“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices
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Learning Objectives:

■ “Concierge concept” of identifying graduate adult learners' potential enrollment needs and concerns

■ Customize the process with curated questions to qualify and engage various graduate prospect personae

■ Cultivate progression of graduate prospects with win-win choices for contact engagement
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

About Mercer University & The Tift College of Education

Why Do This? A Look at Then and Now

Contact Choices & Curated Questions

Key Learning and Lingering Issues
About Mercer University and Tift College of Education

Restructuring Higher Education for the Future, Transforming the Traditional College into the Non-Traditional College
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Mercer University

Mission:
To teach, to learn, to create, to discover, to inspire, to empower and to serve.

Vision:
To change the world, one student at a time.

Our “Why”:
Because the world needs more Mercerians.
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices
The Georgia Education Market

- 180 County and City School Systems, 2299 Schools
- 119 Charter Schools
- Approximately 12,000+ Center-Based and Home-Based Child Care Facilities
- 130+ Private, Independent and Parochial Schools
- 38 Private Colleges & Universities
- 26 State Colleges & Universities
- 22 Technical Colleges
- 19 For-Profit Colleges
- 1 Military College

Georgia County Map

Georgia Institutions
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

Now (2015 – 2020)
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

- Enrollment Management
  - Marketing Communications
  - Admissions Team
  - Community Relations Rep

- Faculty
  - Associate Deans and Chairs
  - Program Directors
  - Administrative Personnel

- Prospect Personae
  - Career Starters and Advancers
  - Career Changers or Re-Careering Individuals
  - Aspiring Leaders

- Regulators
  - Accreditors
  - Departments of Education
  - Professional Standards Commission
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

Age Range Comparison of Undergraduate and Graduate TCOE Students
Adopted a Contact Qualifying Strategy: THATIS

- T: So, **Tell me all about you, and why you’re thinking of heading back to school.**
- H: **How did you Hear about Mercer?**
- A: (Academics) **What schools have you Attended? What is your Academic background?**
- T: **Tell me what you know of Tuition and financial planning?**
- I: To see if the program is a good fit, you’re **Invited to our next Info session on ____**.
- S: To **Start in the fall/spring/summer, your first steps** are to explore the website & info we send you, come to the info session, and start your paperwork.
Why Do This?
A Look at Then and Now

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**True North**
Mission, Vision, Ethical Values-Based Leadership, Academically Qualified, Financially-Prepared Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010-2015</th>
<th>2015-2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Economy &amp; Education Enrollment</td>
<td>Elevating Teaching Profession / CAEP Standards / More Prescriptiveness by GaPSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Reorganization(s)</td>
<td>New University Strategic Plan &amp; Dean</td>
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<td>Tift Dean Changes</td>
<td>Enrollment Census &amp; Retention</td>
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<td>SIS Replacement</td>
<td>Increased Technology Tools and Stealth Applications</td>
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<td>Certification Rules</td>
<td>Curriculum and Program Changes</td>
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<td>Program Format Changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding &amp; Financial Aid</td>
<td></td>
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“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

“I Think I Want to Teach”

- Georgia Professional Standards Commission (abbrev. GaPSC; gapsc.com)
- Prospective Educators link
- Steps to Become A Georgia Teacher
- How Can I Become Certified in Georgia?

Approved Program Providers, (Traditional or Alternative), then:

- Cumulative GPA of 2.5, preferably 3.0.
- Passing scores on GACE Program Admission Assessment
- GACE Educator Ethics Entry Assessment

Transitioning from:

- Another Career
- Provisional Certification
- Another State
- Which Route Is Best?

Unpaid Field Experiences:

- Pre-Practicum, Practicum
- Student Teaching or Internship,
- EdTPA, Certification of Eligibility, and Induction Certificates
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

- Converse To Put Them At Ease; Invite Them To Tell Their Story
- Actively Listen, Probe, Take Notes. Listen For:
  - The Why (Current Situation/Desired Situation)
  - Possible Issues (Affordability, Fear, Myths, Fit)
  - Qualifications (Academics, Experience, Credentials)
- Encourage Or Reassure
- Plan! Call To Action, Confirm
- Mood Check For Excitement And Urgency
"So, Tell Me All About You": Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry Call Openers:</th>
<th>Listen-Respond</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Um, when do classes start?”</td>
<td>So, tell me about you and what has you interested in [program of study]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you located?</td>
<td>How did you hear about Mercer University?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I sign up for classes?</td>
<td>Tell me about your plans for graduate school [or going back to school]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much does your program cost?</td>
<td>What do you know about [applying, financial aid, etc..] and what would you like to know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When is the deadline to apply?</td>
<td>[Repeat issue to confirm], tell me more about that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do y’all offer [program of study]?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you offer online classes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enrollment happens, or not, for a host of reasons

Career prospects or personal motivations may spark interest, but finances, family obligations, and even fear can keep them from college

Many of them, but they’re not low-hanging fruit, as they are often portrayed

Prior experience may mean academic and financial obstacles (holds)

First Generation Adults harder to reach, and are often unfamiliar with the mores of higher education

Enrolled adult students have different needs: need help with academic tutoring, study skills, financial literacy, child care, or food security

And all of them will “expect college to leave them better off than before.”

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High-profile Reform Policies Diminishing the Teaching Profession:

1. value-added models,
2. fast-track teacher preparation and licensure, and,
3. scripted, narrowed curricula

“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

- **Practice # 1:** Engage prospects on their own terms: Be persistent and consistent. Prospective adult learners cycle through consideration of programs at varying times and for varying reasons.

- **Practice #2:** Establish clear urgency: Remind them of deadlines. On average, nearly 39% of adult learner applications are submitted in response to a deadline-oriented communication.

- **Practice # 3:** Prioritize mobile access: 38% of adult learners research programs and/or apply on their smartphones or tablets.
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

- **Practice #4:** *Widen your focus:* Know that adult learner students change their minds—and change them even more than you might expect.

- **Practice #5:** *Leave no one behind:* Reach out to a greater range of potential students, and do so earlier in the process to allow time to cultivate meaningful relationships with your future applicants.

Contact Choices & Curated Questions

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Contact Choices

- Call Routing Recording with Voicemail to Email (Cisco PBX Feature)
- Radius Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) with Communication Plan Automation; Note and Task Tracking, Reporting
- Short Cycle Communication Blasts via Text and Email (Mongoose and MailChimp)
- Brief Intake Questions on Inquiry Forms (Hobsons Radius)
- Brief Intake Questions on Self-Select Appointment Calendars for Phone, Office, Video, or Text (Acuity Scheduling and Zoom)
- Specific Post-Traditional Student Web Landing Page with Story Videos and Testimonials (mercerforyou.com)
- Interactive Web Chat with Default to Email (SnapEngage)
“So, Tell Me All About You”:
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Curated Questions

- Simplifying Self Selection: Initial Teacher Preparation, Advanced Teacher Professional Learning/Certification, And Educational Leadership By Color
- Brief Intake Questions On Digital Inquiry Forms
- Brief Intake Questions On Self-select Appointment Calendars For Phone, Office, Video, Or Text
- Specific Post-traditional Student Web Landing Page With Story Videos And Testimonials
- Interactive Web Chat With Default To Email
- Information Sessions On Campus Or Via Video
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INTAKE FORM NAME:  (Admissions Counseling Tailored For You!)

INTRO: Let's save you time! Consider these discussion points before we meet. What is your story regarding returning to school? For what occupation are you preparing or seeking further professional learning? *

If you are employed, with whom are you employed and what is your role? If you're seeking to change careers, for what position do you plan to prepare? *

Where have you attended college or earned college credit before? How was your previous academic performance and what is your estimated grade point average? *
“So, Tell Me All About You”:
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via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

- When do you see yourself starting classes? Are you familiar with the application process or would you like some help? *
  - Next Available Start Opportunity/I Am Ready To Apply
  - Within Six Months/I Might Need Application Help
  - Unsure/I Need Help With Application Process

- What is your financial plan for college? What do you know, and what do you want to know, about Financial Aid? *
  - Loans/Payment Plan
  - Tuition Assistance/Military Tuition Benefit
  - Combination of Grants/Loans/Direct Payment

* Indicates a response is required
“So, Tell Me All About You”:
Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

- What are your top concerns about returning to school? *
  - Cost/Finances/Financial Aid/Debt,
  - Time/Scheduling/Over-commitment,
  - Academic Success/Can I Keep Up?/Is This Program Right For Me?

INTAKE FORM NAME: (Initial Teacher Certification Counseling Tailored For You!)

- Are you teaching with a provisional certificate today or are you preparing to enter teacher preparation first? If provisionally certified, when was it issued and with which school or school district are you employed?
Please check below if you have completed these initial requirements from the GaPSC website:

- I have confirmed my cumulative undergraduate grade point average is at least a 2.5,
- I have completed the Georgia Educator Ethics Assessment Program Entrance Test 350
- I have successfully completed the GACE Program Admission Assessment (Reading/Mathematics/Writing) OR am prepared to provide exemption documentation with ACT Scores (43 English and Math) SAT Scores (1000 Verbal/Critical Reading & Math), or GRE scores (1030 Verbal and Quantitative after 8/1/11 297 Verbal and Quantitative)

For which teaching certification category are you preparing?

- Elementary education (pre-kindergarten through 5th grade)
- Middle Grades Education (4th grade through 8th grade in two subject areas)
- Secondary Education (6th grade through 12th grade in one Subject area closely linked to undergraduate degree major)
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

Extended THATIS to Digital Inquiry and Appointment Forms
Key Learning and Lingering Issues

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- Prospects Need to Tell Their Story – Let Them. In Fact, Encourage Them!
- Cultivating Qualified Inquiries Is More Productive
- Focus on Improving Prospects’ Access To You Vs. Completing Activities & Tasks
- Create Flow from Stealth to Engaged Inquiry to Applicant to Admit to Orientation to Matriculation
- Keep the Technology Simple and User-Friendly
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

Lingering Issues

- Online research for how to become a teacher in Georgia is complex
- Prospects can be Mercer-eligible, but not GaPSC-eligible
- Prospects can be GaPSC-eligible, but not a good fit for Mercer
- Conversion of Inquiry to Enrolled Standard for graduate students is 15%, per Noel Levitz. Mercer performs annually at around 16%-17%.
- Opportunity Cost of Unpaid Student Teaching
- Reaching Provisionally-Certified Teachers Before Their Deadline
- Tracking Outcomes of Employed Teachers
“So, Tell Me All About You”: Improving Engagement With Post-Traditional Students via Curated Questions and Contact Choices

- Concierge: meaningful engagement, subject matter expertise, anticipating needs
- Curated questions: understanding the prospect personae, inbound marketing, navigating difficult conversations earlier
- Contact choices: commitment to meet prospects where they are, in the time they have, via any possible means.
- Questions?
Your presenter

Tracey M. Wofford, Ph.D.
Director of Graduate Admissions
Tift College of Education

Telephone Appointment
Office Appointment

p: 678.547.6422 m: 404.354.7386
w: mercerforyou.com

a: 3001 Mercer University Dr., B/E Bldg., Rm. 127A, Atlanta, GA 30341

Thanks for Attending!!