Op-Ed: How Antioch College is Combining Cutting-Edge Tools With Traditional Outreach Efforts To Build the Next Generation of Changemakers

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As proud graduates of Antioch College, you know better than anyone the transformative power of our unique educational model. You've lived it. You've experienced the rigorous academics, the life changing co-op program, and the deep commitment to community and social justice that define an Antioch education. Today, I want to share with you how the Office of Admission is leveraging innovative tools,

robust outreach, and your invaluable support to ensure that the next generation of students discovers Antioch.

The landscape of college admissions marketing and recruitment has become increasingly challenging and competitive in recent years, shaped by several significant trends. One of the most pressing issues is the enrollment cliff, a demographic shift that began in 2025, marked by a sharp decline in the number of college-aged students. According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the number of high school graduates in the U.S. is projected to drop by 15% between 2025 and 2030, intensifying competition for a shrinking pool of applicants. Additionally, there is growing skepticism about the value of a four-year degree, with many families questioning whether the cost of college is worth the return on investment. A 2023 Gallup poll found that only 36% of Americans have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education, down from 57% in 2015. This lack of trust, combined with rising tuition costs and student debt, has led many students to explore alternative pathways, such as trade schools, online certifications, or entering the workforce directly after high school.

The world of higher education is changing rapidly. Declining college-age populations, increased competition for students, and shifting expectations from prospective families have made the recruitment landscape more challenging than ever but Antioch is rising to the occasion. We're leveraging cutting-edge technology, data-driven strategies, and personalized outreach to attract the right-fit students who will carry on Antioch's legacy of winning victories for humanity.

In today's digital age, the way young people shop for colleges mirrors how they shop for everything else online: they expect highly personalized experiences and often engage with brands anonymously before making a decision. This behavior is especially evident with stealth applicants, who browse college websites, attend virtual events, and consume content without formally identifying themselves. Much like how consumers use platforms like Amazon or Netflix, where algorithms curate personalized recommendations based on browsing history, in many ways, stealth applicants expect colleges to anticipate their needs and interests without requiring them to fill out forms or disclose personal information upfront. According to a 2023 report by EAB, 60% of prospective students visit college websites without submitting

an inquiry form, making it crucial for institutions to use tools like AI-powered personalization to capture their interest and guide them through the admission funnel.

This is further amplified by a new trend in internet usage which suggests that people, especially younger generations, are spendi
more time on social media platforms and a
long as possible. Platforms like TikTok, In
algorithms to deliver hyper-personalized c
users are constantly scrolling but rarely cli
this means that traditional marketing strat
campaigns—are no longer enough. Instead
they are, using dynamic, algorithm-driven
they already use. By leveraging tools like g
chatbots, colleges can create seamless, per
stealth applicants and keep them engaged,
landscape.



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Antioch is responding to these trends and
education marketing. While we continue to utilize traditional approaches like attending college fairs, personalized outreach from territory managers and admission staff like making phone calls and crafting personalized campus visits, we are further developing our outreach to include modern tools. Antioch's *tech stack* is a critical component of its admission strategy, enabling the college to streamline recruitment efforts, personalize communication, and track prospect engagement. A *tech stack* refers to the collection of tools, software, and technologies that an organization uses to achieve its goals. Think of it like a toolkit—each tool has a specific purpose, and together, they create a system that helps the organization operate more efficiently and effectively. In the context of the Antioch College office of admission, our tech stack is organized around to develop a robust and personalized experience to provide students of today with compelling information about the incredible educational opportunities at Antioch. Below, I will walk through some of the innovative features that are currently being utilized by our office as well as pieces that are being further developed and considered.

At the heart of our recruitment efforts is a powerful **tech stack** designed to streamline the admission process and create meaningful connections with prospective students. Here's how it works:

1. **Technolutions Slate**: This is our central hub for managing prospective student data. Slate allows us to track every interaction a student has with Antioch—whether they've filled out an inquiry form, attended a virtual event, or engaged with our digital viewbook. It helps us personalize our communication and ensure that no student falls through the cracks. It offers both robust automated communication flow like email campaigns guiding students through next steps or it can offer territory managers an ability to quickly look up information about the student in order to personalize outreach.
2. **Student Bridge**: Imagine a high-production digital viewbook that brings Antioch's story to life. That's what Student Bridge does. It showcases our campus, our values, and the experiences of current students in a way that resonates with prospective families. And because we can track analytics, we can retarget our digital ads to present relevant information to students after they leave the viewbook website.
3. **Halda's AI-Powered Personalization**: We're currently in a 90-day trial with Halda, an AI-driven platform that has the potential to revolutionize how we engage with prospective students. Halda's technology works similarly to Netflix, offering a hyper-personalized experience where students visiting our website see content tailored to their interests and needs. This approach aligns with the way today's students expect to gather information—quickly, seamlessly, and in a way that feels customized to them. While we're still evaluating how Halda fits into our existing tech stack, early results from other institutions show a 500%+ improvement in website conversion rates, suggesting that this tool could significantly enhance our ability to connect with students and guide them toward applying. By meeting students where they are and delivering the right information at the right time, Halda could help us demonstrate how Antioch aligns with their goals and aspirations, making the college search process more intuitive and engaging.
4. **Google Workspace:** Behind the scenes, our team relies on Google Workspace to collaborate and communicate effectively. Tools like Gmail, Google Drive, and

Google Meet enable seamless teamwork, ensuring that everyone stays connected and organized throughout the admission process.

5. **Hybrid Digital Marketing:** This platform plays a key role in our outreach efforts by helping us run targeted ad campaigns, track student engagement, and retarget students who've shown interest in Antioch. By combining these capabilities with Google Analytics, our digital viewbook, and email marketing we ensure that our outreach is both efficient and impactful, reaching the right students at the right time.

Our territory managers, Corretta King, Associate Dean of Admission and CJ McGilvery, Admission Counselor and recent Antioch grad, have been at the forefront of our multifaceted outreach efforts. Their work is a critical part of our broader marketing and recruitment plan, which includes traveling to affinity schools and select territories to build relationships with high school counselors, community-based organizations, and prospective students. These face-to-face interactions are invaluable in raising awareness of Antioch and connecting with right-fit students who align with our values and mission. Additionally, on-campus events like Admitted Student Weekend and our upcoming Spring Open House play a key role in driving engagement and conversion. These events allow prospective students to experience Antioch firsthand, meet current students and faculty, and see how they can thrive in our unique community.

Behind the scenes, Corretta and CJ use Technolutions Slate to track every interaction with prospective students and tailor their communication accordingly. Whether it's a congratulatory call to an admitted student or a personalized email to an inquiry, this approach ensures that every student feels seen and supported throughout the admission process. By combining in-person outreach with data-driven personalization, Corretta and CJ are helping to build meaningful connections with the next generation of Antiochians.

In addition to our outreach efforts, the Office of Communication, led by Franchesca Smith, has been working to raise Antioch's profile through **earned media**. Recent coverage in outlets like **Yellow Springs News**, **Dayton Daily News**, and **WOSU Public Media** has highlighted Antioch's unique programs, such as our **permaculture certification courses**, the **Coretta Scott King Center**, and the **Foundry Theater**'s

diverse season of events. These stories showcase the vibrancy of our campus and align with our goal of increasing brand awareness and attracting students who value social justice, sustainability, and experiential learning. For example, a recent article in **Yellow Springs News** highlighted Antioch's designation as a **work college**, emphasizing our commitment to integrating work and learning. Another piece in **Authority Magazine** featured Bruce Linebaugh, our permaculture expert, discussing sustainable agricultural ecosystems. These stories help us reach new audiences and reinforce Antioch's reputation as a leader in innovative education. They also serve as a way to enhance our students' experiences at the College. This adds to retention efforts. In higher education admissions, retention and recruitment are intertwined; strong retention rates, indicating student success and institutional support, positively influence recruitment efforts by attracting prospective students and families

We believe in the power of an Antioch education, and we're committed to making it accessible to students from diverse backgrounds. Our financial aid strategy is designed to balance affordability with sustainability, ensuring that we can continue to deliver on our mission while supporting students' financial needs.

Key components of our strategy include:

- **Antioch Works Program**: This program ensures that Pell-eligible students receive enough institutional aid to cover full tuition costs. It's a powerful tool for attracting students who might not otherwise consider a private liberal arts education. All students pay towards their tuition, whether it's part of their out of pocket cost or using federal and state funds that they may be eligible to receive.
- **Choose Ohio First** (**COF**): Through this state-funded program, we offer competitive scholarships to Ohio students studying in STEM fields.
- **Merit-Based and Need-Based Aid**: We offer a range of scholarships and grants to recognize academic achievement, leadership, and financial need. Our goal is to create financial aid packages that make Antioch affordable for every admitted student.
- **Transparent Communication**: We're committed to helping families understand the true cost of attendance and the value of an Antioch education. Our **Net Price**

Calculator and personalized financial aid counseling ensure that students and families can make informed decisions.

As alumni, you play a crucial role in our recruitment efforts. Your stories, your experiences, and your passion for Antioch are some of our most powerful tools. You can also earn Victory Points while making a real impact. Here's how you can help:

1. **Share Your Story**: Whether it's through social media, or a conversation with a prospective family, your story matters. Talk about how Antioch shaped your life and career, and how the co-op
   program, the community, and the values of the college made a difference for you. (5 points)
2. **Participate in Alumni Recruitment:** Attend college fairs with an admissions representative (10 points), table at community events (25 points), or drop off materials about Antioch at local high schools (5 points). Your efforts help raise awareness and bring Antioch to new audiences.
3. **Nominate Prospective Students:** If you know a student who might be a good fit for Antioch, fill out a nomination form, or encourage them to reach out to our admission team. Your personal connection can make all the difference. (5 points)

Our work isn't just about enrollment—it's about ensuring the long-term sustainability of Antioch College. By attracting right-fit students, we're building a community that values and supports our mission. And by leveraging tools like Slate, Halda, and Student Bridge, we're able to do this more efficiently and effectively than ever before. Antioch College has always been a place where innovation meets purpose. Today, that spirit is alive and well in our admission efforts. By combining cutting-edge tools and strategies with traditional face-to-face outreach, we're ensuring that Antioch continues to attract the kind of students who will carry on our legacy of change making, experiential learning, and community engagement.

But we can't do it alone. As alumni, you are an essential part of this effort. Your support, your stories, and your passion for Antioch are what make this college so special. Together, we can ensure that the next generation of students discovers Antioch and thrives here, just as you did.

Thank you for all that you do to support Antioch College. Let's continue to win victories for humanity—together.

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