Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (00:00):

Thank you, everyone for being here. Thanks for the folks that we have [a great panel with us today00:00:05]. Couple of little housekeeping things that I wanted to bring up; first off, this is our panel on adjusting to the demographic pothole in college admissions. We've got a great panel in this group today. I'm going to have everyone introduce themselves. We'll just kind of go around; in the order, on my screen, you've got Keith and Andy, then Blake and David. And I wanted to point out that while this panel is ... headline is adjusting to the demographic pothole, we're not really going to delve into data itself. Nikki is going to post up the two [WICHE 00:00:48] data or the reports, meaning other people's research and reports. We have the WICHE data and we have what Nathan Gras has produced.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (00:56):

And regardless of whether this data pans out on the high side or the low side, the reality is, is that you either want to harvest the best group of students you can and move them all the way through the pipeline into graduation, or you may have to do some adjustments. You're going to be facing some significant changes in your recruitment pool.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (01:21):

The interesting thing I think that we can talk about is, and particularly with all of you, because you're in different phases of using the advanced analytics, but what are the data analytics that you are engaging at your universities and as well as some of the [inaudible 00:01:40] questions about additional ways, [inaudible 00:01:43] programs, innovation, recruitment; whatever it may be, that's helping you plan for the immediacy and for the longterm.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (01:54):

So, as I mentioned, we'll run these panels in two different sections. We have our general session where we have a number of folks in the audience right now who will get to listen to that. And we will record this and have this in this very cool video aligned transcript available to everybody.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (02:12):

And then we'll get to a section where we're going to dismiss the audience and we'll move into what's called our private session. And the private section will be for those [inaudible 00:02:24] that have asked their questions, no one else gets to hear the responses. So we'll tell you which reporter that came from and that individual reporter will get that segment of questions.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (02:37):

For those of you who are here in the audience, if you have additional questions you want to send in right now, please do so. We've got a pretty stacked list, but we'll try and fit them in. And it's pretty ... we can always make contacts later on for anyone that wants to have offline or a deeper conversation with our panelists. So just know that that's available for you if you're attending.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (03:05):

So now, what I'd like to do is go around and have you introduce yourself a little bit, give us a scope of the size of your university. Maybe the incoming freshmen, whatever kind of metric you think is important. And then anything that you think is significant about your university and or yourself, in a short little snippet. And then we'll parse that out as we move along. So let's start with you Keith.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (03:32):

Great. Thanks Jennifer. And hi everybody. My name is Keith Ramsdell, and I'm currently serving as Vice President for enrollment management and marketing at Ashland University international, Ohio. Just so everybody knows, I've been there, I think this is week 13. So prior to that, I was the director of graduate enrollment and assistant dean of the Graduate College at Bowling Green State University. So I also bring the public university perspective as well as, but especially the graduate perspective.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (04:02):

At Ashland, we have about 8,000 students total; about 6,400 undergraduate 16,00 graduate. But one of the things that's really unique about Ashland, is we also have the largest correctional education program in the country. It's entirely virtual. We have about 3,500 students enrolled in correctional education prisons across the country. And so that's kind of a unique aspect of our institution. And then I'll also just mention the fact that prior to Ashland again working in graduate education exclusively, for 15 years prior to that. So I also have served as president of NAGAP, which is the Professional Association for Graduate Enrollment Management. And I currently serve in the past president position right now.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (04:53):

Great. Thank you. Andy.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (04:55):

Hi everybody. Jennifer, thanks for having us here today. My name is Andy Hannah, and I'm the chairman and one of the co-founders of Othot. I'm also an adjunct professor of analytics at the University of Pittsburgh. At Othot we have a advanced analytics platform that guides colleges and universities to make informed decisions throughout the student life cycle; better understanding the individual. What that means is, that our platform helps these institutions enroll the best fit students who are going to persist and graduate, get great jobs and remain engaged as alumni.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (05:36):

And the way that we do that, is that we understand the data and analytics about an individual from the day that we meet them, or day that our partners meet them, through the days that they're active alumni. So when we learn about somebody when they're in high school informs about what happens to them or how they behave in college and the type of job they get, and how they engage as alumni. And so we put that into one platform, to help universities better understand the individual, not just cohorts or groups of individuals, but the actual individual and helping them optimize their journey through the student life cycle.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (06:18):

Great. Thanks Sandy. Blake.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (06:24):

Hey, good afternoon everybody. Blake Bedsole, and I've been blessed for the last three years to get to serve as the vice president for enrollment management at Arkansas Tech University. We're just under 12,000 students in Russellville, Arkansas. We say we're one university with two campuses. So we offer everything from workforce credentials and associate's degrees, up through bachelor's, master's and up to doctoral degrees.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (06:47):

Excuse me, like Keith, I actually have some experience on the graduate side as well. So I started my career in graduate education at the University of Alabama and did various roles in that regard for about eight years. Had the opportunity to get to the University of West Alabama, which was a much smaller regional institution; as their director of admissions and enrollment for three years before taking the job I have now. So I've had [inaudible 00:07:12] flagship down to regional public and on the graduate and undergraduate spots.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (07:19):

Great. Thank you. David.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (07:23):

Well, good afternoon everyone. It's good to be here. My name is David Hautanen Jr. I'm the vice president for enrollment at St. Mary's College of Maryland. I've been at St. Mary's for four years now, having arrived in 2017. St. Mary's College of Maryland is a public liberal arts college designated as a standalone honors college. Only one of two such institutions are in the country. So as the first and the national public honors college, ultimately we believe in honors for all of our students. Our honors is not just a standalone program, it's the entire institution.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (07:59):

In and outside of the classroom, ultimately, what this means is we set expectations for ourselves and for each other. I come to St. Mary's College after having served at three other institutions, all in undergraduate enrollment all in Massachusetts. So this is my first foray outside of the New England area. I worked at a large flagship public institution, a large private urban institution, and a medium sized Catholic college before coming to St. Mary's. St. Mary's College has about 1500 students as a quintessential liberal arts and sciences college. And we enrolled 450 to 500 new first year and transfer students each year.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (08:43):

Terrific. Thank you. So we have a wide range and you actually know almost all of them, don't you? That's good. And this will be helpful.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (08:54):

[inaudible 00:08:54] of experience, right?

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (08:54):

Now the only thing we're missing is someone from California.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (09:00):

Sure.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (09:03):

Okay. So my first question is going to be, how worried are you about enrollment projections next year and in five years? And how worried do you think your colleagues are? So let's see if we can round-robin this primarily to Keith, Blake and David. So Keith.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (09:20):

Oh, that's a good question. I think many of us were hopeful that once we made it through last fall, that we were out of the woods, and unfortunately many didn't anticipate. In fact, the majority of us didn't anticipate how long the pandemic would persist. And so what I've shared with many colleagues conversations about the fact that at least for last fall, most of our recruitment cycles were pretty well along. On the graduate side, we were mostly done. On the undergraduate side, many schools were well into their recruitment cycle. And so fall didn't turn out to be maybe quite as bad as it could be. In fact many graduates programs, especially online programs, were in many cases, way up in enrollment.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (10:10):

Unfortunately, this is our first experience for all of us recruiting entirely through one full cycle in the middle of a pandemic when we can't use our traditional techniques and strategies for recruitment. And so I would say for this fall, many of my peers were very concerned about the numbers. We're looking for every opportunity that we can to continue to connect, to continue to build enrollment for the fall.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (10:39):

Honestly, the concern for the 2020 and the cliff that everybody talks about, I'm almost more hopeful for that, than I am for this fall; only because we have time to plan for that. I get the demographics, and I understand everybody's concerned with that. And I see Andy nodding in, we're fortunate because I'm new at Ashland and we're new to Othot, and we're very excited about the opportunities to partner there. And we think that that will be huge for us moving forward as an institution. But I'm initially concerned about this fall and what we're going to be able to do with our numbers right now. We're a little bit behind, and trying to catch up is going to be tough at this point.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (11:23):

Great. Thank you, Blake, something to add to that.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (11:29):

Yeah. I'll echo that 100%. I am more confident in the long term, than I am in the short term. A lot of us, [inaudible 00:11:37] enrollment management we talk about this thing in art in a science, and unfortunately, I feel like it's more of an art right now. The thing that I could rely on in the past, we're not proving to be as effective and looking at the yield, especially. So looking at the way our fall 20 class yielded, was not at all what we would have thought; based on the application, volume we saw, visit volume in the [inaudible 00:12:03] size and things like that. So it's really working with products and we're lucky to get to work with Andy and his team as well at Othot. Looking at products to be comfortable with predicting the yield because we're all marketers, right? We can all go out and drive applications [inaudible 00:12:21].

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (12:22):

But it's working those students through the funnel and kind of that second level of engagement, is where we're really focused on right now. Because our [app pool 00:12:30] was up. And I know some

places are not having that luxury, but we've got the app pool, but it's how can we move them through to take those next steps and get their schedule and confirm their housing and do their orientation and things like that. So that's my short term concern; is yield for this fall, for sure.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (12:49):

Right. Thank you. David.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (12:52):

There are days when I wonder why I put my career in the hands of the decisions of 17, 18 year old students. As I've said to the board, typically, the crystal ball that we're all used to look at, and of course analytics support this, but it's normally a bit cloudy. And this year, my crystal ball is really downright muddy in terms of projecting what we can expect moving forward.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (13:20):

Last year we experienced a shift in yield and as we did our analysis, it really was primarily due to having to cancel our on-campus programming. Keith had said earlier, on in the undergraduate space, we are already so far along in our recruitment funnel, that, that impact was mitigated. But certainly as we did our analysis, not being able to host students on-campus in April in particular, I can draw a direct line to a difference in enrollment that we would have ... we experienced due to that.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (13:55):

That being said, we had a very strong year last year in terms of enrollment. And I think that was likely due to the fact that we are small and nimble. And we can talk maybe a little bit more about that later. Like Blake, we've seen an increase in the number of applications that we've received this year following significant increases last year as well. As we monitor our enrollment funnel, we have seen really growth throughout the funnel and it's playing itself through.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (14:33):

But where we go, where it goes with yield is, that really at this point is the unknown. And we've built out a tremendous programming to try to influence and mitigate that. So as we're tracking positively, I have to say, I'm cautiously optimistic. And if you knew me, that would probably be no surprise to you that I am optimistic. But at the same time, I'm doing a really being careful to set expectations with the executive team and the board, while we're managing this year. But we do still have our sights on five years down the road and making sure that we've done all the work to set ourselves up to be successful once sort of, that the cliff starts to occur.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (15:20):

Okay, great. So in this next set of questions, Hallie Busta from EdTech Higher Ed, which is a CDW publication, she's sent me a nice long list of them. I might kind of bounce around just to kind of keep us on time. And then Andy, I'm going to ask you at some point to explain, to put in layman's terms, what it is ... help us understand what analytics are, right? Let's pretend we don't know anything, which I probably don't. So give us a parallel. So think about how you can encapsulate that briefly.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (15:54):

So the first question from Haley is for the rest of you all, what specific data points are you collecting or looking at during this year's recruitment cycle, and is that different from previous years? So if you jump in here to ... if someone has a great answer, maybe not all of you, want to address that.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (16:15):

I'll jump in Jennifer with this one, if I may. Really, I think the only things that we're looking at a little bit differently, obviously we're all looking at the typical funnel data. But when I think about what we're looking at that's a little bit differently, that's tracking a little bit differently, we're trying to look at programs, the academic programs a little bit more deeply to see how the pandemic is maybe impacting our individual programs. I've taken a closer look at our in-state versus out-of-state applicant pool, and what we're seeing and we've heard this I think four months now, that our applicant pool is definitely making decisions to stay closer to home. So our out-of-state numbers are down this year, our in-state percentage is higher than it typically is; which is a little worrisome. Especially when we're in the middle of the Midwest, and when you talk about the cliff coming, that's a dangerous situation to be in for the long haul.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (17:19):

And then I think the other numbers that we're concerned about, are first-generation students of color. Those areas again, those populations tending to be down a little bit because of the pandemic, maybe wanting to stay a little bit closer to home. And again, we're seeing some of that at Ashland as well this year.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (17:38):

Okay. David, and then Blake, maybe.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (17:42):

Sure. I just want to say, as we're looking at our data, we're looking at the demographics, we're looking at our programming. In addition as Keith said, really being closely monitoring our funnel data and really monitoring how effective are we being at conversion from one point in the funnel to another. And we're nimble enough that we are adjusting our strategies along the way to be able to affect as best as we can project, the conversion rates from one area to another. And one of those is really, as we've had to move away from on-campus programming to more virtual programming, we've been really closely monitoring sort of attendance and participation rates in all of our programming and making adjustments along the way to influence the behavior of students through the funnel.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (18:38):

Thank you. Blake, some thoughts on that?

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (18:44):

Yeah. So Keith touched on it a little bit. But for us this year, it's really looking at striations within the applicant pool. In the past, you'd look at your application number and maybe work percentages down from there. But at Tech, we're 94% Arkansan. So what's happening in Arkansas is going to be the biggest thing for me to monitor and then kind of the contiguous states after that. And if you break down, we look at distance from campus. So not just necessarily in-state, out-of-state, but even within the state,

how far are you? Because it's ... as you Keith said, students are choosing to go closer to home. And we saw that a lot in our fall 20 class.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (19:21):

So while on [inaudible 00:19:23] our applicants that are up for this year, we also have to look at things like, okay, from 50 to 150 miles, you're actually down [inaudible 00:19:30]. And your Caucasian students are down, you're up to 30 groups which you know you're not going to yield to high. So it's really looking at the breakdown. We're also starting to pull in consumer ratings because we know that our income level ... formerly EFC levels of our students will play a large part who will actually get to enroll. And then using that for prediction and also trying to better leverage the aid that we have in terms of yielding the class.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (20:00):

Okay. So then, this is maybe the time Andy for you to start high level overview, make [inaudible 00:20:06] analytics easy for us.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (20:09):

Okay. I think you can break analytics into two pieces. First what we have are what we'll call traditionally analytics. And those are descriptive and diagnostic. So you can think about having a spreadsheet to analyze what happened and why did it happen? And that's sort of a backwards sort of walk in view of your data. And that's a critical piece because that's a building block, right? So if you can't understand or diagnose what happened, is very difficult to move on to the next level.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (20:45):

The advanced analytics is more about predictions and prescriptions. So once we understand what happened and why, we can then predict what is going to happen. So we can think about this as each individual students, can we predict their likelihood to enroll or their likelihood to persist or graduate or get a job or whatever. What we can do is we can understand their behaviors through these very sophisticated algorithms, and then predict the likelihood of the outcome happening that we want to have happen. So if we predict somebody is 30% likely to enroll through those algorithms, our next step is how do we maximize it? That's a student we really want to come to our university. How do we maximize a probability to get them to enroll? And that's called using prescriptions. And those prescriptions could be financial aid, it could be a marketing program, it could be a visit to the campus, it could be a call to them at their home.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (21:46):

And what the algorithms can do is say, okay, we understand this individual. And they're more driven by relationship than they are driven by money. So you're much better off, focusing on that visit or that telephone call rather than seeing how much money that we can get that individual. And those prescriptions help us maximize the probability of the outcome that we want. So I think that's probably the best way to think about it as sort of traditional analytics, backward looking, descriptive and diagnostic and advanced as being what's going to ... can we predict what's going to happen? And if we can predict it, can we maximize the outcome that we want?

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (22:25):

So this is a perfect segue to Hallie's other question, which is, which of these recruiting track tactics are you changing? How has the analytics ... can you identify a couple that you are changing based on analytics? Give her something concrete. Anyone got an idea here? Go ahead Blake, set you.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (22:53):

Yeah. With all the [inaudible 00:22:58] up some of our marketing stand and trying to be really strategic about that. One of the things we're using, as Andy mentioned, really...to decide who's going to benefit from a certain marketing piece perhaps, who's going to benefit most for a push to take an action step, whether it's completing an application or coming campus to take a visit, [inaudible 00:23:22] whatever; not mailing everybody [the same thing] is not doing campaigns for the whole ... kind of joke about the shotgun [inaudible 00:23:32]. It's really kind of honing in a part of population for certain things, rather than just scattering the spaghettis on the wall and seeing what sticks. And we're also starting to play around with [inaudible 00:23:47] as a way to ensure enrollment.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (23:51):

Okay. Some ad-ons from Keith or David?

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (23:55):

I was just going to say, for us, it's really, our analytics really have been focused on how we're leveraging need-based aid in order to influence students based on their behaviors and activities leading up to the moment of determining what aid they should be receiving and offering that aid. I think one of the things that as ... and likely, we've all done this, I guess it probably depends on the place in the country that you are. We do know that if a student visits campus, they are more likely to enroll. And with the pandemic, ultimately, that strategy, or that was taken away from us; and in particular for this past year, really between April and through July, that really impacted us.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (24:41):

We were able to begin to offering one-on-one campus tours in August, and as a strategy, as we built towards, I think that's helped contribute to the the increase in our applicant pool, because we were able to actually see more students visiting campus that way and delivering a more on-brand experience. We have a nine to one student faculty ratio. So the experience and the passion is very tailored and personal. Now we're able to deliver that in this way. And I hope that we're able to continue that with resources moving forward.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (25:15):

But what where we really changed is understanding that we don't have some of the relationship developing, meant that we have typically in terms of where staff are able to go out on the road, and as Blake alluded to, we have implemented a very significant digital recruitment program.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (25:35):

So this is interesting that Hallie asked, she said, "Are you using analytics to help you deliver tailored messaging to other groups, not limited to students? So perhaps their parents or teachers?

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (25:51):

Yes, that's actually very much part of our communication flow that we are looking at all of our messages and making a conscious decision, is this just a student message? Is this just a parent message, or is it a message that needs to go both based on what we hope, what we plan for the call to action to be for that distinct message. But we have been using analytics as part of that digital campaign to be targeting parents specifically, to be targeting counselors specifically, as well as students specifically in the digital worlds that they live. And I know other schools must be doing this as well, because as I look at my feed, I must be targeted as a prospective parent by a number of different schools.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (26:40):

Yeah. I just went through that with my own son, he's up at a private college in Oregon. I had more emails than I knew what to deal with. Another extension of this question, Hallie is interested in COVID. So have messaging changed around COVID, and regarding vaccine administrations, have any of you [inaudible 00:27:02] specific examples about that, or something that you want to bring up?

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (27:09):

I don't have any example about the vaccine yet. I feel like that's becoming a very hot topic and it's something we'll probably address in a couple of weeks. But the pandemic has really altered the way we handle invitations to campus. I think David mentioned that. We can't accommodate the volume of student visitors that we would want to. And so we're having to be very strategic about who we invite to tours and who we invite to visit programs. A great example is, we have a senior visit day in the spring, called town out for tech; where we would have 1800 freshmen and their families on campus at the Coliseum and venturing around. While now we can't have anything over a group of 30.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (27:54):

And so having to take that event, spread it out over multiple days, really be smart about who we invite and let us in that, and then incorporating virtual presentations and pieces into that, that's been a complete [inaudible 00:28:07] from what we would normally do this time of year in terms of visiting [inaudible 00:28:12]. So the pandemic is definitely affecting that. And it feels like that's going to persist at least into the summer, if not next fall as well.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (28:24):

It's interesting Blake that we can't even host groups that large on campus. So hands-off sort of one-on-one, and at the moment we're on a hiatus for our one-on-one visits until the pandemic, say it hopefully quiets down a little bit until we can relaunch those. Once the pandemic hit in late spring, we did pivot on messaging then actually. And through the summer, really messaging about being a small institution, we're in a rural area, beautiful waterfront location that this actually would be a safe place; to be coming to school compared to perhaps another type of location.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (29:09):

And so I think that helped contribute to our enrollment success this past year, but also we have ... 2/3 of our students are living on campus. So compared to what we normally would see. So part of our messaging ... and it's interesting, we have always had an ethos called the St. Mary's way; which really is about responsibility to ourselves, each other, and to the environment.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (29:35):

But that hasn't necessarily been part of our marketing messages, but with COVID, and the responsibility that we now need to take for ourselves and for one another, this is now front and center to who we are. And I think that really is resonating in the marketplace. And as we think about that shift in messaging, the St. Mary's way, what it's really doing is responding to the empathy. That we, as institutions need to be showing our students understanding the challenges that they have, and that we're going to meet them and join them in those challenges for their success.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (30:13):

Thank you. Jennifer, if I can just tag on, we've done a lot of the same things that David and Blake have talked about as far as sending that messaging out and getting it out through email, text messages and so forth. But the one thing that's really been quite remarkable to me at Ashland, is that our president ... this started long before I got there. But throughout this entire year, our president has done a series of town halls. Town halls that included not just the immediate campus community, but essentially the broader community. And that has really been remarkable and has been exceptionally well-received, just to make sure that on a consistent basis, we're getting that information out there. The community is invited to participate, ask questions openly, and those questions are addressed in real time; which I think has been a great opportunity for him to really address parent and student concerns.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (31:10):

Great. That's very interesting. We have another question here from Hillary Burns, who's reporter at the Boston Business Journal, which might seem a little, why would it be the business journal? But I think she's looking for a larger piece, not just for Boston. And her question is, what student demographics are you targeting as traditional students diminish in numbers? Are there any particular groups that you're maybe ... and I don't know what she's defining by the word traditional, but maybe she's getting at, can you tell us the other kinds of innovation things you might be doing now that you wouldn't have been doing? Perhaps looking at what's going to happen in 2025.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (31:52):

It's interesting, I'm glad you said you didn't know what he meant by traditional. Because I was wondering that myself, what does she mean by traditional? As a public institution, we have a commitment, a statutory commitment to serving underrepresented students in the state of Maryland in particular. And as we've done the analysis, we know that the demographics are going to be shifting, the sort of traditional Caucasian college going population is declining, and other populations of color, [BiPAP 00:32:26] students are increasing. So as we think about this, we're strategically working to build, to make sure that we are building the relationships with various communities; both in terms of working with community-based organizations, religious based organizations; as well as ensuring that perhaps students who may not be, let's say, maybe a first-generation family who might not be comfortable sending their student to a four-year institution that were directly working with those students and families to help them understand that, they in fact have a place here. At the same time we're building a number of relationships and strengthening partnerships with community colleges.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (33:16):

Keith or Blake, anything to add to that?

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (33:19):

Sure. I can say at Ashland ... Ashland, historically has been very traditionally oriented. And when I say that, the definition that I would use is the direct from high school population, primarily living on campus. And so beyond that, and we're just starting to get into this a little bit more that the populations that we're looking at, are really, how do we expand and at least stabilize that population and preparation for 2025. But also adding additional programs at the graduate level, adding programs that would target primarily ... or not target, but certainly serve the degree completer, or through our corporate partners, we have opportunities for those populations to come back and to complete either an undergraduate degree or to pursue a graduate degree.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (34:12):

And so those types of opportunities, certainly anything online, right? So even some of those, what we would maybe consider traditional in many of those traditional populations now, are now looking to online options so that there's some specialty kinds of programs that are out there that we're trying to look into. And so launching of new programs that would attract a different type of population is also on our radar.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (34:35):
Okay.

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (34:35):
I think one of the benefits of the pandemic, really has been, we have a traditional faculty, traditional academic programs as a liberal arts and sciences college. And one of the benefits of the pandemic in having this switch to hybrid learning, is now, I think a faculty who now sees that this actually there is benefit here and this actually is something that is appropriate and can be appropriate at a more of a traditional institution.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (35:05):

Great. Andy, I had a larger question for you since you work with a lot of university folks. This is also part of Hillary's question. Do you have some insight about how enrollment strategies have changed in the remote world? Can you maybe speak a little more broadly about trends that you're noticing?

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (35:30):

Yeah, I think first thing say is that if we think about the 2025 to '30, so the second half of this decade as the movie, COVID was somewhat of a trailer to that movie. It gave us a preview to what's coming in front of us. And there's no doubt we have this supply demand issue that's rising, right? So Nathan Gras tells us, we're going to have 450,000 less high school students, right? When high school graduates going to college in that second half of the decade, that's a big gap. And so what we're seeing is to think about fit; in way that ... and allow us to use data and analytics to drive our population of potential students. So getting beyond where we traditionally may recruit; or thinking about, I think COVID has also opened up a whole different distance learning concept that we haven't quite figured out yet, but we will. That's going to open up our universities and colleges to a whole group of students that aren't necessarily in our backyard.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (36:47):

And so what we need to understand is, how those students will fit with the programs that we have, with the outcomes that we're generating at our colleges and universities. And I think that our most forward-looking colleges and universities, and I think you've heard it from all of our panelists are thinking ahead, just beyond their backyard, about how do I reach out match those individuals to the programs and the type of school that we are. And I think that's ... from a bigger picture perspective, that is a wave of strategy. I think that's at the very crest.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations ([37:25](#)):

Great. Thank you. So before I jump into this next group of questions, I want to go back and correct myself. The first group was actually from Higher Ed Dive. Hallie writes for them. This next group is EdTech Higher Ed, and this is Amelia Pang and her questions are: what are your long-term plans for attracting and supporting disadvantaged students such as those from low socioeconomic background, those with disabilities and undocumented immigrants? And, will technology play a role here? Blake.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech ([38:01](#)):

Yeah. I can start with that one. At Tech, we're very proud of the work we do to support disadvantaged students. Before the pandemic, we were almost 50% [inaudible 00:38:13], 40% first gen; [inaudible 00:38:16] you go on and on, it's something we like to talk about is social mobility. So there are a lot of rankings that show we're number one in the state for increasing that student success after college. And so we already [inaudible 00:38:31] really tried to build that into our mission. You have to serve students.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech ([38:36](#)):

Some things we're thinking about doing for the future, for us, it's not necessarily just that the overall numbers are changing, but it's how they're changing. And we've all kind of talked about that. So it's not just that the number of possible graduates is going down, it's of that, that smaller number, it's predicted that there will be the level of affinity for going to college right away; but then also, that the demographics of that number. So the cultural shifts are important to look at for us, Arkansas is projected to have an increase in Hispanic students, the quite substantial one.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech ([39:06](#)):

And so we're already a campus that's 11% Hispanic, what do we need to do to make those students feel more comfortable and choosing Tech as a destination; either for right out of college as traditional students or on down the line. So that's a big thing. We're thinking about is, do we possibly position ourselves as an HSI, and try to get to that 25% number or higher and get some assistance from the federal government to do that? And then somebody mentioned online, that will always be key for non-traditional in my opinion. But what can we do, whether it's part of learning assessment or badging [inaudible 00:39:41], certificate workforce development type programs to get students into those online programs to kind of meet them where they are.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech ([39:50](#)):

An initiative we started last year was going after our own stuffed out students. So students that had dropped out of Tech for whatever reason and had not enrolled at another institution. And technology plays a huge role in that because 95 plus percent of those, don't want to reenter their own campus program, they want to enter an online degree, or they can complete that. So yes, I think technology is only growing importance with online programs and even traditional fabric [inaudible 00:40:21] moving forward.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (40:23):

Keith and David, I'd love your insight in this topic as well.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (40:29):

Well, I guess the first thing that I would add Jennifer is simply, to agree with a lot of what Blake said. We're doing a lot of the same at Ashland in particular on the student support side and the retention side, and using technology to do that very thing; the early warning kind of systems to be able to say, "Hey, we've got some students who are in trouble here;" regardless of what their background is. I think that this really comes into play, but in particular with first-generation and students of color where they may not have the home environment, a traditional home environment that can encourage them to look for the help when they initially need it. I think that's on us to say, "Well, now we've put some pieces and parts into play. We've got the technology now for us to internally support our students in that regard."

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (41:21):

And that's really been our first move in that direction. We still have a lot of work to do on the recruitment side, and I think we'll be moving in that direction here over the next couple of years, especially with, all that's helped is we look at our current profile and where we need to move and building out that profile. But providing that support has been our top priority.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (41:43):

David, any additional add on?

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (41:46):

Just briefly, one of our approaches as we're working to build these relationships, has to develop a programmatic support services here on campus. So for students who are, let's say for first-generation low socioeconomic areas that they ... and develop a student success programs for them to have affinity based groups while they're here on campus. And we found that they've been very successful; sort of building those relationships externally because those that support students from disadvantaged backgrounds are looking for that same level of support to be provided once they enroll at the institution. And we found that success by developing specific programs designed to do that. And then as Keith said, really making sure that we're monitoring student success and various retention measures over the course of the students; in particular, their first and second year to ensure that persistence.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (42:55):

Okay, great. Thanks. So in the interest of trying to make that promise of this being an hour or less, I'm going to go to one more question in the general group, and then we will close off and move into our private section. Because we have two pretty hefty groups of questions here that we may not be able to get into all of them. But, this other question is, what are the problems you're trying to solve with current data analytics that analytics currently don't solve? So give us something like, "Oh man, if only we could do this;" is kind of the question. We could do this at the moment, but we can't do that. This is what we're hoping for. Andy, maybe you want to start with that.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (43:43):

Yeah. I can tell you what we're hearing from our partner schools and other schools that we talked to. And there's this idea of how do we, at the top end of the funnel identified the best fit students earlier,

right? Wherever they may be in the country. And again, that is by having a mechanism or a way to understand whether or not those students do fit, is really the beginning of the answer to that question. You can fill that funnel with as many people as you want, but if they don't fit your institution or the programs that you offer, you're going to have issues, really building a robust funnel.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (44:31):

And I'd say that gets even more complicated, because as we move to more of a test optional environment, we may know less about students and we did a couple of years ago. And so how do we know more about them as individuals when we're actually getting less data? And so we have to be much more sophisticated about how we build relationships, how we understand them, who they are, why they might fit, how we communicate to them.

Andy Hannah, Co-Founder of Othot (45:01):

And one last thing I'll add, I know I'm using up a lot of time here, but remember gen Z has been taught that everything should be personalized, right? The way that they consume their music, Spotify, Amazon, Netflix, you name it. The way that they consume, is everything's been personalized to me. We need to start to really think about that from an educational and institutional basis, so that we're matching what they're expecting as they start to look at colleges and universities.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (45:34):

Some thoughts from the rest of our folks, Keith? You're on mute.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (45:41):

Well, I was going to tag team with Andy a little bit ... what's wrong?

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (45:41):

No, we got you now.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (45:45):

[inaudible 00:45:45]. Oh, you got me. Okay. I was just going to tag team on something that Andy said, it reminded me that about a week ago, I had a conversation. In fact, I was doing a panel with some representatives of EAB, and NAGAP and some research that we've been doing with them and a series of studies, a series of pulse surveys that we've done with some graduate enrollment professionals across the country through NAGAP, and when it comes to the data, one of the things that I said we don't have data on yet, is, what is motivating a student to jump into your funnel right now? Because we don't know, right?

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (46:25):

So if we're not able to get a test score, if they're not coming in through an inquiry form, and we know based on our national data right now, that students are making their decisions, they're applying later. In fact, as of ... I don't know, a month ago, EAB had reported out to 40% of high school seniors who indicated the intent to go to college next fall, had not yet applied to a single college or university; 40%.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (46:56):

And that was a month ago, right? That was between Thanksgiving and Christmas. And so we asked the question, well, what data exists that indicates what is motivating a student to apply right now? And that doesn't exist. Nobody knows. And so suddenly over the holidays, we started to see a bump in some applications, not just at Ashland, but some of you probably saw the common app numbers January one skyrocketed, from the weeks prior, on campus, we were kind of joking, was that because mom and dad suddenly said, "You got to get out next fall and I'm not letting you wait any longer. You've got to apply someplace."

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (47:35):

I don't know. But that would be ... Andy, you said, helping you to decide, predicting once they're in the funnel, where they're going to end up at the bottom of the funnel; what we're looking for is, well, how do you truly right now get them in your funnel?

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (47:53):

Interesting. Blake, David, ready to add into that or too deep?

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (48:01):

I think the only that I have to say from what Andy had to share was, a pain point for me is, as we're looking at building and growing our institution which is probably interesting in this climate, we are dedicating a lot of resources to have the entire funnel. So pain point for me is to be able to better differentiate where we need to be dedicating resources through the funnel, so I can be using my resources more efficiently.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (48:40):

Okay. And Blake, some ideas there.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (48:46):

I think I have to echo the top of the funnel. Anything that can help us unmuddy those waters. I think in that same ... the presentation that Keith was talking about, there was nationally [inaudible 00:48:56] applications [inaudible 00:48:57]. The one [inaudible 00:48:59], that you might normally have from those [inaudible 00:49:02] applicants, are coming through. And so some students really rely on the student [inaudible 00:49:07] and then they can massage them down the funnel from there.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (49:12):

So anything that can help clear up the waters at the top of the funnel, I think is what people in our profession are craving right now.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (49:20):

Okay. Great. So we'll go ahead and take this ... and very much, I'm going to close this off, have a terrific afternoon.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (49:30):

Thank you everybody. It was a pleasure. [inaudible 00:49:32].

David Hautanen, St. Mary's College of Maryland (49:33):

Thank you very much. All the best for the rest of your cycle.

Jennifer Harrison, Pando Public Relations (49:39):
Thank you.

Dr. Blake Bedsole, Arkansas Tech (49:39):
Thank you.

Keith Ramsdell, Ashland University (49:40):
Thank you.