adoption, significantly altering the way consumers interact with AI. This includes tools like ChatGPT, Perplexity AI, Google Gemini and a host of others, which utilize AI language processing to provide real-time responses to questions and inquiries posed by consumers.³ Forbes Magazine reported, "In January 2023, ChatGPT hit 100 million active users, marking it as the fastest-growing application in history."⁴

Figure 1: Rapid Growth of ChatGPT

ChatGPT Sprints to One Million Users

Time it took for selected online services to reach one million users



*one million backers ** one million nights booked *** one million downloads

Source: Company announcements via Business Insider/LinkedIn

AI's applications extend far beyond ChatGPT and similar LLM chat bots. Artificial intelligence is integrated into numerous tools and applications used across our workplaces and tied into our day-to-day tasks. The emergence of modern technology has fundamentally transformed how workers engage in their daily activities and which tasks can be automated to enhance efficiency.

1 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/qai/2023/01/06/applications-of-artificial-intelligence/?sh=7515013be4ea>
2 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/607716/worldwide-artificial-intelligence-market-revenues/>
3 <https://www.ibm.com/topics/chatbots>
4 <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/in/business/ai-statistics/>

Across virtually every industry, AI is either enhancing existing processes by boosting productivity and precision, or pioneering new products and processes altogether.¹ Businesses worldwide leverage AI technologies for a multitude of purposes including content generation, marketing, sales, customer service, and data analysis, among others.² In fact, research from McKinsey indicates that over half (50%-60%) of companies are utilizing some type of AI-powered technologies.³ In fields that rely heavily on data, like marketing, the presence of AI is felt across nearly every process and technology platform. With AI integration in workplaces, business can optimize efficiency and foster greater opportunities for growth.

Higher education is experiencing the effects of AI across the board. From pedagogical questions on AI's impact on student learning to improving business processes, AI is at the center of many campus conversations. Perhaps no area on campus is more impacted by AI than student marketing and the student recruitment process. But, the opportunity to improve the student experience through AI is not without challenges. Higher education marketing and enrollment management leaders are grappling with rapidly evolving, and increasingly complex, advertising and student engagement platforms while trying to keep up with student expectations and preferences.

1 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/qai/2023/01/06/applications-of-artificial-intelligence/?sh=7515013be4ea>

2 <https://www.upwork.com/resources/how-is-ai-used-in-business>

3 <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai-in-2022-and-a-half-decade-in-review>

Executive Summary and Key Findings

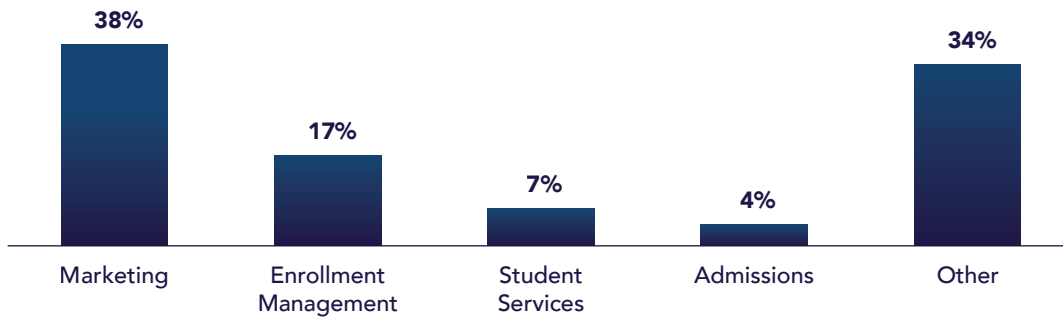
The 2024 Emerging Trends and Technology survey conducted by UPCEA and EducationDynamics examined the current and perceived use of artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies within institutional marketing and enrollment management. The findings revealed an overall positive perception of AI, with institutional representatives expressing optimism about its benefits and future potential within the workplace. However, a significant portion of respondents have yet to adopt AI-powered tools within their marketing and enrollment departments, citing reasons such as a lack of understanding, fear of change among institutional leaders, budget constraints, and insufficient staff or technological readiness. Privacy and data safety concerns also heavily contribute to overall hesitancy. Bridging the gap between positive perceptions and actual adoption rates requires enhanced understanding, support, staff development and training, and ethical guidelines for integrating AI in higher education.

- **Ninety-one percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they are receptive to using emerging technology, like AI,** in their marketing and/or enrollment work. However, only 40% strongly agreed or agreed that they currently do so.
- **Only 7% said their institution has a plan to upskill and support staff in adopting AI-driven technology,** while 30% said their institution has a responsible use policy for AI, and 21% said their institution currently communicates, or will communicate in the next year, their data privacy practices and policies to students who might interact with AI during the recruitment and enrollment process.
- Over one third (**35%**) of participants said **personalized marketing/target audiences is the greatest area of opportunity** for adopting AI-driven technology at their institution, while 23% said reducing workload/increasing efficiency, and 19% said chatbots/improving communications.
- Nearly one third (**32%**) of participants said **a lack of resources/time/money is the greatest challenge** in adopting AI-driven technology at their institution, while 18% mentioned resistance to change/fear of AI, 16% said buy-in from senior leadership, and 16% cited privacy concerns/security risks/data issues.
- **Seventy-two percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they perceive AI as a useful tool for their future growth and development in their role** while 54% strongly agreed or agreed that their institution's use of AI will positively impact the student experience. Also, 54% think that students will value transparency about how AI is being used in the recruitment and enrollment process.

Our Respondents

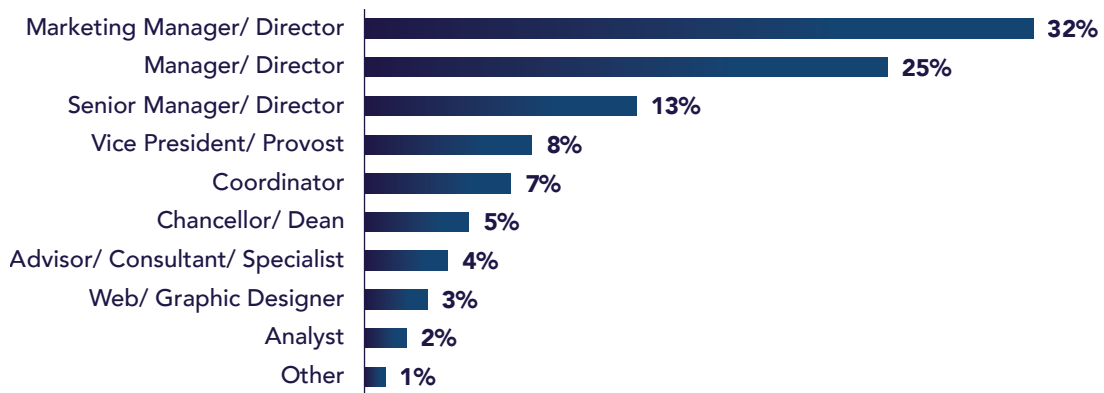
Thirty-eight percent of survey participants have a primary role in marketing at their institution, 17% in enrollment management, 7% in student services, and 4% in admissions. Over one third (34%) of participants with primary roles that fell into the “Other” category were terminated from the survey.

Figure 4: Which best describes your primary role at your institution (n=210)

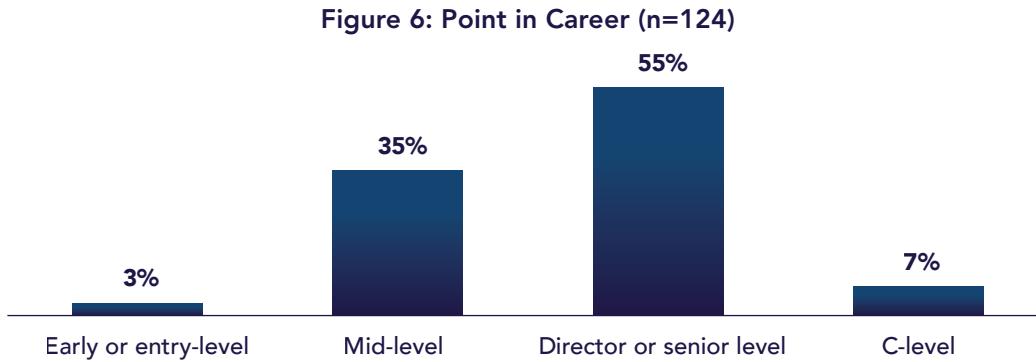


Nearly one third (32%) of survey participants are marketing managers/directors, 25% are managers/directors, and 13% are senior managers/directors.

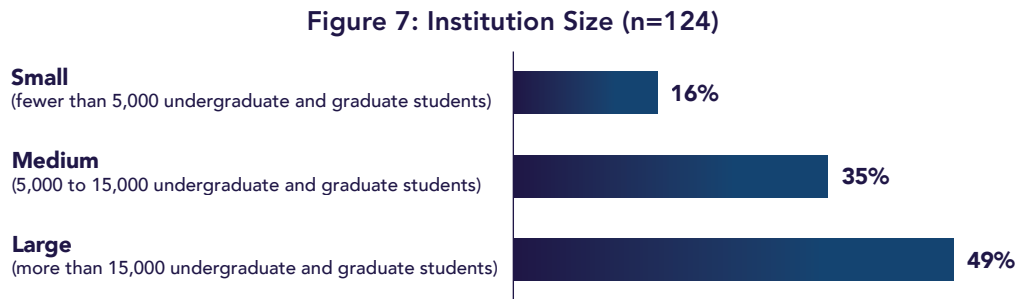
Figure 5: Job Title (n=124)



Over half (55%) are at a director or senior level point in their career, 35% are mid-level, 7% C-level, and 3% are early or entry-level in their career.



Nearly half (49%) of participants come from large institutions, 35% from medium-sized institutions, and 16% from small institutions.

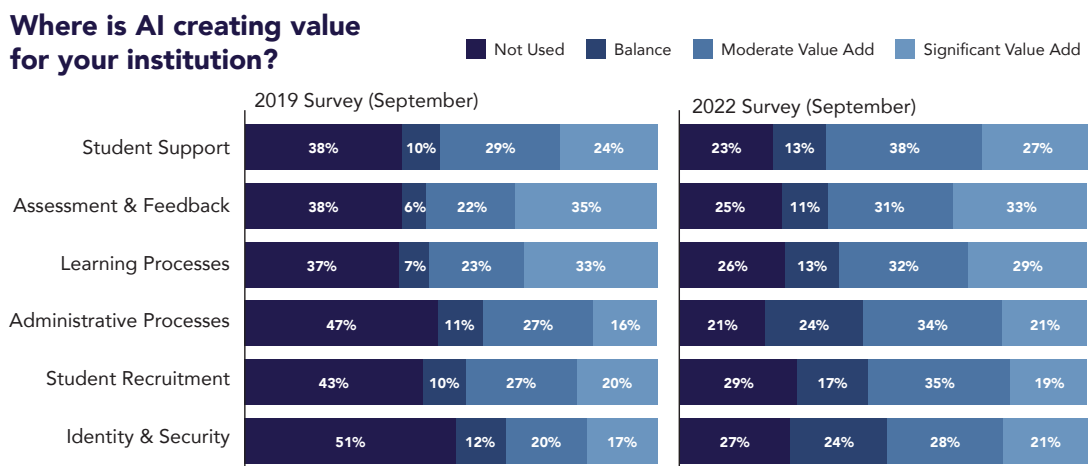


How Institutions of Higher Education are Using AI

While AI finds utility across various industries, its prominence in higher education is being adopted at a slower rate.¹ In higher education, AI offers an array of benefits to both faculty and students. One major application lies in the recruitment and enrollment phases, specifically within the marketing and enrollment management departments. Amidst the challenges presented by declining enrollment rates in recent years and the shift away from traditional education models, institutions find themselves compelled to innovate to attract prospective students and convert them into enrolled students.² Advertising platforms like Google Ads, Meta, LinkedIn and others leverage AI in a variety of ways, including audience identification, real time bidding, ad placement and content optimization. AI-powered communication tools, such as chatbots, phone services, and automated email systems, play a pivotal role in an institution's recruitment phase. These tools offer the opportunity to provide personalized content and a better experience, efficiently addressing student queries and potentially expediting the enrollment process. By harnessing AI insights, institutions can better understand their target audience and customize marketing campaigns to appeal to potential learners. In fact, in UPCEA's 2024 survey with EducationDynamics, when given a list of potential areas of opportunity for integrating emerging technologies into their institution's marketing and enrollment functions, 80% of respondents cited improving the student journey from marketing to enrolled student status, 67% cited improving enrollment conversion rates, and 62% cited personalized student experiences.

A 2023 survey by HolonIQ revealed that nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents said that AI is creating moderate to significant value add to student support, and over half (54%) said it's adding moderate to significant value to student recruitment.³

Figure 8: Amount of Value Created by AI Use



Source: HolonIQ, February 2023. n = 464 across both 2019 Aug-Sep Survey and 2022 Aug - Sep Survey

1 <https://www.anthology.com/news/anthology-survey-reveals-university-students-and-leaders-slow-to-adopt-but-cautiously>
 2 UPCEA & EducationDynamics "Emerging Technology Benchmarking Report: The Role of AI in Marketing and Enrollment Management 2024"
 3 <https://www.holoniq.com/notes/artificial-intelligence-in-education-2023-survey-insights>

AI and Emerging Technology in the Workplace

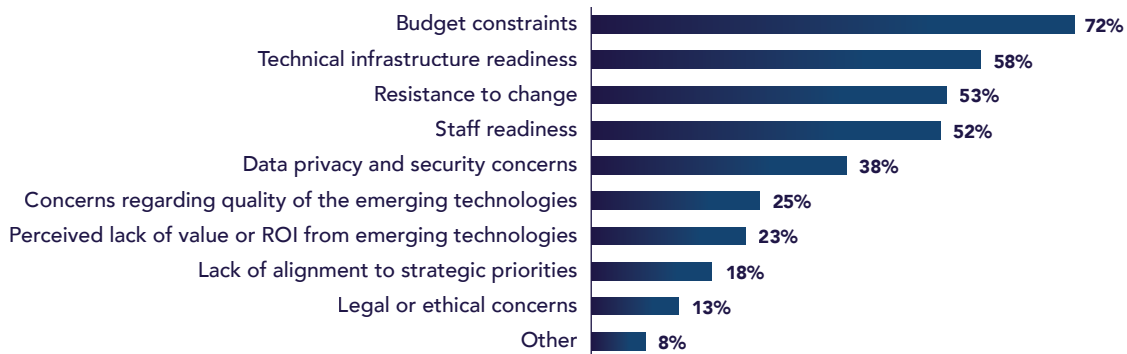
When given a list of potential areas of opportunity for integrating emerging technologies into their institution's marketing and enrollment functions, 80% cited improving the student journey from marketing to enrolled student status, 67% said improving enrollment conversion rates, 62% personalized student experiences, and 60% reducing manual tasks and administrative workloads.

Figure 2: What do you see as the greatest areas of opportunity for integrating emerging technologies into your institution's marketing and enrollment functions? Select all that apply. (n=116)



Budget constraints were considered the greatest barrier to integration of emerging technologies by 72% of respondents. Fifty-eight percent cited technical infrastructure readiness, 53% resistance to change, and 52% staff readiness.

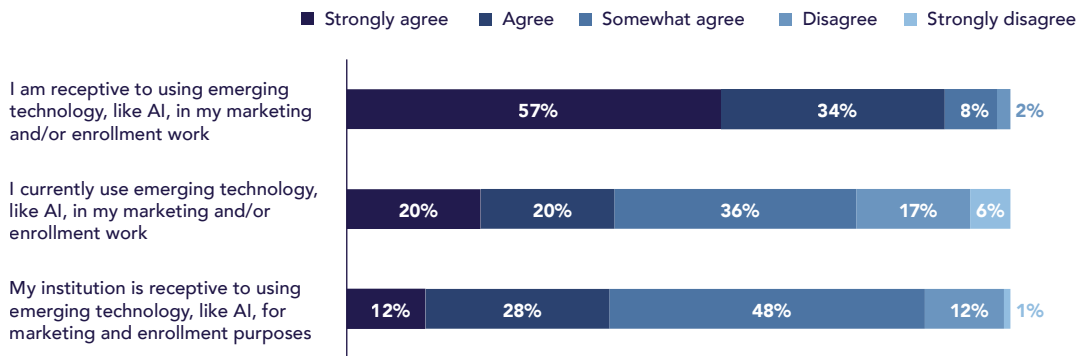
Figure 3: What do you see as the greatest barriers to integrating emerging technologies into your institution's marketing and enrollment functions? Select all that apply. (n=113)



Current Practices in Marketing and Enrollment Management

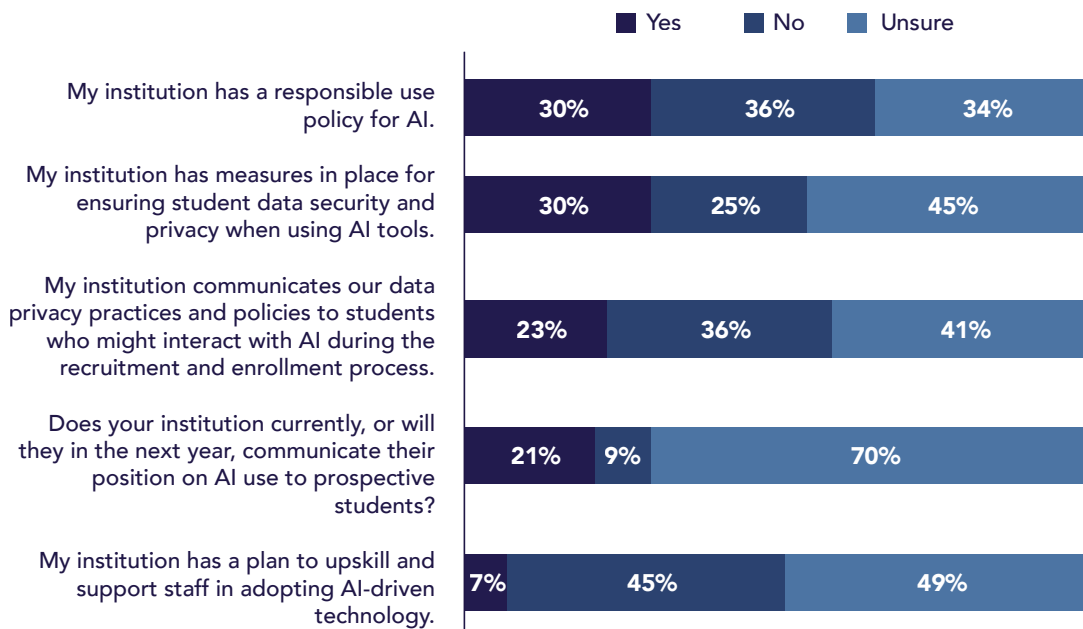
Ninety-one percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they are receptive to using emerging technology, like AI, in their marketing and/or enrollment work, but only 40% strongly agreed or agreed that they currently do so. Also, 40% strongly agreed or agreed that their institution is receptive to using emerging technology, like AI, for marketing and enrollment.

Figure 9: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=113)



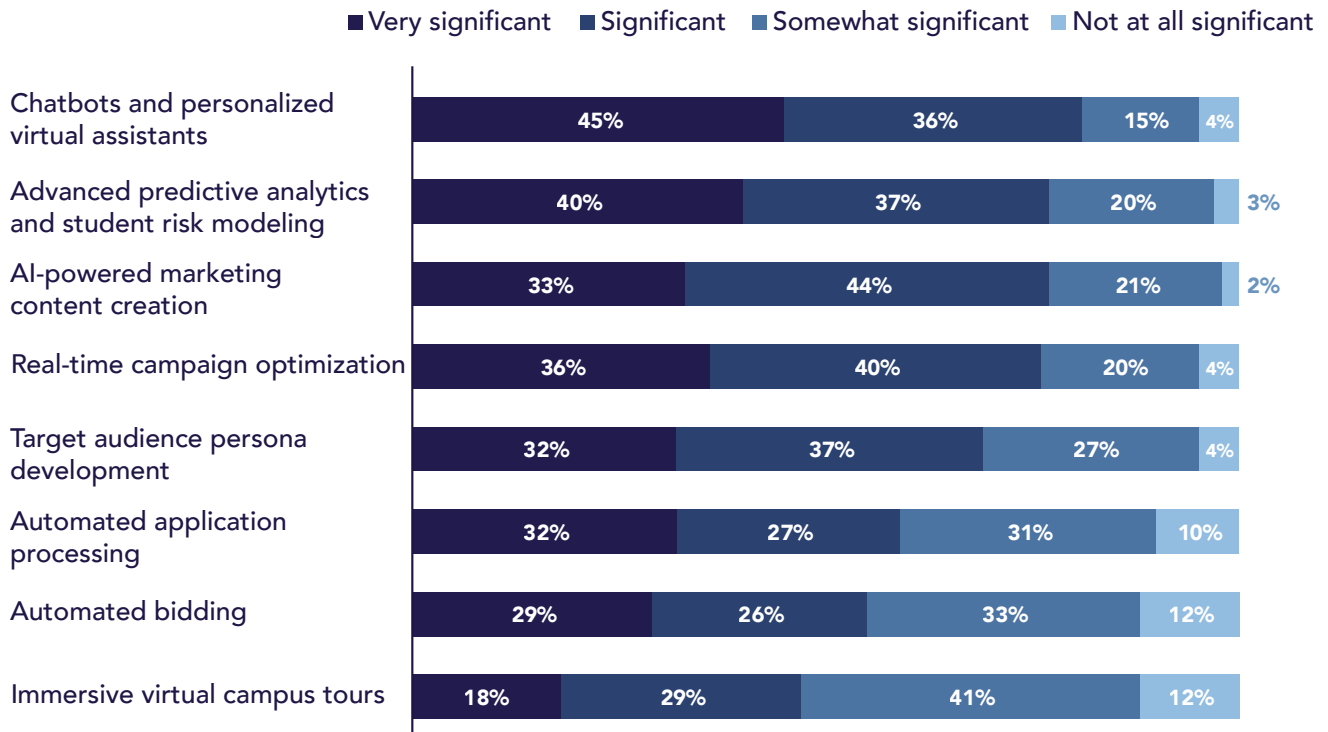
Forty-five percent of participants said their institution does not plan to upskill and support staff in adopting AI-driven technology, 36% said their institution does not have a responsible use policy for AI, and 36% said their institution does not communicate their data privacy practices and policies to students who might interact with AI during the recruitment and enrollment process.

Figure 10: Please answer the following questions regarding the use of AI at your institution (n=107)



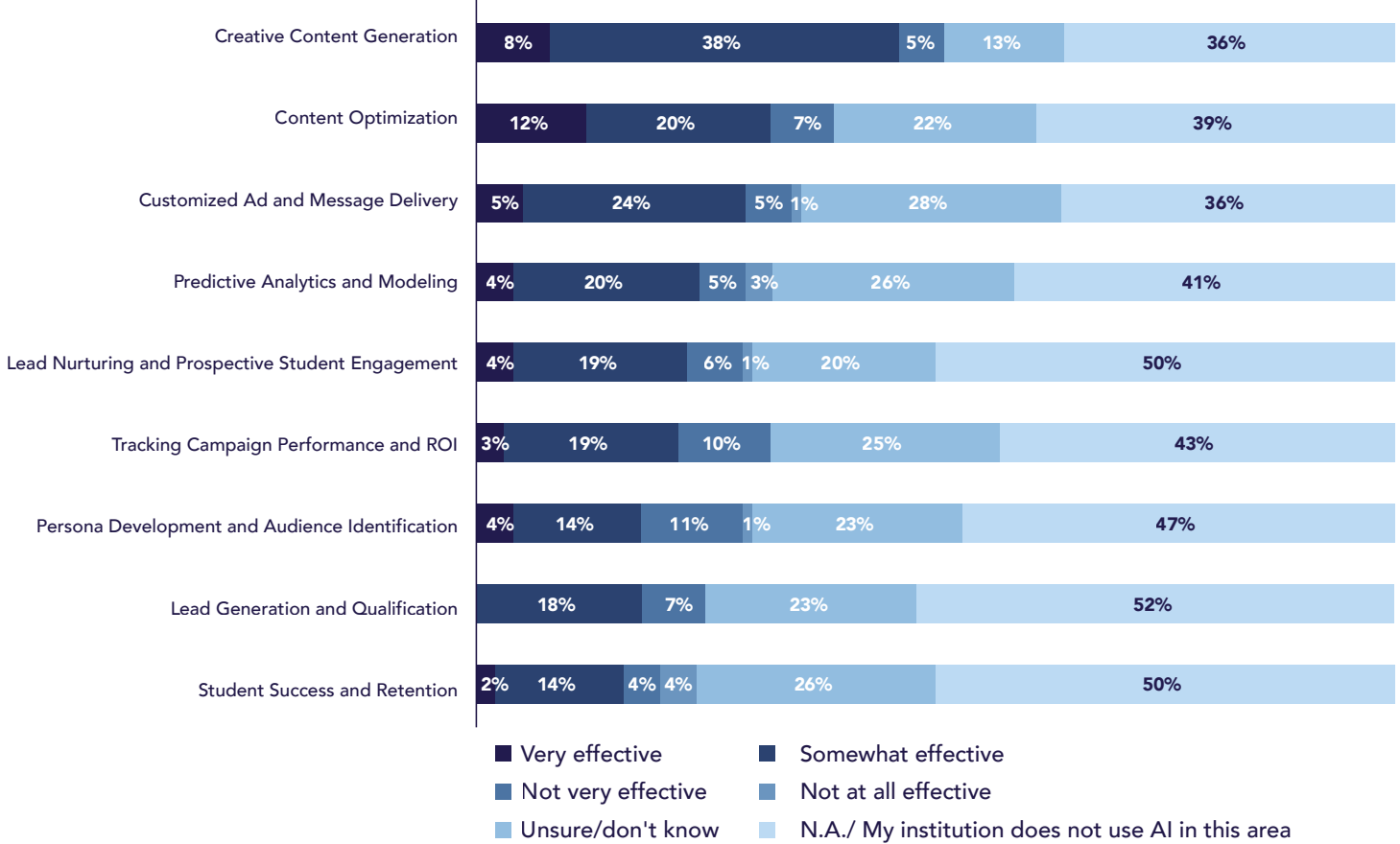
Eighty-one percent of participants agreed that within the next two years, chatbots and personalized virtual assistants will have very significant or significant potential to transform marketing and enrollment management in higher education, followed by advanced predictive analytics and student risk modeling, and AI-powered marketing content creation (each 77% very significant or significant).

Figure 11: Within the next two years, how significant do you believe the following AI innovations are in terms of their potential to transform marketing and enrollment management in higher education? (n=102)



Participants were asked the effectiveness of AI-driven technology in various marketing and enrollment functions. Content optimization had the highest number who considered it very effective (12%), although just another 20% said it was somewhat effective. Creative content generation was rated very effective by 8% while another 38% found it somewhat effective. Many respondents said their institutions do not use AI in these areas. No respondents identified AI-driven technology as Very Effective at Lead Generation and Qualification, and only 18% thought it was somewhat effective.

Figure 12: Please rate the effectiveness of AI-driven technology used in the following marketing and enrollment functions at your institution (n=95)



Participants whose institutions use AI tools in lead generation and qualification were asked to briefly describe the process. When asked for further details, relevant examples of responses included mapping students to program types, utilizing predictive models, identifying conversions, and content generation for website and communications.

Table 1: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI tools in lead generation and qualification (n=12)

APIs in Salesforce map students to program types based on interest forms

Data analysis and lead scoring of prospective students, lookalike audiences

Marketing Cloud Einstein (Salesforce)

Trying to utilise predictive models

Use Google's AI to help identify conversions and get more leads that will hopefully convert

Using AI mostly for content generation for website and communications

We are exploring different options including a chatbot.

We use a tool called Conversica that leverages AI components to reach out to students presenting as a staff person. We use AI bidding technology in our Google and Facebook campaigns. We use chat GPT to help with some content creation but find we need to heavily edit.

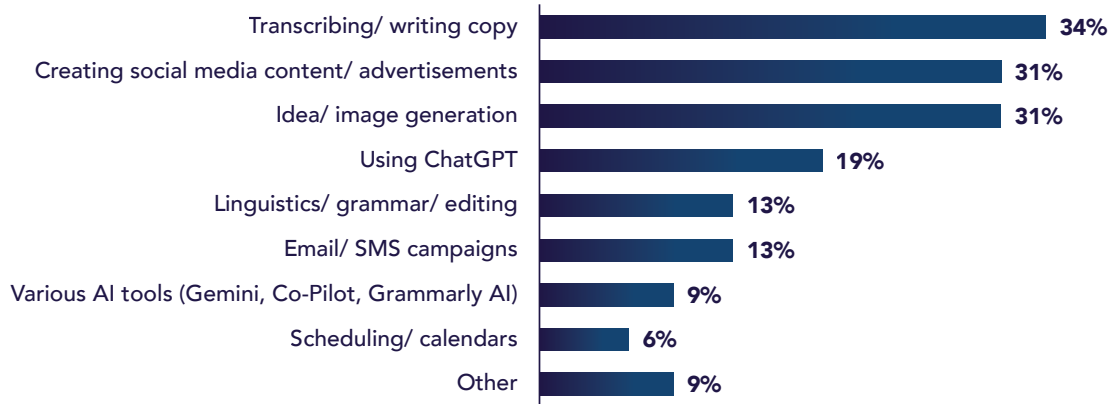
The participants whose institutions use AI tools for tracking campaign performance and ROI were asked to briefly describe the process. When asked for further details, relevant examples of verbatim responses include using AI for automated dashboards and updates, digital marketing and campaign performance, statistical learning, and pinpointing better target audiences and track ROI.

Table 2: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI tools for tracking campaign performance and ROI (n=16)

Automated dashboards and updates
For our Adult division, we have just rolled out a AI assisted phone system that will result in better data we can feed back into our campaign performance tools. Traditional Undergrad has not.
Marketing Cloud Einstein (Salesforce)
Our vendors use AI tools to help with digital marketing and campaign performance.
Statistical learning
Use google analytics not anything else
Using AI for Content, Analytics, Lead optimization
Using Google, and other tools to attribute, monitor and measure. Also looking at tools like voice of the customer from sprout social
Using tools within platforms like GA4, PowerBI, etc.
Utilizing API and data pulling in Tableau to track enrollment trends, Einstein dashboards in Salesforce
We have access to Marketing Intelligence and Marketing Cloud from Salesforce that uses Einstein capabilities that are supposed to be AI. Most of the automated insights have been very obvious and not helpful.
We use all of Google and Meta's AI driven optimization strategies to pinpoint better target audiences and track ROI.
We use GA4 for analytics.
We use Google Ads campaign tools.

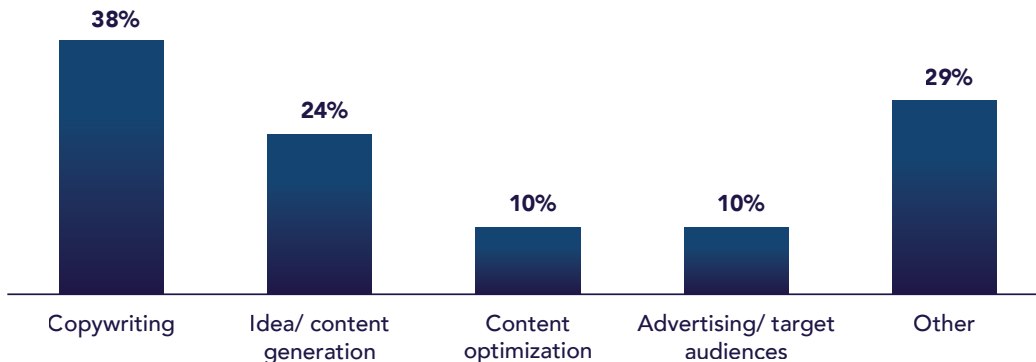
Among the 32 participants whose institutions use AI for creative content generation, 34% said it is used for transcribing/writing copy, 31% for creating social media content/advertisement, and 31% for idea/image generation. Uses mentioned only once were placed in the “Other” category, which included classroom practices and educational workshops and building webpage wireframes.

Figure 13: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI for creative content generation (n=32)



Of the 21 participants whose institutions use AI to optimize marketing content, 38% said it is used for copywriting, 24% for idea/content generation, 10% for content optimization, and 10% for advertising/target audiences. Uses mentioned only once were placed in the “Other” category which included using Google Analytics and organizing information, among others.

Figure 14: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI to optimize marketing content (n=21)



Participants were asked how their institution uses AI tools for persona development and audience identification. However, only four of 13 respondents identified how it is used; the others said they are not using AI for these purposes or unsure of the processes. When asked for further details, verbatim responses included identifying how AI is used included generating marketing plans for target audiences, mapping survey results to Salesforce, creating different cohorts, and using Google and Meta to pinpoint better target audiences.

Table 3: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI for persona development and audience identification (n=13)

AI to generate marketing plans with target audience information

Survey results mapped to Salesforce using Salesforce API

Trying to create different cohorts and personalise

We use all of Google and Meta's AI driven optimization strategies to pinpoint better target audiences.

Participants who said their institution uses AI tools for lead nurturing and prospective student engagement were asked to briefly describe the process. When asked for further details, five of the 16 respondents mentioned using a chatbot, while others listed AI communication tools, using AI for email content, and implementing an AI assisted phone system, among others.

Table 4: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI for lead nurturing and prospective student engagement (n=16)

AI to draft email content for drip marketing campaigns
Chatbot
Chatbot features
For our Adult division, we have just rolled out a AI assisted phone system to assist with nurture and conversion. Traditional Undergrad has not.
Marketing Cloud Einstein (Salesforce)
Statistical analysis of results
Using AI enable communication tools
Using chatbot to assist the nurturing process
We have an online chatbot that responds to student questions.
We utilize a chatbot.

Among participants whose institutions use AI for predictive analytics and modeling, some use Google Ads Campaign, Marketing Cloud Einstein, or Tableau tools, while others use AI to predict growth trends in inquiries or use it to predict enrollment for future terms.

Table 5: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI for predictive analytics and modeling (n=19)

Google Ads campaign tools
Marketing Cloud Einstein (Salesforce)
Predicting growth trends in inquiries
Tableau enrollment predictions based on historical enrollment data and current funnels
Trying to using AI for creams cohesive data lake
Using data from past terms to predict enrollment for future terms
We are currently using a funnel management tool that uses decision tree machine learning to help us dedicate our staff time to the students where they will have the most impact.
We use it in Salesforce.
We work with a consulting firm.
We'd like to do more here but it's so hard b/c things need to be at the program level given the nuances of each program's competition, messaging, and market.

Among 12 respondents whose institutions use AI for student success and retention, four described using AI for communications with students, while seven were either unsure or not using it.

Table 6: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI for student success and retention (n=12)

Google Ads campaign tools

Marketing Cloud Einstein (Salesforce)

Predicting growth trends in inquiries

Tableau enrollment predictions based on historical enrollment data and current funnels

Trying to using AI for creams cohesive data lake

Using data from past terms to predict enrollment for future terms.

We are currently using a funnel management tool that uses decision tree machine learning to help us dedicate our staff time to the students where they will have the most impact.

We use it in Salesforce.

We work with a consulting firm.

We'd like to do more here but it's so hard b/c things need to be at the program level given the nuances of each program's competition, messaging, and market.

Among participants whose institutions use AI for customized ad and message delivery, multiple respondents mentioned using Google and Meta’s AI tools, while others use it for ad placement, advertisement copywriting, and customized emails, among others.

Table 7: Please briefly describe how your institution is using AI for customized ad and message delivery (n=17)

AI to generate ad copy for digital marketing ads
Looking into this now through behavior / response triggers
Marketing Cloud Einstein (Salesforce)
Through our vendors
Through using Google and Meta AI-augmented ad campaign tools
Use customized data on the website
Using Google's AI to dynamically create customized ads and messages based on who the person is and what they are searching for
Using segmentation abilities in Slate to try and customize emails
Utilizing the standard smart tools that platforms like Google Adwords enable. Nothing more sophisticated than that to date.
Vendor uses an AI tool for ad placement, bidding etc.
We use an outsource provider so I'm unsure of the specifics.
Within the Meta machine

Over one third (35%) of participants said personalized marketing/target audiences is the greatest area of opportunity for adopting AI-driven technology at their institution, while 23% said reducing workload/increasing efficiency, and 19% said chatbots/improving communications. Responses mentioned fewer than three times were placed in the “Other” category which included academic program review modeling, automation and semi-automation, and the implementation of thought leadership, among others.

Figure 15: What do you see as the greatest area of opportunity for adopting AI-driven technology in marketing and enrollment at your institution? (n=74)



Nearly one third (32%) of participants said a lack of resources/time/money is the greatest challenge in adopting AI-driven technology at their institution, while for others, this is a resistance to change/fear of AI (18%), buy-in from senior leadership (16%), and privacy concerns/security risks/data issues (16%). Responses mentioned fewer than three times were placed in the “Other” category which included adoption across different units, bad content, and AI’s poor understanding of the institution’s target audiences.

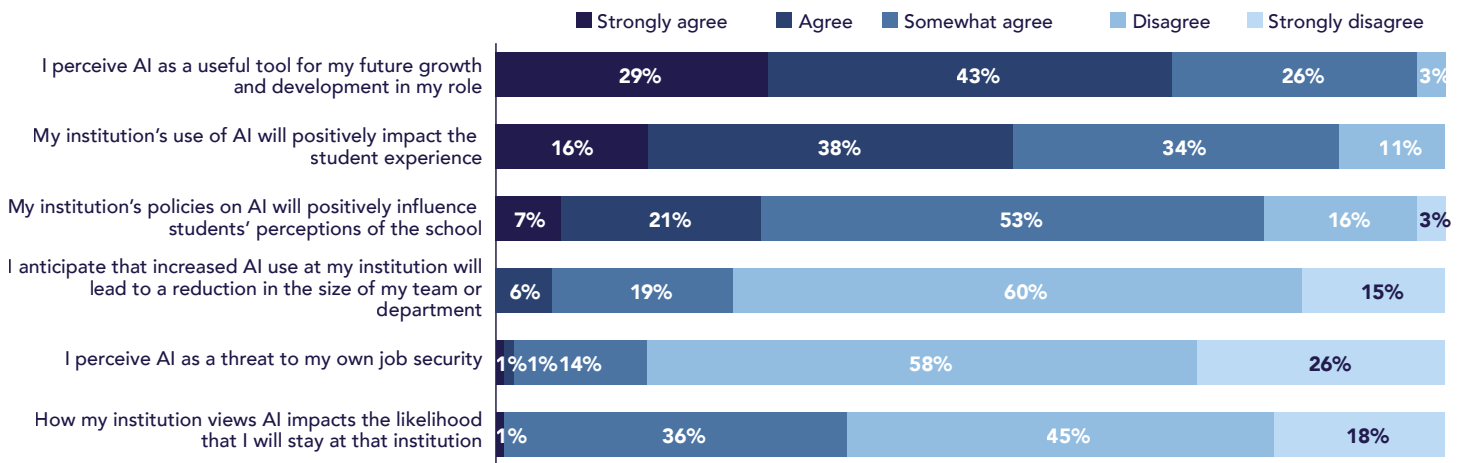
Figure 16: What do you see as the greatest challenge in adopting AI-driven technology in marketing and enrollment at your institution? (n=74)



Perceived Impact of AI Use

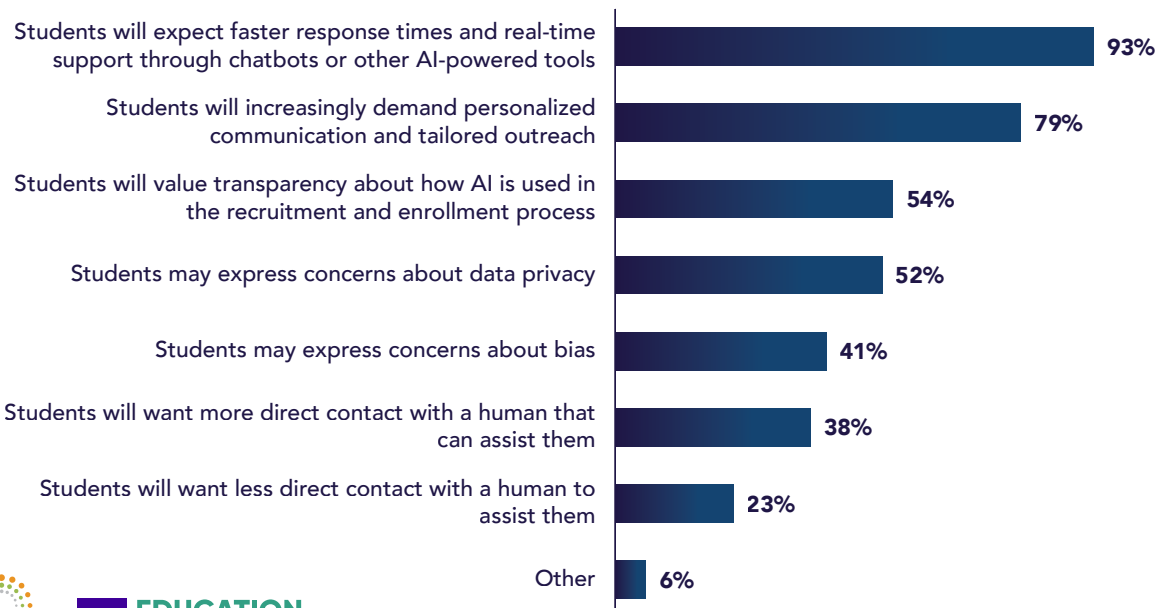
Seventy-two percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they perceive AI as a useful tool for future growth and development in their role and 54% strongly agreed or agreed that their institution’s use of AI will positively impact the student experience. Eighty-four percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that they perceive AI as a threat to their own job security while 75% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they anticipate that increased AI use will lead to a reduction in the size of their team or department.

Figure 17: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=73)



Ninety-three percent of participants think that, with the use of AI, students will expect faster response times and real-time support through chatbots or other AI-powered tools, 79% believe students will increasingly demand personalized communication and tailored outreach, and 54% think students will value transparency about how AI is used in the recruitment and enrollment processes.

Figure 18: In your opinion, how will the use of AI impact student expectations and preferences regarding interactions during the recruitment and enrollment process? Please select all that apply. (n=71)



Concerns Around the Use of AI in Higher Education

Despite the significant strides in efficiency and quality brought about by the proliferation of AI and other emerging technologies, there are valid concerns regarding the ethical use of AI. Many AI-powered tools used for marketing purposes gather and store data from consumers and use this data to inform marketing decisions.¹ In the context of higher education, institutions may use these tools to gather data from prospective or enrolled students to optimize and personalize their learning experiences. However, such practices should involve consistent processes and transparency, and must follow ethical guidelines.² Prior to integrating AI technology, institutions should establish a responsible use policy for AI, ensuring it is clearly communicated to all users of the technology, including prospective and enrolled students who may be affected by it. In UPCEA's 2024 survey with EducationDynamics, 36% of respondents said their institution does not have a responsible use policy for AI, and 36% said their institution does not communicate their data privacy practices and policies to students who might interact with AI during the recruitment and enrollment process.

Another potential challenge in integrating AI technology into the marketing and enrollment departments is the resistance to change and the lack of buy-in from institutional leaders. Despite the proven benefits of AI, perceptions of its efficacy remain cautious, particularly in institutions that are entrenched in legacy systems and accustomed to traditional procedures. Institutional leaders may doubt whether artificial intelligence can replicate the human-to-human connection crucial in interacting with students.³ The perception that using AI to replace human interactions with virtual assistants may instill fear among institutional leaders regarding the effectiveness and authenticity of these processes.

Even when institutional leaders endorse the use of artificial intelligence and aim to integrate these technologies into their marketing and enrollment departments, resource constraints and budget limitations may impede their implementation. Introducing new technology not only incurs institutional expenses but also demands additional time and resources for staff training in these novel applications. For instance, the cost of implementing a chatbot varies widely depending on the a number variables.⁴ These financial considerations often pose significant barriers to the adoption of AI technologies in higher education, hindering their capabilities to enhance marketing and enrollment efforts.

1 <https://www.routledge.com/blog/article/ai-and-its-implications-for-data-privacy#:~:text=AI%20relies%20on%20data%20to,such%20as%20through%20facial%20recognition.>

2 <https://www.reuters.com/legal/industry/privacy-paradox-with-ai-2023-10-31/>

3 UPCEA & EducationDynamics "Emerging Technology Benchmarking Report: The Role of AI in Marketing and Enrollment Management 2024"

4 <https://helpcrunch.com/blog/chatbot-pricing/>

Unlocking the full potential of this emerging technology for marketing and enrollment teams requires overcoming several key challenges. According to the UPCEA/EducationDynamics 2024 survey, respondents highlighted various barriers to integrating emerging technology into their institutions' marketing and enrollment functions. Specifically, 72% listed budget constraints, 58% mentioned technical infrastructure readiness, 53% cited resistance to change, and 52% indicated staff readiness as significant challenges.

Figure 19: Greatest Barriers to Integrating Emerging Technologies

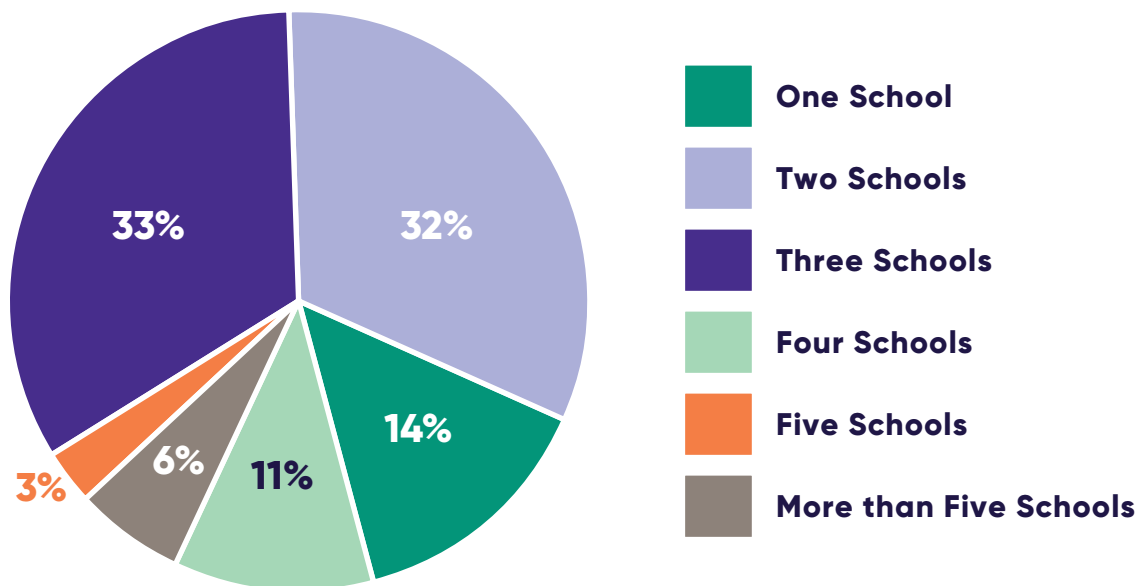


These findings illuminate the multifaceted nature of the obstacles that institutions must address to effectively adopt AI into their marketing and enrollment departments.

Student Demands, Expectations and Preferences

While higher education has been largely slow to adopt emerging technologies, students, particularly online students, are adjusting their expectations of engagement and their ability to access information. Online college students are shortening both the time they take to research prospective schools and the number of schools considered. According to EducationDynamics' [2024 Online College Students Report](#), 79% of students are considering three or fewer schools during their initial search. And, over half (54%) are completing their search in three or fewer weeks.¹

Number of Schools Considered During Initial Search



EducationDynamics' 2024 Online College Students Report

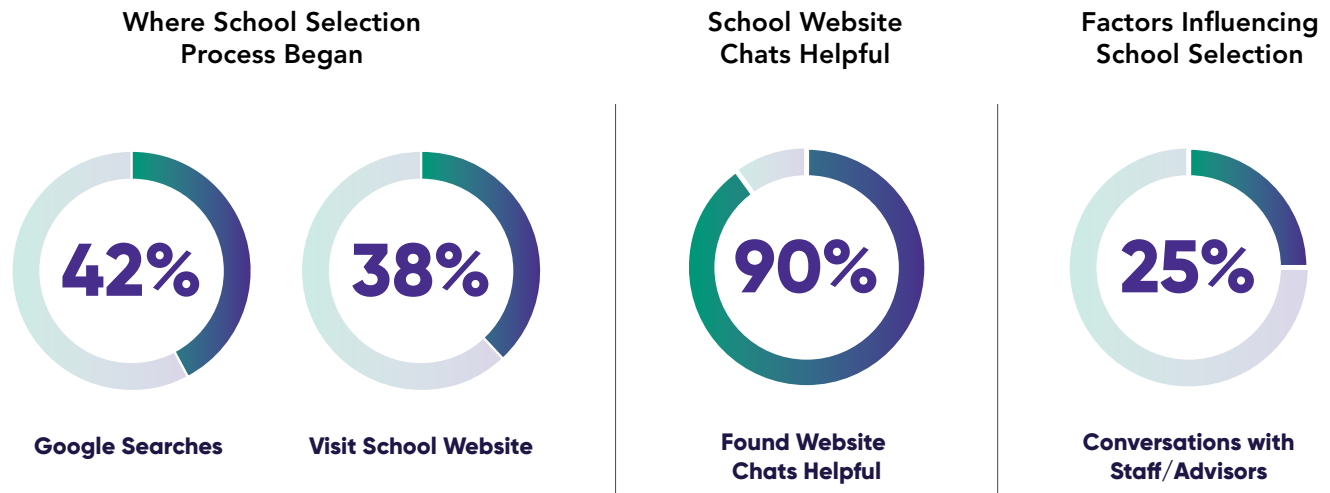
Student Decision-Making Process and Timeframes

Prospective students rely heavily on a school's website for information. Google Search (42%) and visiting the school's website (38%) were the most common places where students began their school selection process. The recent inclusion of AI-assisted summaries within the search experience may increase this number in the future. Chat functionality was also influential, with 43% of website visitors turning to chatbot functionality on the website. A full 90% of those utilizing chat features found them helpful.² At the same time, human interaction remains critical to the decision-making process.

¹ EducationDynamics "2024 Online College Students Report"

² EducationDynamics "2024 Online College Students Report"

Prospective students ranked conversations with staff and advisors as the most influential factor in their decision-making process at 25%.¹ Taken together, higher education institutions that leverage technology to improve and support the early decision-making process, while freeing up their staff for high-impact conversations, are best positioned to create the engagement experience students most desire.



EducationDynamics' 2024 Online College Students Report

Impact on Higher Education

Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies present a clear watershed moment for the global economy. While benefits related to streamlined operations and increased efficiency are abundant, so too are the challenges that this new paradigm of productivity presents. Higher education institutions, regardless of size or type, face these intertwined challenges and opportunities. While emerging technologies have the potential to impact all facets of the higher education ecosystem, perhaps the most immediate, and potentially most nimble, area is marketing and enrollment management.

This research found that staff members tasked with driving marketing and enrollment management functions are eager to harness the potential of AI. Overall, 91% of respondents strongly agreed (57%) or agreed (34%) that they are receptive to using emerging technology, like AI, in their marketing and/or enrollment management work. These professionals identified areas of opportunity to integrate emerging technologies including improving the student journey from marketing to enrolled student status (80%), improving enrollment conversion rates (67%), and developing personalized student experiences (60%). Nearly three-quarters (72%) perceive AI as a useful tool for their future growth and development in their role. However, while there is a shared excitement about the potential of AI, current implementation is lagging.

1 EducationDynamics "2024 Online College Students Report"

While AI has been around for many years, the progression and transformative power of emerging technologies has exploded. This abrupt and dramatic shift is highlighted in the disconnect between interest in leveraging emerging technology, and the actual use of the technology. Less than half of survey respondents (40%) agreed that they currently use emerging technology like AI in their marketing and/or enrollment management work. This could also, in part, explain why only 40% agreed that their institution is receptive to using emerging technology, like AI, for marketing and enrollment purposes. Additionally, only 30% of institutions have a responsible use policy for AI, and, alarmingly, only 7% have a plan to upskill and support staff in adopting AI-driven technology. These realities limit the ability of staff members to integrate emerging technologies into their marketing and enrollment functions, and exacerbate challenges.

Challenges and concerns, both real and perceived, related to emerging technologies are numerous. When asked about the greatest challenges in adopting AI-driven technology in marketing and enrollment at their institution, respondents most often cited a lack of resources, including time or money (32%), resistance to change or a fear of AI (18%), buy-in from senior leadership (16%), and security concerns around data and privacy (16%). While many of these concerns are understandable, particularly those around data security and resource allocation, which would also apply to existing technologies, resistance to or fear of AI, especially from senior leadership, is the first challenge that will need to be confronted to unlock the true potential of these emerging technologies on campus.

Collectively, these datapoints indicate a shared sense of excitement and much uncertainty around the use of emerging technologies in marketing and enrollment management. However, the general feeling among survey respondents was optimistic. When asked about the significance of various AI innovations, 81% believed chatbots and personalized assistants would be either very significant or significant in terms of their potential to transform marketing and enrollment management. Over three-quarters (77%) also envisioned significant impacts on advanced predictive analytics and student risk modeling, as well as AI-powered marketing content creation.

The new adult learner will come to expect many of the conveniences afforded to them through AI and other emerging technologies. Ninety-three percent of survey participants think that, with the use of AI, students will expect faster response times and real-time support through chatbots or other AI-powered tools, and 79% believe students will increasingly demand personalized communication and tailored outreach.

Institutional leaders and marketing and enrollment professionals alike must recognize that emerging technology will serve as the genesis for the next evolution of marketing and enrollment management. AI is not a panacea for all of the headwinds facing higher education, but it is an essential arrow in the marketing and enrollment management quiver that, when applied appropriately, can mitigate risk, improve efficiencies, supplement staff capacity, and benefit the student experience.

Recommendations for Marketing and Enrollment Leaders

AI is no longer a futuristic concept; it's a reality; reshaping how we engage and interact with the world. In higher education, it is touching everything from marketing and enrollment processes to teaching and learning. To thrive in this dynamic environment, individuals, departments, and institutions must proactively embrace AI and its potential. Ignoring this transformation is not an option; it's a recipe for falling behind. Marketing and Enrollment Management leaders are encouraged to take action to expedite the inclusion of AI technologies in their strategic plans, or risk falling behind other institutions.

- 1. Invest in AI skills:** On an individual and organizational level, immediately begin to invest in building skills and expertise in AI and AI-driven technology. This will ensure individuals stay current in a rapidly-evolving job market and help organizations improve efficiency and performance.
- 2. Stay informed:** Become familiar with how AI is being used across your marketing platforms. Identify where you have deferred implementation of AI-driven capabilities like Google Ads' Performance Max features. This will help you understand your current marketing and enrollment management technology stack and identify areas where AI can be effectively implemented to improve student recruitment and engagement.
- 3. Empower your staff:** Invest in your team's development to ensure they have the skills, capabilities, and freedom to implement AI-powered tools where appropriate. Reward your team's curiosity in emerging technologies and unlock the potential to streamline processes and better serve prospective and current students.
- 4. Provide transparency:** Clearly communicate to both internal and external stakeholders how and where AI tools are being utilized. Document instances of content creation using Generative AI, and distinguish it from content created by your human team members. Transparency builds trust and fosters understanding among all stakeholders. It also helps maintain accountability and ethical practices in AI usage.

5. **Communicate honestly:** Be upfront with students about how AI is being used to communicate with them, including AI-powered chatbots and outbound phone messages. This fosters open and honest communication with students, ensuring they understand the role of AI in their learning journey and feel comfortable interacting with AI-powered tools.
6. **Value personalization over automation:** Leverage AI to personalize student experiences beyond simple automation. This allows you to tailor student engagement pathways and resources to individual needs, creating a more engaging and effective experience across the student journey.
7. **Partner with experts:** Partner with marketing, enrollment management and technology experts that can clearly define how they leverage AI-driven tools to better serve you and your students. Today's increasingly complex student lifecycle requires experts with specialized knowledge and guidance that will help you leverage AI effectively and ethically to create a more enriching student experience.

About the Authors



About UPCEA

UPCEA is the online and professional education association. Our members continuously reinvent higher education, positively impacting millions of lives. We proudly lead and support them through cutting edge research, professional development, networking and mentorship, conferences and seminars, and stakeholder advocacy.

Our collaborative, entrepreneurial community brings together decision makers and influencers in education, industry, research, and policy interested in improving educational access and outcomes. Learn more about us at UPCEA.edu and follow us online @UPCEA.



About EducationDynamics

EducationDynamics is the transformative enrollment growth partner focused on helping schools meet the challenges and opportunities of serving adult and non-traditional students. From consideration to graduation and beyond, our end-to-end marketing and student engagement capabilities allow us to help schools create sustainable growth, at scale, and accomplish our shared mission of expanding opportunity through education.

Survey Methodology and Objective

UPCEA, in collaboration with EducationDynamics, designed a survey for institutional representatives specializing in marketing, enrollment management, student services, and admissions. The primary objective of the survey was to understand emerging trends and technology in higher education marketing and enrollment management, as well as the impacts of the use of AI in institutional marketing and enrollment departments. The survey took place from March 4th to April 1st, 2024. Overall, 210 individuals participated in the survey, of which 124 qualified, and 71 completed the entire survey.

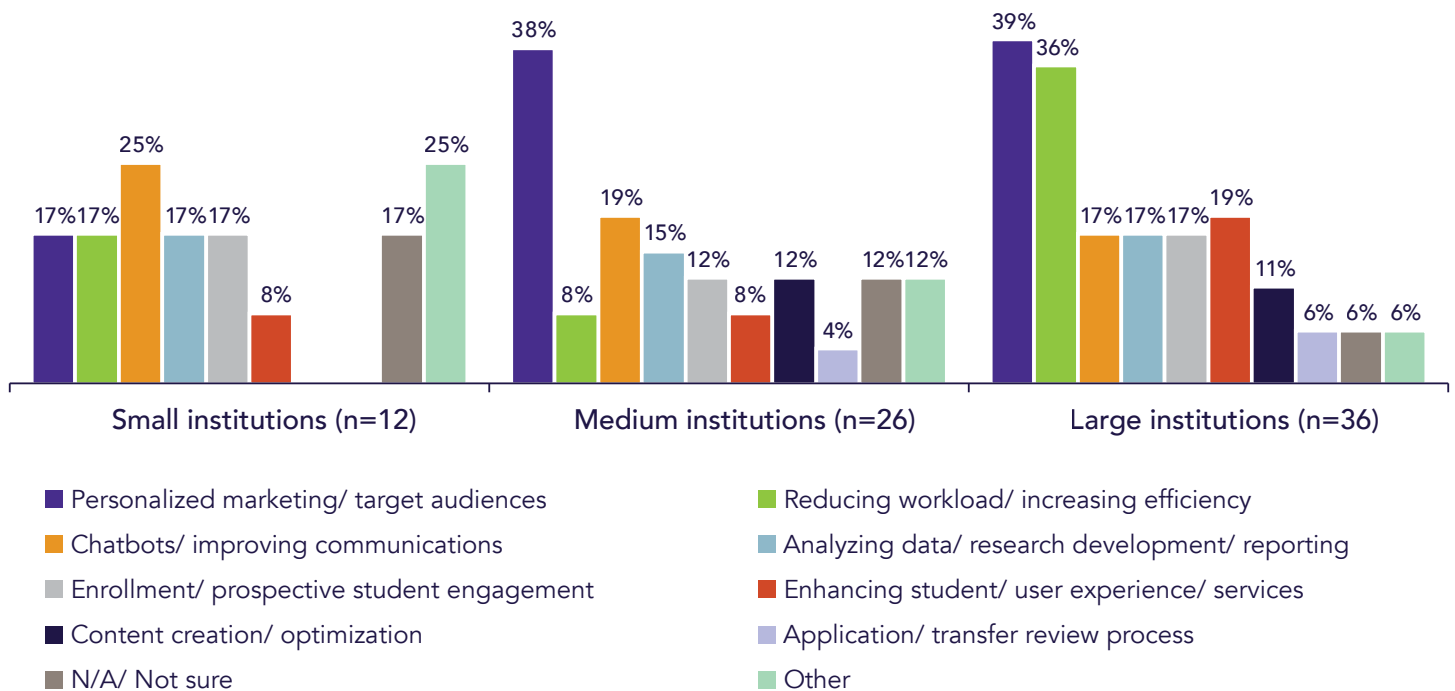


Appendix: Key Responses by Institution Size

Perceived Opportunities by Institution Size

Three of the 12 survey participants from small institutions (25%) considered chatbots/improving communications as the greatest area of opportunity for adopting AI-driven technology in marketing and enrollment. Those from medium (38%) and large (39%) institutions cited personalized marketing/target audiences, and those from large institutions listed reducing workload/increasing efficiency (36%), much more than those from the other groups.

Figure 20: What do you see as the greatest area of opportunity for adopting AI-driven technology in marketing and enrollment at your institution? By Institution Size



Impediments to Adoption by Institution Size

For participants from all institution sizes, lack of resources/time/money is the greatest challenge in adopting AI-driven technology in marketing and enrollment at their institution. Those from small institutions also cite buy-in from senior leadership, while those from large institutions were more likely to cite privacy concerns/security risks/data issues.

Figure 21: What do you see as the greatest challenge in adopting AI-driven technology in marketing and enrollment at your institution? By Institution Size

