

5 Steps to Student

Management System Success: Student Journey Mapping

Introduction

Are you looking to attract more students to your university and boost enrollment? It all starts with creating the perfect student experience. One of the best ways to create a winning experience is through student journey mapping.

Sound like a plan? Great, let's dive in!



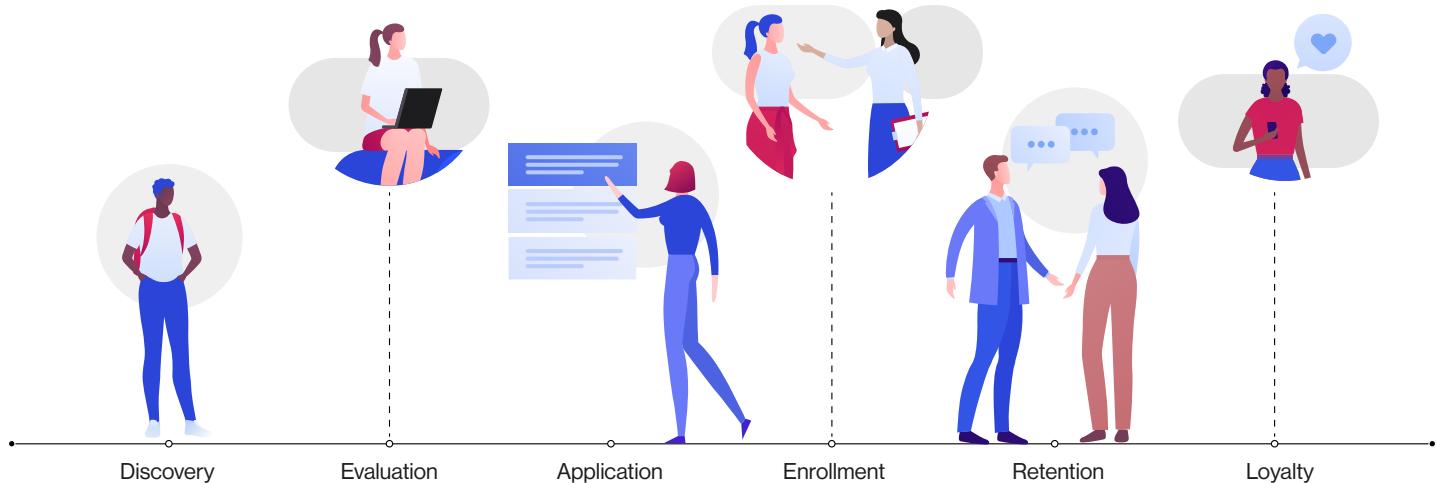
What Is Student Journey Mapping?

A student journey map is simply a visual representation of each step a student takes before and after enrolling in a university. Once this student journey mapping exercise is completed, your college will have a much better idea of which students it's trying to reach and the experience those folks have while interacting with your school.

Student journey mapping opens the door between a school and its students. It allows university personnel to easily identify any friction in the college-student relationship and enables them to pinpoint the exact measures they need to take to better the student experience.

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Student Journey



Why Is Student Journey Mapping Important?

Student journey mapping gives universities amazing insight into their prospective students. Admissions Teams can then use this insight to improve the student experience and [increase enrollments](#).

For example, let's say that a small college in the United States has missed their enrollment goals for each of the past three semesters. Desperate for improvement, the university's marketing team decides to map the student journey to discover why enrollment numbers are so low. After conducting the student journey mapping exercise, the team realizes that there is a major disconnect between who the school is targeting its marketing messages toward and the actual folks who end up enrolling.

Armed with this knowledge, the university's marketing team is able to adjust their messaging, reach more qualified prospects, and win more enrollments. But this wouldn't have been possible without first mapping the student journey and identifying friction points.



The 5 Key Elements of Every Student Journey Map

A proper student journey map will have five specific elements. They are personas, stages, touchpoints, mindsets, and opportunities. Let's dive into each of these individually.

1 Personas

A persona is a fictional character created to represent a group of people. The best student personas include both demographic details (i.e., gender, age, income level) and psychographic details (i.e., hopes, fears, goals). A dynamic student management system will give your institution the data it needs to understand your personas' demographic details. When it comes to psychographic details, [The Parthenon Group](#) divides students into [six segments, or “personas,”](#) based on people's aspirations, for example, what they hoped their bachelor's degree would enable them to do after graduation.

2 Stages

Stages, also known as phases, are the general steps a student goes through before and after enrolling in a university. For most institutions, there are six stages: discovery, evaluation, application, enrollment, retention, and loyalty.

3 Touchpoints

By touchpoints, we mean every point of contact between an organization and its prospects. For universities, this could include a website, [social media channels](#), downloadable documents, starting an application, and campus visits.

4 Mindsets

It's important that your student journey map explores the mindsets your prospective students have before and after enrolling. What are they thinking and feeling as they research information? What excites them? What frustrates them?

5 Opportunities

The final element is opportunities. After your student journey map is complete, it needs to be analyzed so that areas of improvement can be identified. How can your university improve the student experience and boost enrollment numbers.



How to Create Your Own Student Journey Map

Now that we have a firm understanding of what student journey mapping is, why it's important, and the five essential elements every student journey map needs, we can discuss how to create unique journey maps for your university.



1. Understand Your Target Market

It all starts with your target market. You need to have a deep knowledge of who your ideal students are—what they like and don't like, where they come from, and what they're hoping to achieve. You can learn this by studying your current crop of students, cultivating data from your student management system, and using the information you glean to develop student personas.

Once you've conducted thorough research, you can [assemble your personas](#). It's definitely okay to have more than one! In fact, you probably should have more than one persona. It's highly unlikely that all of your students will group together into one single category. But just be aware, every persona needs its own unique student journey map.

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2. Map Out Each Stage

Next, you need to map out the various stages your prospective students will go through before and after enrolling in your university. As we mentioned before, there are six main phases. Let's discuss each:

- 1 **Discovery:** At this stage, a potential student has just become aware of your college. Or perhaps they've heard of it before, but they're just now realizing that the education programs it offers may be the right fit for them.
- 2 **Evaluation:** Once a prospective student is aware of your university, they may begin to seriously consider enrollment. During this stage they'll likely be conducting a lot of research, talking with family members, and assessing finances.
- 3 **Application:** A potential student reaches the application stage when they've narrowed down their university options and applied to the select few schools they feel will help them reach their education goals.
- 4 **Enrollment:** At this stage, your prospect decides to take the plunge and actually enroll. Congratulations! But the student journey is far from over. The way your college handles things from here on out will [determine its student yield](#).
- 5 **Retention:** Your school's goal is to keep students engaged throughout their entire time at your college and eventually reward them with a degree. A student journey mapping exercise that ends with enrollment isn't complete.
- 6 **Loyalty:** Finally, we have loyalty. Just because a student graduates doesn't mean their relationship with your university is severed forever. A strong university marketing strategy will account for alumni and map their journey as well.

Now, these are just general stages. You need to assess your own university and decide if there are others you need to include during your student journey mapping exercise.



3. Identify Every Touchpoint

Remember, touchpoints are the areas of contact between your university and its prospective students. These include your school's website, its social media channels, any downloadable documents, email correspondence, campus visits, your application portal, and more.

Identify every touchpoint between your college and its target market and add them to your map in the stage that they best correspond with. For example, the website research touchpoint will most likely fall into the “evaluation” stage.

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4. Dig into Student Mindsets

This is where your student journey mapping efforts really begin to bear fruit. It's not enough to simply know who your target audience is, the stages they go through, and each touchpoint between your school and them. You also need to understand what they're thinking throughout the entire process.

Are they enjoying their experiences with your university? If not, why? What pain points are they experiencing and how can you improve your school's interactions with them so that they no longer feel that pain?

You can discover more about your prospects' mindsets by asking your current students about the enrollment process, surveying folks who are considering an education at your school, and by using web analytics tools.



5. Look for New Opportunities

Now that your student journey map is complete, you can look for opportunities to improve. For instance, if you've discovered that prospective students crave more communication, you can hire additional admissions representatives, commit to better social media marketing, and [build more email workflows](#).

At the same time, you'll probably discover things that your university does really well. When you do, keep doing them! You may even want to look for opportunities to do more of what's working.

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Improve Enrollment Numbers with Student Journey Mapping

Student journey mapping is essential if you want to [recruit more students](#) to your university and boost enrollment. Although the exercise does take a bit of elbow grease, if you follow the steps we outlined in this article, you should be able to complete it fairly quickly!

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