

The Student-Centric Advantage:

Using Qualitative Insights to Shape Higher Ed Marketing Strategies

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STARBUCKS®

Decaf

Shots

Syrup

Milk

Custom

David









Our job is to create fans.

Molly Battin
Delta SVP Global Brand Marketing





80%
distrust advertising



86%

willing to pay more for great experience







UNITED

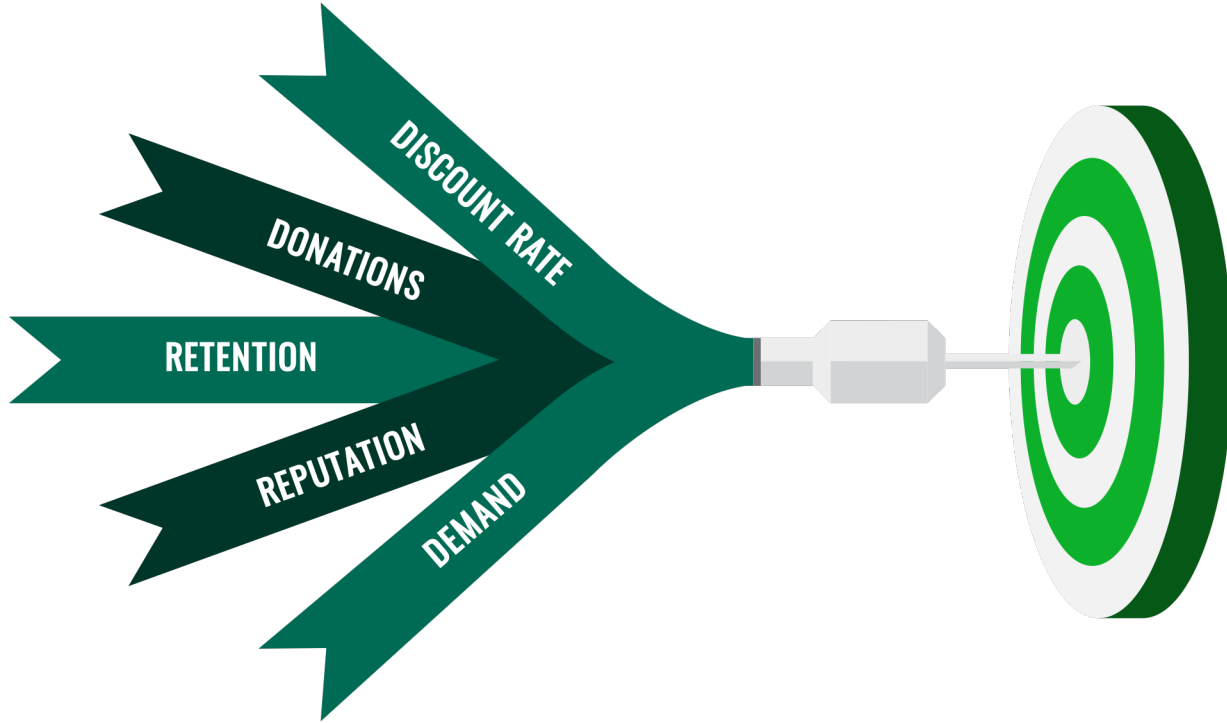
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

UNITED

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

Denver: The WSJ Airport Rankings' Rocky Mountain High-Scorer

How Denver International Airport, once a laughingstock, got itself right to win top score in the Journal's first survey of the largest 20 U.S. airports



Experience is all-encompassing.

Jeff Selingo
Journalist and Higher Education Author





STUDY PURPOSE

Improve marketing planning and the student marketing experience at a small liberal arts college in the Northeast.

CYCLE 1

- Gain a better understanding of students' experience of the college search journey from their perspective, in their own words.
- “What do **students** say is meaningful in their college search journey?”

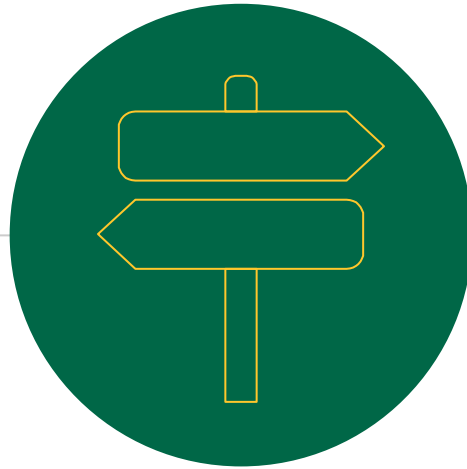
MEANINGFULNESS



(Martela, 2017; Metz, 2013)

(Kauppinn, 2013)

(Reading, 2011)



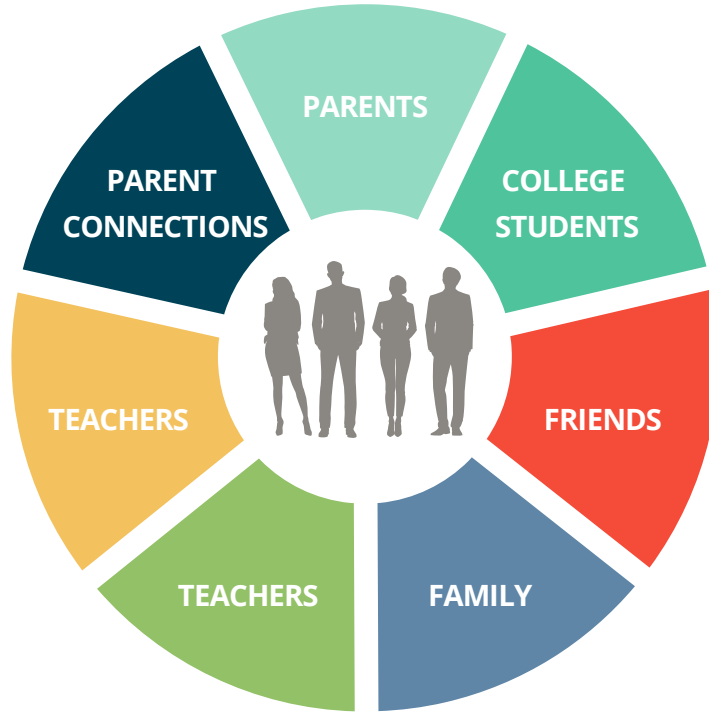
The right choice

The desire to make a choice among all the options
and feel affirmed in that decision.

My biggest worry was that I was going to pick the wrong one and that I wouldn't be happy at the school I chose

“

REFERRALS



*It makes you **feel better** when there's numerous students who feel the same way you do.*

“

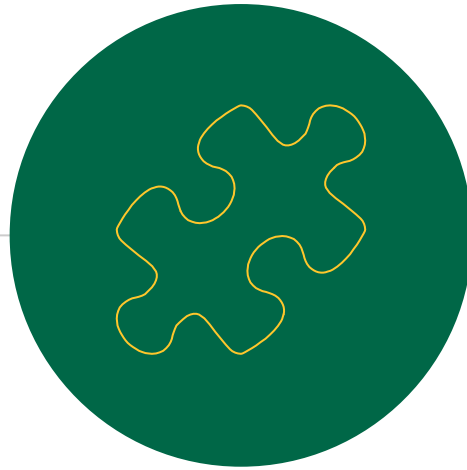


Belonging

The human emotional need and inherent desire to be accepted into a group.

I felt like they wanted me.

“



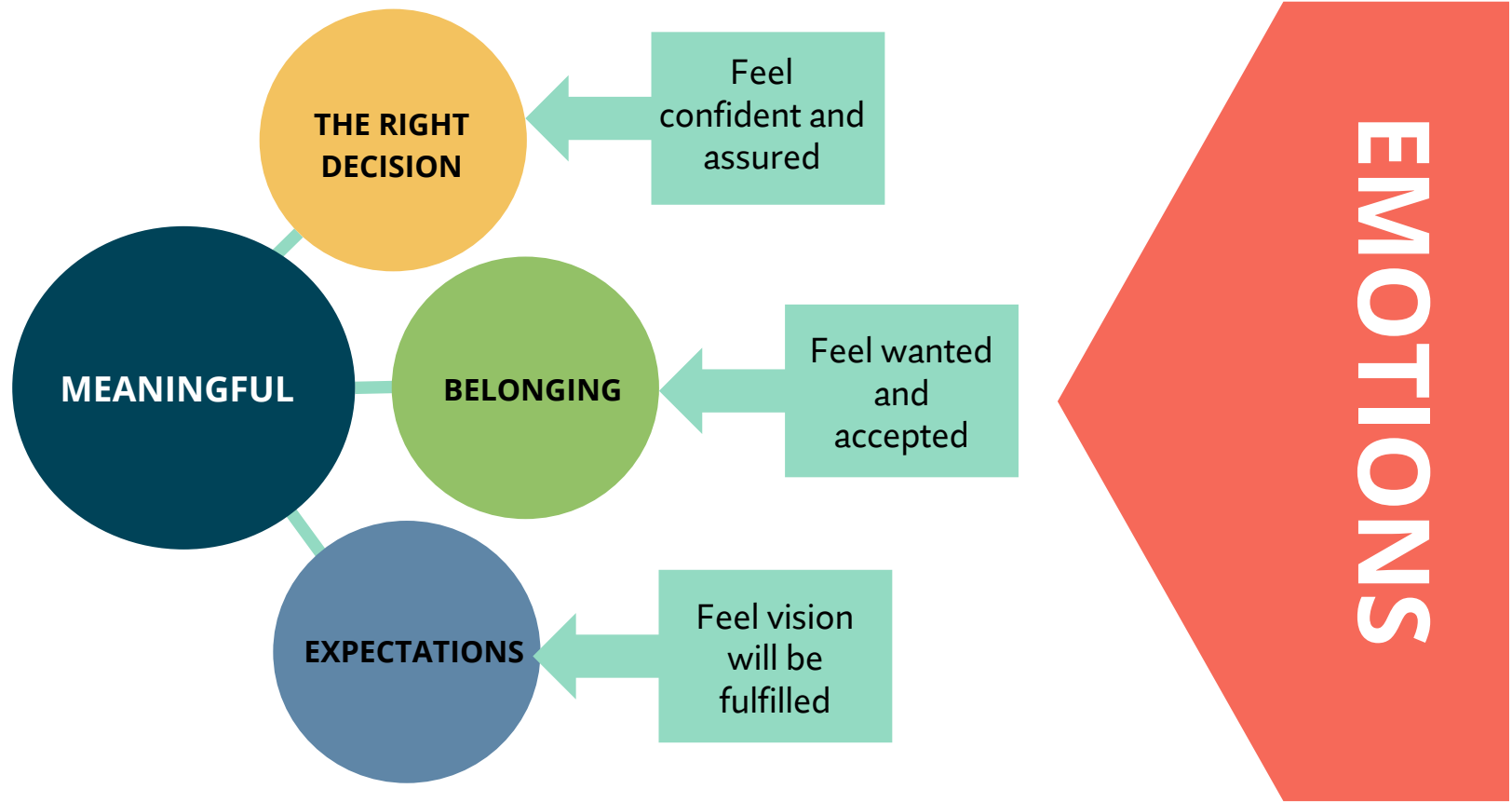
Expectations

Set of beliefs that allow people to envision the future and how it will unfold



EXPECTATIONS

- Visiting colleges - “nobody can really tell you what you’re going to like” until you do
- Social constructs - “classic college experience”; “aura of ivy league”; “tv college”





CYCLE 2

- Co-create a student-centered marketing plan
- Produce a playbook for future iterations and plans

CYCLE 2

- What are effective ways to develop and implement a student-centric marketing plan for a higher education institution?
- What can be learned from the marketing plan development process in terms of effectiveness or ineffectiveness?

THE TEAM

Admissions

Communications

Data Systems

Enrollment
Management

Experience

Financial Aid

Marketing

FINDINGS

AUDIENCE CENTRIC INTENTIONALITY



**BUILDING A CHANGE
COALITION**



**OPERATIALIZING
CHANGE**



**BUILDING A CHANGE
COALITION**

“We’re really transforming it into a much more Franciscan marketing plan”

“You had to embrace change”



**AUDIENCE CENTRIC
INTENTIONALITY**

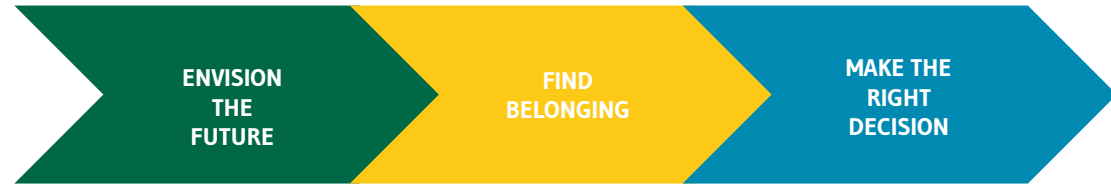
“It’s probably hard to find a way that it’s not student-centered.”

“I love this path you’re on and the student-centered focus on the strategy.”

“100%”

“The heartbeat of the plan”

STUDENT
NEEDS



STUDENT
GOALS

Feel Supported,
Ready, Inspired,
Excited

Feel Wanted, Desired,
Valued, Accepted,
Safe, Comfortable

Feel Affirmed, Sure,
Proud, Validated,
Exuberant, Confident,
Relieved

STUDENT
NEEDS

CREATE A
VISION FOR
THE
FUTURE

FIND
BELONGING

MAKE THE
RIGHT
DECISION

STUDENT
GOALS

Feel Supported,
Ready, Inspired,
Excited

Feel Wanted, Desired,
Valued, Accepted,
Safe, Comfortable

Feel Affirmed, Sure,
Proud, Validated,
Exuberant, Confident,
Relieved

STUDENT JOURNEY

Get excited
about future
and the
prospect of
college

Access the
support I
need in
college
search

Search for
options that
could bring
my vision to
life

Explore
potential
communities
and
experiences

Develop
relationships
that help me
on the
journey

Consider
what my
experience
would be like

Connect with
future
classmates
and friends

Proudly
share my
college
decision

SIENA TACTICS

Get
prospective
students
excited about
their future
and the
prospect of
college

Support
students in
their college
search;
improve
equity in
college access

Help students
see Siena as
opportunity
for vision
fulfillment

Invite and
include
prospective
students into
the Siena
community
and
experience

Foster
personal
relationships
between
students and
counselors

Help students
see
themselves as
Saints and
envision their
Siena
experience.

Connect
admitted
students and
create
relationship
building
opportunities

Foster pride
and
confidence in
the choice to
attend Siena.



**OPERATIONALIZING
CHANGE**

“What's next is what scares me now. I think we discovered a strategy as opposed to a plan.”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Always consider the students' experience of our marketing efforts

Create student feedback loops to inform decision-making

Employ design thinking (empathize→define→ideate→prototype→test) in action planning



Recommendations for **practice**

- »» Audience insights are a must
- »» Make emotional connections
- »» Leverage planning processes to spur cultural change

QUESTIONS?



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Marketer's Digest