

# Strategic Solutions: Overcoming Lead and Application Generation Hurdles, Website Glitches, Outreach Team Challenges, and Multi-Location/ Division Complexities

**Bella Margarian**  
Cambridge College  
500 Rutherford Ave.  
Boston, MA 02129, USA

**Abstract**—This research paper delves into the intricacies and challenges associated with admissions processes in higher education. The study particularly focuses on managing the application processes for online programs and multiple locations. The research addresses critical concerns pertaining to online applications, round-robin inquiry distribution, external recruitment, and website accessibility for different programs. By conducting a detailed analysis, this research article offers practical solutions that institutions can implement to enhance efficiency, streamline application processes, and ensure more equitable lead distribution. Adopting these solutions can result in a positive experience for prospective students and lead to successful enrollment outcomes.

**Keywords**—Admissions processes, Multiple locations, Application challenges, Round-robin inquiry distribution, External recruitment, Website accessibility, Transparency, Lead distribution metrics

## Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions were faced with the challenge of meeting the requirements of a rapidly changing educational landscape. To ensure the safety of students and facilitate continuity of learning, colleges and universities had to expedite their transition to online curricula, resulting in a significant shift towards hybrid and online programs and divisions [1]. This transition, while successful in many respects, was not without its challenges, including logistical issues.

To bridge the educational gap created by the pandemic, institutions of higher education increased the quantity and quality of online courses and introduced online programs and divisions to complement their traditional infrastructure. This provided potential students with a wider range of options to choose from within the same institutions [2].

However, this also raised critical issues in the administrative division, particularly in the admissions process, as institutions had to manage a delicate balance between their multiple locations and online programs. Building on these experiences resulting from the pandemic period, the institutions of higher education started online programs and divisions parallel to their hybrid and traditional infrastructure to fill up the gaps and capitalize on financial and labor investments made. This gave prospective students options to choose different education formats inside the same institutions.

The landscape of higher education, especially admissions, is ever-evolving, with institutions managing a delicate balance between multiple locations and online programs. This comprehensive research paper seeks to explore critical observations and complexities, delve into the intricacies of workflows, and propose actionable solutions to refine application processes, ensure equitable lead distribution, and bolster overall efficiency in the admissions domain.

The research employs a qualitative analysis of admissions processes, including a thorough examination of current workflows, system settings, and outcomes of external recruitment activities. Information is collected through staff interviews, system evaluations, and an examination of lead distribution metrics.

This manuscript aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and proposes detailed solutions and ultimately contribute to smooth flow of enrollment efforts in higher education institutions.

## I. Findings

In the face of shifting educational landscapes, managing multiple locations and online programs poses a number of intricate challenges for higher education institutions. Such challenges can reveal conflicts of interest that may impact the focused

efforts of the admissions team and the admissions processes.

Moreover, online application processes can present critical concerns, including the permissibility of multiple and unnecessary documents, accessibility issues for programs, and the assignment of applications to incorrect programs. Additionally, the distribution of inquiries through the round-robin system and external recruitment processes, as well as the lack of transparency and oversight, can make the admissions process overwhelmingly challenging.

The following section of the manuscript aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and proposes detailed solutions to refine admissions workflows, ensure consistency, and ultimately contribute to the success of enrollment efforts in higher education institutions.

#### A. *Overseeing the multi-locations and divisions*

It is crucial to consider the possibility of a conflict of interest when a supervisor oversees multiple programs, divisions, and locations simultaneously. This dynamic can lead to a variety of issues, such as inquiries, applications, and other essential matters being disproportionately "redirected" to a particular team due to preferential treatment. This can create multifaceted challenges like disparities in staffing, technical resources, steering opportunities, and benefits, and would adversely affect the success of a neglected team/ area, creating a divisive atmosphere, and negatively impacting morale and cohesion among teams.

To ensure that all programs and divisions receive equal attention and enrollment is maximized, a more nuanced approach becomes imperative. This would involve dividing responsibilities and having a dedicated person for each location or division. This dedicated person would be responsible for identifying the unique needs of their area and developing tailored strategies to address those needs. This approach would help in building a better relationship with local students, which would ultimately lead to higher enrollment numbers.

By implementing this approach, processes would be streamlined, and all programs would benefit equally. Each team would have a greater focus on specific locations, programs, or divisions, leading to greater success for all. This, in turn, contributes to higher enrollment numbers as strategies are fine-tuned to align with the specific needs and preferences of the local demographic. Moreover, having a dedicated person responsible for each area would help in identifying and addressing any issues or challenges

that may arise, leading to a smoother and more effective operation, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful student recruitment.

Implementing this focused approach not only ensures that all programs receive equal attention but also streamlines processes for improved efficiency. Each team, with a designated focus on specific locations, programs, or divisions, can operate more effectively, leading to collective success. This approach facilitates a more balanced distribution of efforts and resources, contributing to the overall success of the institution. This strategy enhances the institution's ability to navigate the complexities of diverse programs while fostering a culture of inclusivity and effectiveness.

#### B. *Addressing Critical Concerns in Online Application*

Issue I: Challenges could arise due to different application requirements for different programs/divisions. The inclusion of superfluous documents, such as multiple references, in the online application system presents a challenge for prospective students. The permissibility of uploading unnecessary and non-mandatory documents leads to an overwhelming and unintended complicated process, which may result in inconsistencies and ultimately lead to dissatisfaction among prospective students.

##### Proposed Solutions:

- Review and update system settings. Conduct an evaluation of the online application system settings to limit the number of references and allowed and mandatory documents for graduate/undergraduate applicants to align with program requirements.
- Clarify application requirements. Clearly communicate the application requirements for each program on the application portal, minimizing any discrepancies between program/division expectations.
- Implement User-Friendly Guidelines. Provide step-by-step guidelines within the application system, guiding students on the submission of required materials and avoiding unnecessary uploads.

Issue II: Accessibility: A technical glitch affecting the drop-down box functionality could impede prospective students' access to specific and necessary information.

This would pose a significant challenge for prospective students who are interested. This not only hinders their ability to find relevant information but may also discourage potential applicants from pursuing opportunities.

**Proposed Solution:**

To rectify this, a comprehensive review of the website's user interface, with a specific focus on enhancing the accessibility of the drop-down box for all programs, all locations and divisions. This immediate action aims to create a seamless experience for prospective students navigating the website and ensure that they can easily find the information they need.

Issue III: Incorrect assignment of applications: Applications being incorrectly assigned to a team instead of the other could result in confusion for students and counselors.

**Proposed Solution:**

Implementing corrective measures within the online application system.

These measures should be designed to ensure that assignments are made accurately based on a variety of factors, including program, degree level, and semester. By doing so, not only will confusion be minimized, but the overall application process will be expedited as well.

### *C. Comprehensive Review and Resolution Needed for Round Robin Inquiries*

-The proliferation of systems-generated duplicates results in a host of challenges for the admissions process. Specifically, these duplicates would cause inefficiency, confusion, and a negative impact on lead quality.

-Duplicate inquiries, multiplies the workload of admissions staff. Each duplicate requires attention, leading to redundant efforts and a drain on resources.

-Handling duplicate inquiries introduces a risk of errors and confusion. Admissions officers may inadvertently treat the same inquiry multiple times, impacting the accuracy of records and potentially causing communication mishaps.

-The inefficiency extends beyond time and effort; it also results in a wastage of valuable resources.

Staff spend considerable time sorting through duplicates instead of focusing on more strategic aspects of the admissions process.

-Duplicates may lead to redundant communications with prospective students, creating a suboptimal experience. Such students may feel frustrated or overlooked if they receive the same information repeatedly.

-Inconsistent lead quality, including missing phone numbers or email address. The inconsistency in lead quality indicates a lack of standardization in the information gathered from prospective students. Some leads may contain comprehensive details, while others may be incomplete or missing critical information.

-Unfair lead distribution. The issue involves the existing lead distribution system exhibiting disparities, particularly favoring certain regions, demographics, or categories of inquiries over others. Counselors do not receive leads in a fair and equitable manner. The unfairness is more pronounced in the distribution of international inquiries due to the complication and requirement of the paperwork. These inquiries may not be allocated equitably, potentially leading to neglect of valuable prospective students from diverse geographic locations.

-Faculty-generated leads directed to a specific counselor rather than being distributed via the round-robin system. The failure to channel leads generated by faculty through the round-robin system exacerbates the existing challenge of unequal lead distribution among counselors. Certain counselors may receive a disproportionate number of leads, while others may be overlooked. When faculty-generated leads bypass the established round-robin system, it creates a scenario where counselors may not have an equal opportunity to engage with prospective students. This leads to disparities in workload and potentially uneven enrollment outcomes.

-Uncertainty regarding the sources of the external lead: Its not easy to determine if leads generated through website chats or external sources are entering the round-robin system as there is a lack of reporting mechanisms. This uncertainty causes difficulties in accurately tracking leads and may lead to missed opportunities for engaging with prospective students.

**Proposed Solutions:**

-Address the supervisory communication gap by emphasizing the importance of clear guidance. Supervisors should provide explicit directives to faculty members regarding the necessity for all leads to go through the round-robin system. This clarity ensures consistency and adherence to institutional lead distribution policies.

-Enforce round-robin Inclusion: Strengthen the enforcement of round-robin inclusion for all leads, including those generated by faculty. This ensures that each counselor has an equitable opportunity to engage with a diverse pool of prospective students.

-Strengthen the system's data validation mechanisms to identify and prevent the creation of duplicate inquiries. This may involve implementing more robust algorithms or introducing additional checks during data entry.

-Ensure consistent lead quality: Introduce data validation processes to maintain a consistent and high-quality lead pool.

-Establish fair lead distribution: Integrate a transparent lead distribution mechanism to ensure equitable distribution among counselors without bias taking into account factors such as geographic diversity, program preferences, and other relevant criteria.

-Integrate faculty-generated leads: Develop a system to seamlessly integrate leads generated by faculty into the round-robin distribution process.

-Make certain fields, especially those containing critical information like phone numbers, mandatory in inquiry forms. This ensures that incomplete forms are flagged and prevents the submission of inadequate data.

-Transparent distribution and reporting policies: Clearly communicate the lead distribution policies to all stakeholders, including admissions staff, faculty, and prospective students. Transparency helps build trust and demonstrates the institution's commitment to fair and equitable practices. The reports and data should be regularly shared with counselors to maintain accountability and address any disparities promptly.

#### *D. Addressing inefficiencies and lack of reporting in external recruitment processes*

-Lack of a dedicated team for external outreach. This deficiency hinders the ability to engage effectively with external stakeholders, such as high schools, community organizations, businesses and prospective students.

-Absence of reporting mechanisms for outreach outcomes. The absence of a clear reporting structure leaves the institution's ability to quantify the outcomes of its efforts, hindering the assessment of the cost-effectiveness of various outreach strategies. Admissions team do not receive statistics or insights into the success of these initiatives. This would hinder their ability to measure their impact on lead generation and enrollment. Without a systematic reporting framework, it becomes challenging to identify which outreach approaches are most successful. Institution may miss valuable insights into what resonates with external stakeholders, making it difficult to refine and replicate effective strategies.

-Limited oversight and accountability in the external recruitment process. If the external recruitment process lacks the necessary oversight and accountability measures, making it challenging to evaluate its effectiveness and contribute to informed decision-making.

#### Proposed Solutions:

-Define and prioritize key performance indicators (KPIs) relevant to outreach goals. Clearly articulated KPIs enable the institution to measure success, track progress, and align outreach efforts with broader strategic objectives.

-Implement robust reporting mechanisms: Reporting mechanisms are essential for measuring the return on investment (ROI) in external outreach initiatives. Develop comprehensive reporting mechanisms to provide insights into the outcomes of external

outreach activities. This report should include data on engagement levels, partnership outcomes, and any tangible impacts on student recruitment and community relations.

-Enhance oversight and accountability: Introduce stringent oversight and accountability measures to evaluate the effectiveness of external recruitment initiatives.

-Establishment of clear outreach goals: Define clear goals for the outreach team to align their efforts with the institution's objectives. These goals could include increasing awareness, fostering partnerships, and enhancing the institution's reputation within the community.

-Provide specialized training for the outreach team to equip them with the skills needed for effective external engagement. This training should include strategies for building partnerships, conducting presentations, tailoring communication based on the audience, effective data collection practices. Equip team members with the skills needed to capture relevant information during engagements, ensuring accurate and comprehensive reporting.

-Collaboration with admissions team: Foster collaboration between the specialized outreach team and the general admissions team. This collaboration ensures a cohesive approach to student recruitment, where the outreach team can feed valuable insights and leads to the admissions team for follow-up.

#### *E. Addressing Accessibility Issues on Website for Specific location and Programs*

-Inaccessible drop-down box for programs in specific location and division. While this technical issue could be primitive but would hamper the students ability to navigate and explore the various programs offered.

-Negative impact on inquiries and student enrollment. If prospective students encounter difficulties in accessing information about programs they would less likely to submit inquiries and application. This directly hinder the potential for student enrollment.

#### Proposed Solution:

Comprehensive website review: Conduct an immediate and comprehensive review of the website's user interface, specifically focusing on enhancing the accessibility of the drop-down box for all programs and locations. This proactive step aims to improve the overall user experience and positively impact inquiry generation and student enrollment.

#### Conclusion

By addressing the communication gap at the supervisory level, the unequal lead distribution, dedicated outreach team with strong presence in the

community and monitoring the system, the institution can foster a more inclusive and effective admissions process, ensuring that each counselor has an equitable opportunity to contribute to the enrollment goals.

By addressing limited oversight and accountability through these proposed resolutions, the institution can foster a more organized, efficient, and effective external recruitment process. This, in turn, contributes to a cohesive team dynamic and improves the overall success of recruitment initiatives.

Strategic decision-making relies on data-driven insights. The absence of reporting mechanisms deprives decision-makers of essential information, limiting their ability to make informed choices about resource allocation, target audiences, and the overall direction of outreach efforts.

This manuscript critically examined the challenges within higher education admissions and provided detailed recommendations to enhance efficiency, streamline application processes, and ensure equitable lead distribution. By implementing these solutions, institutions can navigate the complexities of admissions with agility, contributing to a positive experience for prospective students and fostering successful enrollment outcomes.

#### REFERENCES

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