

# Which Applicants will become Engaged Alumni?

## The Psychographics of Student Recruitment

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## Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Psychographics Research
3. Applicant Recruitment
4. Student Engagement
5. Alumni Affinity
6. Questions / Discussion

# Introduction

## *Part 1*

# Exploratory Research

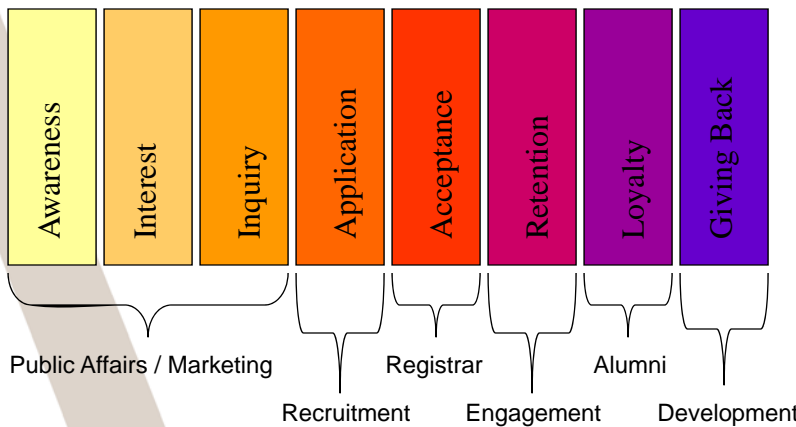
- 12 years ago, we pushed the envelope by applying quantitative consumer research to university applicants
- Now, charting new territory applying psychographic segmentation
- Integrating applicant recruitment, student engagement, and alumni affinity
- Data today is suggestive, but still preliminary
- Hope to hear your reactions, ideas

# The Student Continuum



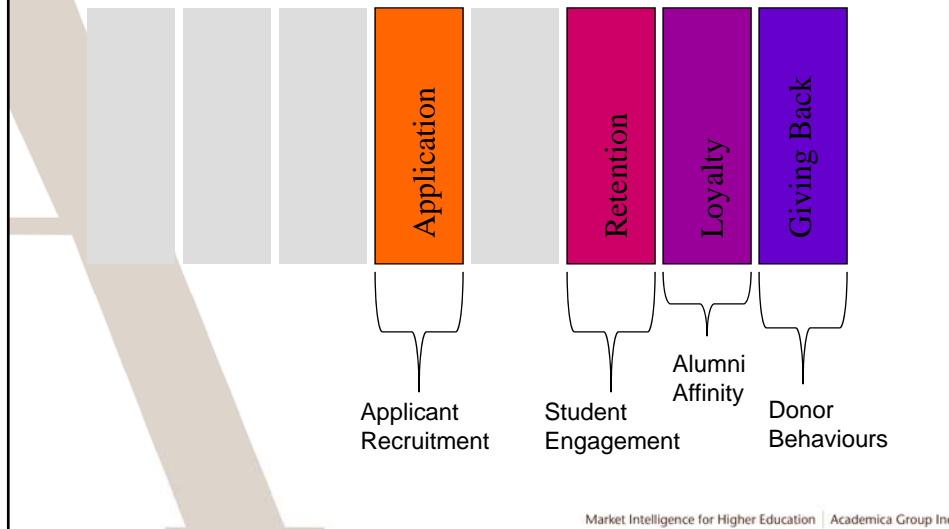
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# The Student Continuum



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# The Student Continuum



# Integrative Research



- Applicant recruitment influences Student engagement, which influences Alumni affinity, which influences Donor behaviours
- Consistent research cycle over time will provide integrative understanding
- Insights for recruitment messaging, student services, alumni relations, and development

# Psychographics Research

## *Part 2*

“To understand the heart and mind of a person, look not at what he has already achieved, but at what he aspires to do.”

-- Kahlil Gibran

## “What he aspires to do”



- Applicant motivation *predicts* student engagement and success
- Alumni affinity *predicts* support even before wealth provides them with the capacity to give

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## Motivations



- SMAU Psychometric Scale (Student Motivations for Attending University)
- Developed by two Canadian sociologists, Dr. James Côté & Charles Levine, 10 years ago
- Studying the bilateral interaction of student motivations and learning environments on learning outcomes
- Factor analytic techniques defined an empirical typology of 5 motivations for pursuing PSE

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# Motivations



5 SMAU subscales (5 questions each):

1. Careerist / Materialist
2. Personal / Intellectual Development
3. Humanitarian
4. Expectation Driven
5. Default

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# Careerist



University is...

- “a practical means for me to achieve personal success.”
- “a way to learn specific skills that can help me to earn more money.”
- “a way by which I can achieve a position of higher status in society.”

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# Personal Development



University...

- “will be satisfying because it will give me the opportunity to study and learn.”
- “will provide a setting for me to develop myself personally.”
- “will be a setting that will allow me to improve my intellectual capacity.”

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# Humanitarian



- “My education should enable me to help people who are less fortunate.”
- “I intend to use my education to contribute to the improvement of the human condition.”
- “Through my education, I believe I can make meaningful changes to ‘the system.’”

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## Expectation



- “My parents would be very disappointed in me if I didn’t get a university degree.”
- “There are considerable pressures on me from my friends / family to get a university degree.”
- “I basically have no choice but to go to university.”

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## Default



- “I don’t think I’ll get anything out of university, but it beats the alternatives.”
- “I’m going to university basically because there are few other options.”
- “I often ask myself why I’m going to university.”

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## Motivations



- Côté & Levine found only 33% of university students were pure types
- Most students have mixed motivations
- On a scale of 1 to 5, various intensities of motivation can be measured

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## PROI



- Our psychographic research also applies new research into Perceived ROI of PSE
- Rod Skinkle, James Côté
- National studies funded by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation
- Modelling how people conceptualize the financial and intangible ROI of higher education

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## PROI



- Perceived Monetary Benefits
  - Salary gain over high school education
- Perceived Non-monetary Benefits
  - Personal gains in job quality and prestige
- Perceived Monetary Costs
  - outlay in relation to return; debt accumulation
- Perceived Non-monetary Costs
  - personal adjustments with significant others that threaten identity and comfort zones

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## Applications



- Social policy research: PSE participation, persistence/retention, funding access
- Academica is developing technology to bring psychographics to university and college websites
- Focused brand positioning
- Enhanced recruitment strategies

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# Applicant Recruitment

## *Part 3*

# Applicant Surveys

- UAS since 1997, CAS since 2003
- Academica surveys 100,000 applicants across Canada every spring
- Statistics drawn from 2006 UAS, about 12,000 respondents, Ontario, Atlantic provinces, and prairies

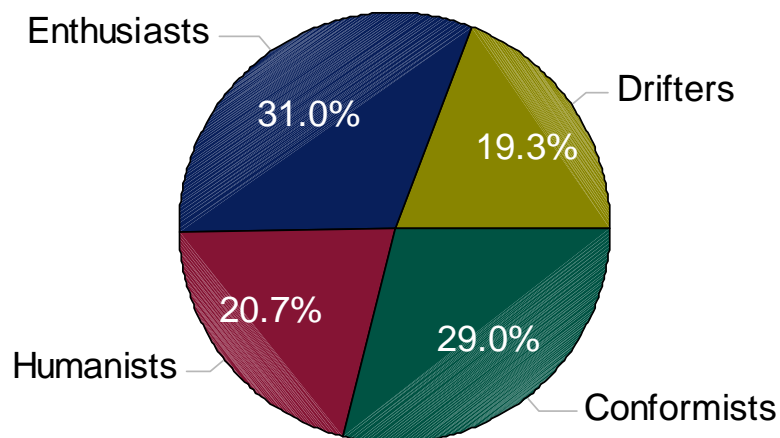
# Psychometrics



- Using SMAU and PROI scores, cluster analysis has identified four major, distinct psychographic groups
- The four segments differ **significantly** from each other on their demographics, decision process, and use of university information sources — and they also transcend high school grade averages

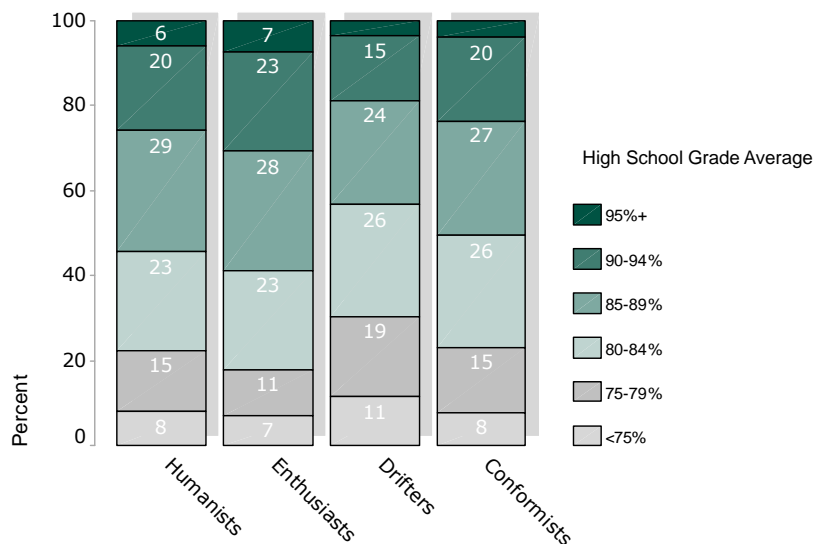
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# Psychographics



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# Psychographics



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## Enthusiasts (31%)



- Highly motivated by careerism, expectation, and personal development, High PROI
- Youngest, most mobile, less price sensitive
- Sciences, engineering, business
- More influenced by Family recommendation, *Maclean's* rankings

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## Enthusiasts (31%)

- Attracted to abstract, aspirational themes connoting excellence
- Really liked “Excellence. Innovation. Discovery.”
- Less attracted to slogans evoking creativity, experiential learning, or teamwork

## Conformists (29%)

- Expectation driven, Default, Fairly low PROI
- Less emphasis on extracurriculars, peers
- Younger, more likely commuter students
- Parents highly educated, often visible minority
- Sciences, applied sciences, engineering, commerce/business

## Conformists (29%)

- Liked “One world. Many futures” more than other groups
- Least attracted to “change the world” messages

## Humanists (21%)

- Altruistic, Internally motivated, High PROI
- *Far* less expectation-driven
- More influenced by personal contact, especially want to meet profs, not students
- More female, slightly older, smaller towns
- Fine/applied arts, or social sciences
- More influenced by extracurriculars, small class sizes, student experience
- Likely to be engaged with classmates
- Less influenced by most media, opinions of others

## Humanists (21%)

- Artsy, altruistic group
- More receptive to messages about teamwork, creativity, potential to effect change
- Liked “Working together. Building our Future.”
- Less receptive to messages emphasizing practical experience.

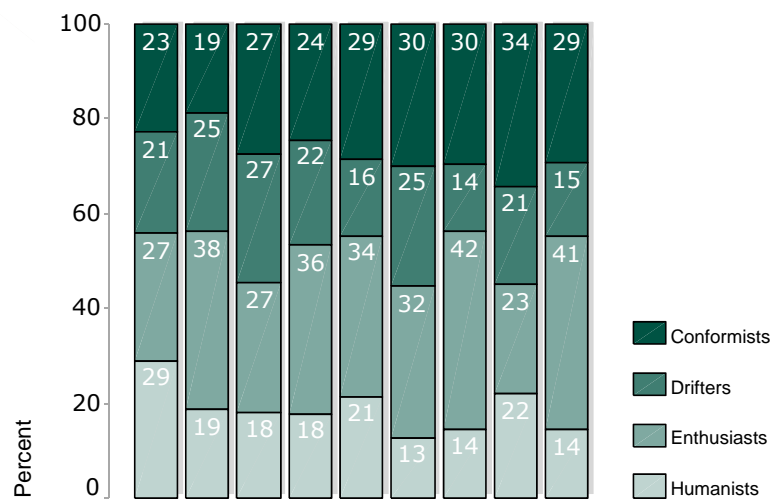
## Drifters (19%)

- Default motivation, virtually *zero* PROI
- More male, may have taken a gap year
- Most likely to be commuters
- Computer sciences, math, business/commerce
- Most likely group to apply to a university because their friends did
- More influenced by proximity to home, athletic teams, phone call from the university

## Drifters (19%)

- Attracted by more concrete, personal messages regarding experience, science
- Liked “Learn from Experience”
- More likely to respond positively to directive messages (“You Belong Here” and “Change your Life for Good”)
- Less attracted to teamwork messages

## Different Universities



# Applications



- Applicant research helps client institutions refine recruitment messaging, branding, media
- Some have made capital investments like new residences, facilities based on UAS results
- Psychographics: a religious-affiliated liberal arts college, seeking to attract more Humanist applicants, basing its brand positioning around altruism, changing the world
- So what happens when applicants become students?

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# Student Engagement

## *Part 4*



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## Motivation & Success



Dr. James E. Côté & Charles Levine:

“Student Motivations, Learning Environments, and Human Capital Acquisition: Toward an Integrated Paradigm of Student Development”

*Journal of College Student Development*  
May/June 1997

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## Motivation & Success



- Côté & Levine studied Canadian university students in 1<sup>st</sup> year and again in 3<sup>rd</sup> year
- Found that motivation scores did **not** change significantly (except for a decline in Careerism)
- Careerism and Personal Development motivations predicted self-management and motivation skills

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## Motivation & Success



- Personal Development and Humanitarian motivations predicted academic success better than high school grades
- Careerism, Expectation motivations had no bearing on academic success
- Default motivation was a negative predictor of academic success

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## Nurturance



- Also applied 7-item NLES (Nurturant Learning Environment Scale)
- Found that Personal Development motivation was most strongly and consistently correlated with perceived nurturing environment at university
- Found that Default motivation was negatively correlated with nurturance

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## Implications



- Applicants with Personal Development or Humanitarian motivations most likely to succeed at university
- Expectation, Default motivations for most at-risk students
- Students who enter your university with strong Personal Development motivation will perceive it as more nurturing

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## Applications



- Enhanced understanding of how student recruitment impacts student engagement
- What happens when students become alumni?

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# Alumni Affinity

## Part 5

# Simplified Equation

- ***Donations*** = Capacity x Affinity
- ***Ability*** to donate requires financial means (alumni profiling / prospect research)
- ***Propensity*** to donate requires personal sense of connection to the institution

## Affinity



- Not just alumni credit cards, insurance, or even mortgages
- Development – cultivation, stewardship
- Alumni affairs – homecoming, magazine, online communities, directories
- Public affairs – perception of reputation, research breakthroughs, students
- Own experience as a student there!

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## Student Experience



Dr. Charles T. Clotfelter, Duke U:

- “the amount and regularity with which alumni make donations to their *alma maters* is highly correlated to their expressed satisfaction with their own college experiences”
- “their own evaluation of the intellectual and cultural experience they had as students”

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## Student Experience



Key aspects of subjective experience:

- College was their first choice
- Leadership in extra-curriculars
- Received honours / awards
- Professor took special interest in them
- Formed life-long friendships
- Educational and career success

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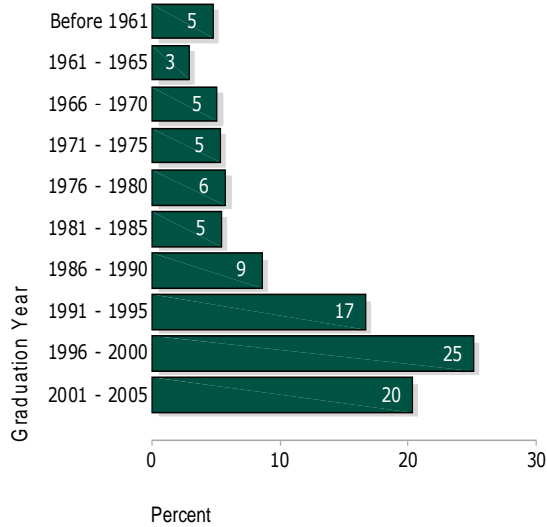
## Alumni Case Study



- Academica has been expanding on traditional alumni surveys
- A scientifically-validated measurement tool for alumni affinity
- Case study: elite liberal arts university
- 1,700 responses

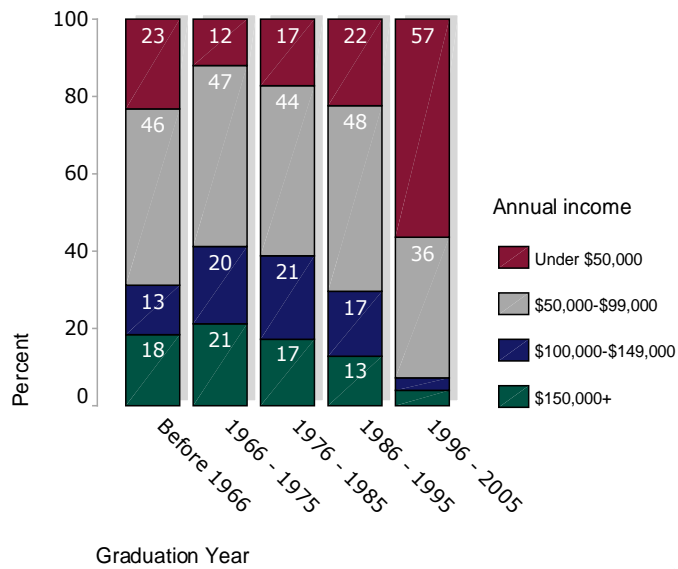
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# Year of Graduation



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# Income



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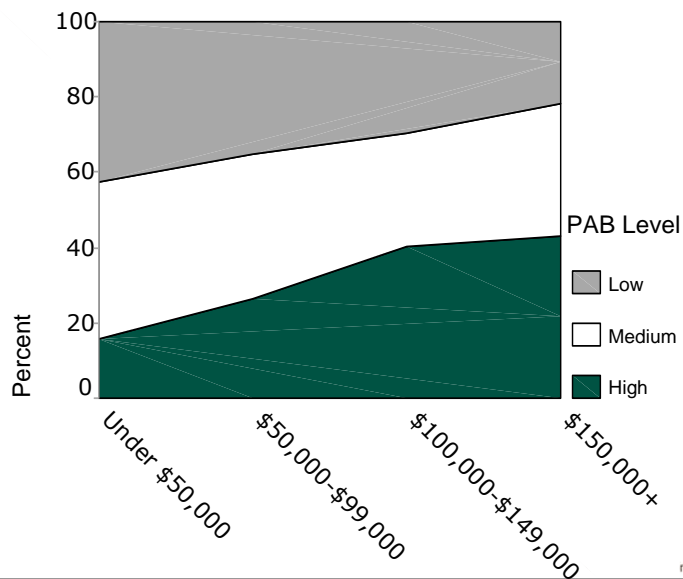
## Positive Behaviours



- PAB (Positive Alumni Behaviours):
  - Recommend the university
  - Reported likely to give
  - History of giving
- Converted to 100 pt scale

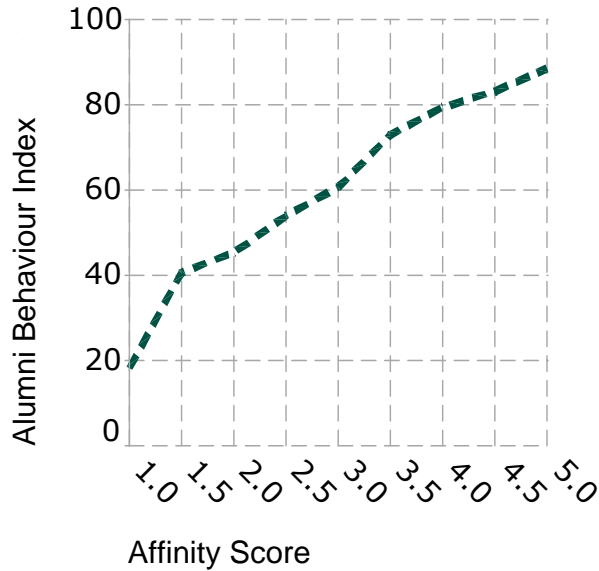
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## PAB by Income



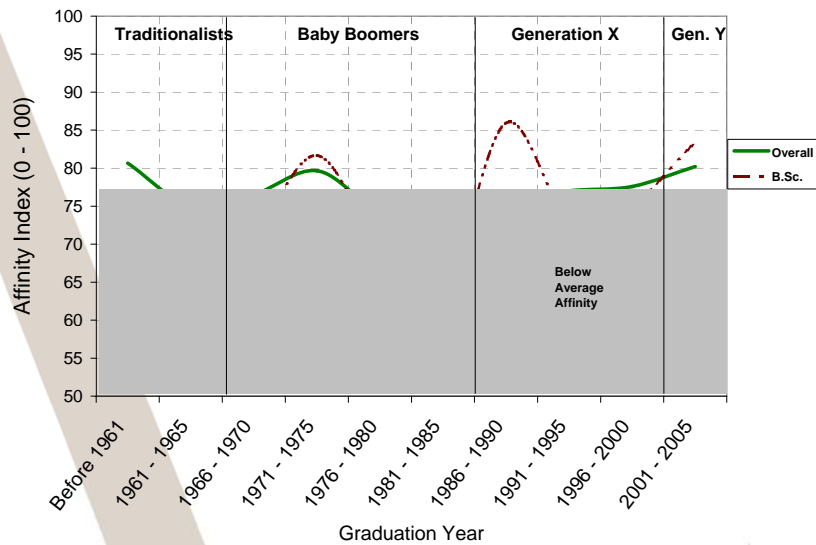
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# Affinity and PAB



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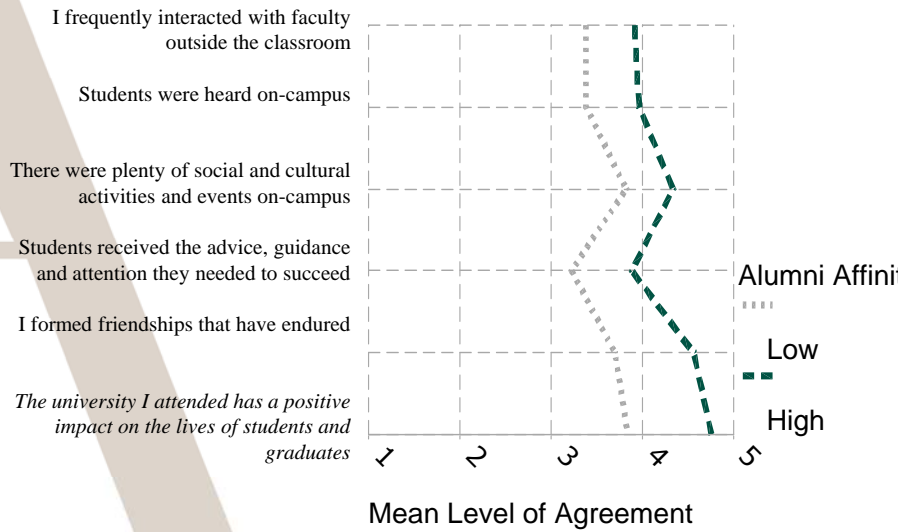
# Affinity by Cohort



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# Affinity Drivers

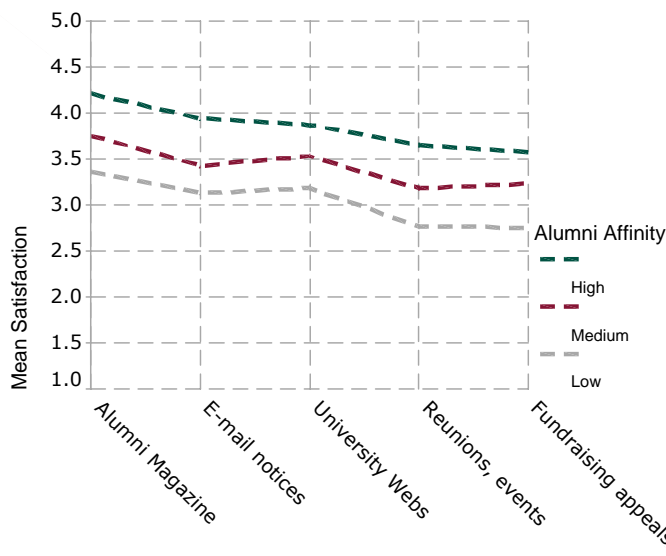
## Student Experiences



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# Affinity Drivers

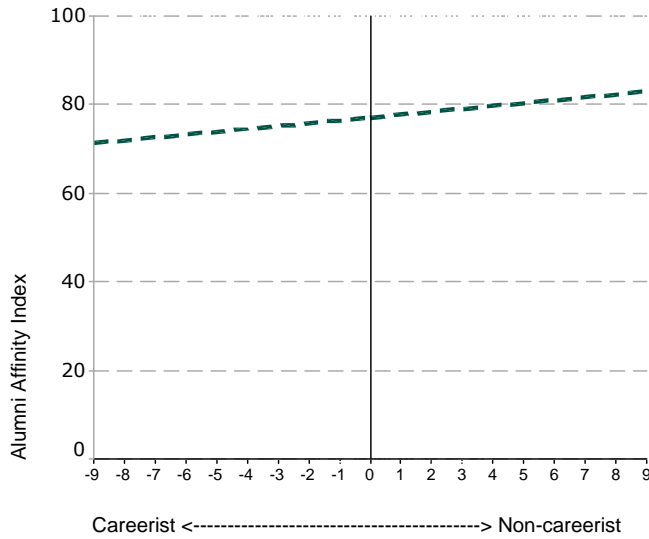
## Alumni Services



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# Affinity Drivers

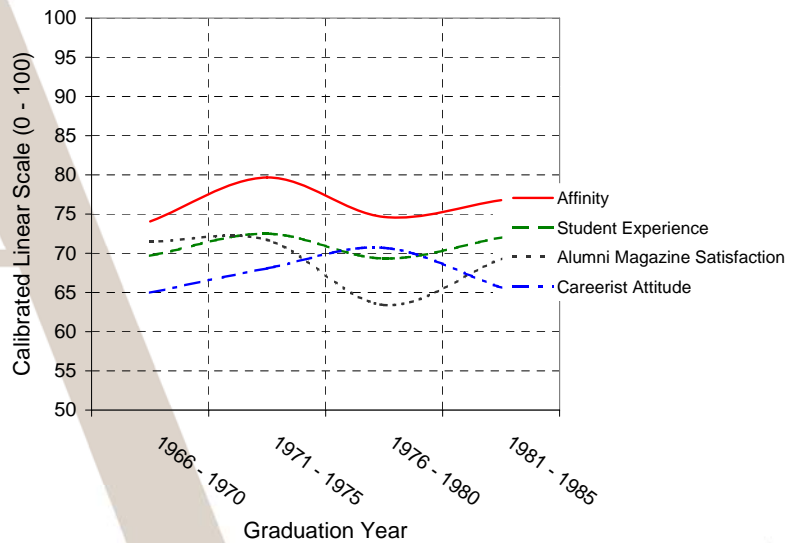
Applicant Motivation for Attending (SMAU)



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# Affinity Drivers

Applicant Motivation for Attending (SMAU)



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## Implications



- Universities/Colleges need effective branding to attract students that “fit”, ensure they have a positive experience
- Recruitment messaging needs to reflect applicant perceptions, motivations
- Faculty need to understand that they play a key role in student engagement, impacting alumni and development permanently

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## Implications



- Vital to break down the “silos”, manage the student experience across the continuum
- Just like marketing should be integrated, market research should be integrated
- It’s a wasted opportunity to do just an old-fashioned alumni survey

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# Implications



- A glimpse of next-generation research approach to applicant recruitment, student engagement, alumni affinity
- We're continuing to refine the instrument and analysis, segment students even more precisely
- Already psychographics are providing our clients with useful insight for messaging, brand positioning, competitive intel.

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# Questions / Discussion

## *Part 6*



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## Thank you!

We welcome your questions, suggestions or comments, now or at any time.

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