

How a University Successfully Differentiated Itself from its Peers



CHALLENGE

Due to the rise in interest in online degree programs, especially in Nursing, a premier university wanted to understand awareness, accelerants, and obstacles that current and prospective Nursing students would face when considering different BSN programs.

SOLUTION

This university program partnered with Vennli to understand how prospective Nursing students would make choices concerning the advancement of their education. By using software and services, the university was able to gather insights about what is important to Nursing students and how they choose between competing Nursing programs.

KEY INSIGHTS TO DRIVE ACTION

In order to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive market, this university needed to understand how prospective students were making their choices and how it compared to competitors.

Research showed that the availability of scholarships and financial aid was one of the most important choice factors to students who are looking into BSN programs. Another important choice factor was the ability to start coursework shortly after acceptance, giving students a sense of a head start.

The type of environment that students look for in a BSN program was also an important factor. Learning in a simulated real-world environment was a much more appealing attribute of a BSN program compared to the access to cutting-edge technology or undertaking research in modern facilities.

Important differences were discovered amongst segments of applicants based on level of interest in Nursing programs. For example, those who are looking for information on BSN programs and are earlier in their decision journey are more likely to seek advice from friends, family, and colleagues in the industry. This is also affected by age considering that people who are aged 18-24 are most likely to be either enrolled or considering a BSN but have not started searching compared to those who are 25 and older and are more likely to be actively researching and applying to programs.

Competitive Differentiation Heatmap

Factor Importance (Top 2 Box %)	Choice Factors	Client	Competitor A	Competitor B	Competitor C	Competitor D	Client Competitive Advantage/Disadvantage
		n=147	n=53	n=35	n=15	n=9	
95%	Able to start coursework shortly after acceptance	93%	58%	69%	93%	67%	Client Advantage
95%	Availability of scholarships and financial aid	68%	83%	86%	80%	67%	Client Disadvantage
94%	High employment rates for graduates	68%	70%	97%	93%	67%	Client Disadvantage
93%	High variety of clinical placements	65%	74%	86%	100%	56%	Client Disadvantage
93%	Simulated real world learning environment	82%	77%	80%	73%	56%	Client Advantage
91%	Modern facilities and classrooms	57%	52%	51%	53%	57%	Unmet Need
89%	Faculty are well respected in their field	78%	81%	80%	100%	78%	Neutral
87%	Ability to transfer credits from another accredited institution	69%	83%	89%	93%	78%	Client Disadvantage
87%	A CCNE accredited program	86%	75%	89%	87%	78%	Neutral
87%	Low cost of tuition	34%	53%	77%	40%	56%	Client Disadvantage
85%	Ability to take courses online and in person	78%	77%	80%	73%	78%	Neutral
82%	Higher than average income for graduates	52%	64%	69%	80%	78%	Neutral
69%	Low faculty to student ratio	67%	43%	60%	80%	56%	Neutral



RESULTS

These insights made it possible for the university to see what factors are most important to prospective students. As a result, the university was able to make changes that benefit the students while also being able to withstand increased competition due to the rising interest in online programs.