

CASE STUDY

How Defiance College Increased New Student Enrollment Nearly 80% With Liaison Enrollment Marketing



Overview

After years of disappointing results from traditional recruitment efforts and third-party vendors, Defiance College (DC) needed more than a new marketing vendor—it needed a partner. The college turned to Liaison for a smarter, more strategic enrollment marketing approach. It later consolidated its vendor relationships to work exclusively with Liaison because of product strength, strategic impact, and high-quality support. Since adopting Liaison Enrollment Marketing Platform (EMP) a few years ago and more recently adding Liaison Search and Enrollment Marketing (EM) campaigns, DC has experienced dramatic enrollment outcomes—highlighted by its highest deposit numbers in a decade and an 80% increase in new undergraduate student enrollment.

The Challenge

Low ROI and Limited Personalization

Prior to partnering with Liaison, Defiance College was navigating a series of challenges familiar to many institutions. Marketing strategies were fragmented across multiple vendors, few of whom provided measurable ROI. Despite purchasing large volumes of prospective student names, the college struggled to convert them into applicants and enrolled students. The existing CRM setup was underutilized, personalization was lacking, and the institution's ability to connect with key student demographics was limited.

On top of that, Vice President for Enrollment Management Dr. Jeremy Taylor inherited a siloed team structure and marketing workflows that simply weren't producing results. "We had a lot of long-term vendor contracts that we were trying to get out of. The ROI just wasn't there," he explained.



The Solution

A Unified, Personalized Strategy

DC's decision to consolidate its enrollment marketing strategy with Liaison was grounded in two key goals: Build a healthier top of funnel and simplify the communication pipeline. Liaison took a deep dive into DC's historical funnel and leveraged predictive analytics to formulate an intentional search strategy focused on generating enrolled students, not just inquiries.

EMP's CRM functionality provides a central platform to house all prospective student data, while EM campaigns layer in highly targeted outreach strategies across email, print, and digital media.

Implementation was seamless. "Compared to our previous vendors, the lift was significantly lighter on our side," said Dr. Taylor. In addition, Liaison's content development, campaign management, and list consultation services took a heavy workload off the college's team while also improving results.

Working from a flexible campaign framework, Liaison's team collaborated closely with DC to continuously monitor results and pivot messaging when needed. "Their responsiveness and willingness to accommodate our requests, even when they go against conventional wisdom, has been exceptional," Dr. Taylor added.

Liaison also introduced personalized print pieces and microsites that better conveyed the school's value proposition to key audiences. According to Dr. Taylor, "Liaison's personalized print pieces have been a tremendous asset, helping us effectively communicate our message to prospective students."

“ Liaison’s campaign support, from content creation to list curation, has been a game-changer. It’s taken a significant workload off our team and proven to be highly effective.”



JEREMY TAYLOR, Ph.D.
Vice President for Enrollment Management
Defiance College

The Outcome

Increased Enrollment and Lower Discount Rates

Defiance College has seen tremendous results with EMP and EM campaigns. The numbers speak for themselves:

- ✔ New student enrollment increased nearly 80% over the previous cycle.
- ✔ The discount rate dropped by 13 points, allowing DC to generate more tuition revenue per student.
- ✔ Applications rose 29.6% over the previous year.
- ✔ Acceptances climbed by 40%, and deposits rose by 79%, compared to the previous year.
- ✔ 32.5% of deposited freshmen were included in list purchases.
- ✔ The college also reported its highest average GPA in years for the incoming class.

According to Dr. Taylor, the driver behind these improvements was a combination of strategic enrollment planning, operational improvements (like transitioning financial aid leveraging in-house), and Liaison's intentional, full-funnel enrollment marketing strategy. "Liaison's campaign support—from content creation to list curation—has been a game-changer," he explained.

Importantly, EMP also introduced efficiencies that made day-to-day operations smoother. As Dr. Taylor pointed out, "It wasn't a dramatic change for most of our team, which is a testament to how smooth the integration was. Now we have students uploading transcripts online, accessing aid awards digitally—it's made things easier all around."

The Partnership

A Rewarding Collaboration

The partnership between Defiance College and Liaison has been instrumental in driving the institution's remarkable enrollment growth and academic profile improvements. With strong momentum in place, DC is already setting its sights on its next strategic moves.

Liaison will remain a central part of that strategy. "The team at Liaison has been great. They're very accommodating and responsive to our needs. It's almost like they work in our office, because we can just shoot them a message and they fix any issues right away. The people we work with are a big part of why our partnership with Liaison has been so effective," Dr. Taylor said.

For institutions looking to rethink their enrollment marketing strategy, Dr. Taylor offers a clear message: "You have to treat enrollment like a business. Evaluate your your ROI and be willing to change strategies—and partners—if it's not working. Liaison has been the partner that delivered."



About

Founded in 1850, Defiance College is a private liberal arts institution dedicated to preparing students to lead lives of purpose and service through academic excellence and community engagement.

- ✔ Located on a 150-acre residential campus in Ohio, DC serves approximately 650 students with a 12:1 student-to-faculty ratio.
- ✔ The college's mission—To Know, To Understand, To Lead, and To Serve—guides its commitment to liberal arts learning, global awareness, leadership development, and civic engagement.
- ✔ Nationally recognized for its dedication to service and military-friendly culture, DC is home to signature programs like the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity and the Service Leadership Program.
- ✔ With 99% of full-time students receiving financial aid, DC offers accredited academic programs in education, business, nursing, social work, and more—alongside a vibrant campus life.



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