



BRIDGING THE GAP:

Navigating Graduate Enrollment Challenges with Social Intelligence Insights

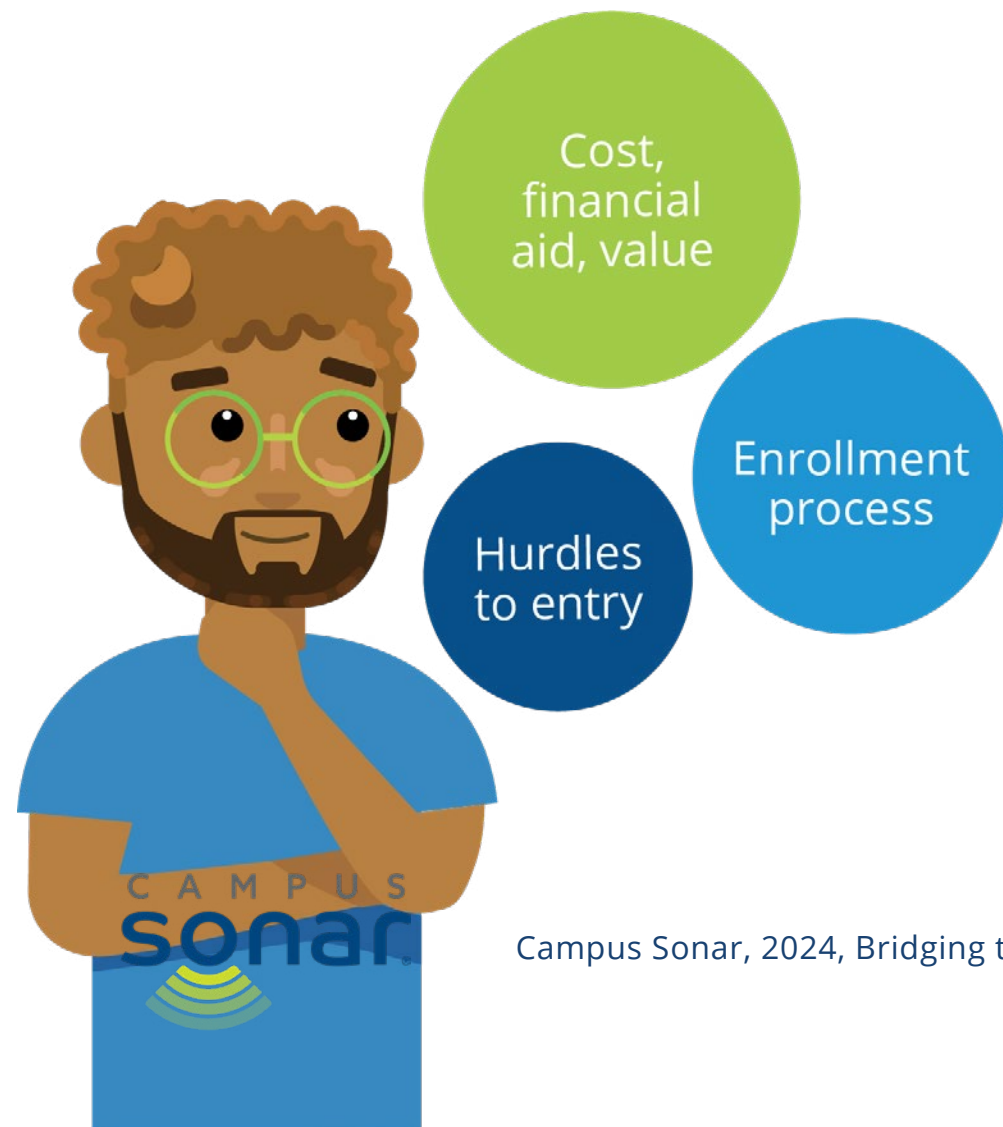
Industry trends help you understand context, consider its relevance to your campus, and find actionable ways to focus your strategy and impact outcomes.

What We Set Out to Uncover

Campus Sonar's 2022-23 social intelligence research explored how institutions can navigate current challenges in graduate enrollment.

We used social intelligence to analyze conversations and gather insights and authentic perceptions about the emotional impact of the graduate application process, inequities, and accessibility; questions prospective students are afraid to ask in person; and competitive intelligence.

Social Intelligence Research Framework



The Social Intelligence Data

Campus Sonar analysts explored how individuals think and feel about graduate enrollment by **analyzing more than 61,000 online mentions from August 1, 2022–July 31, 2023.**

Prospective students discussed 51 colleges on 177 subreddits and the conversation had three critical themes describing pain points, issues, and challenges individuals experience in the graduate enrollment process.

- 1 Hurdles to entry
- 2 The enrollment process
- 3 Cost, financial aid, and value

Graduate Enrollment Challenges

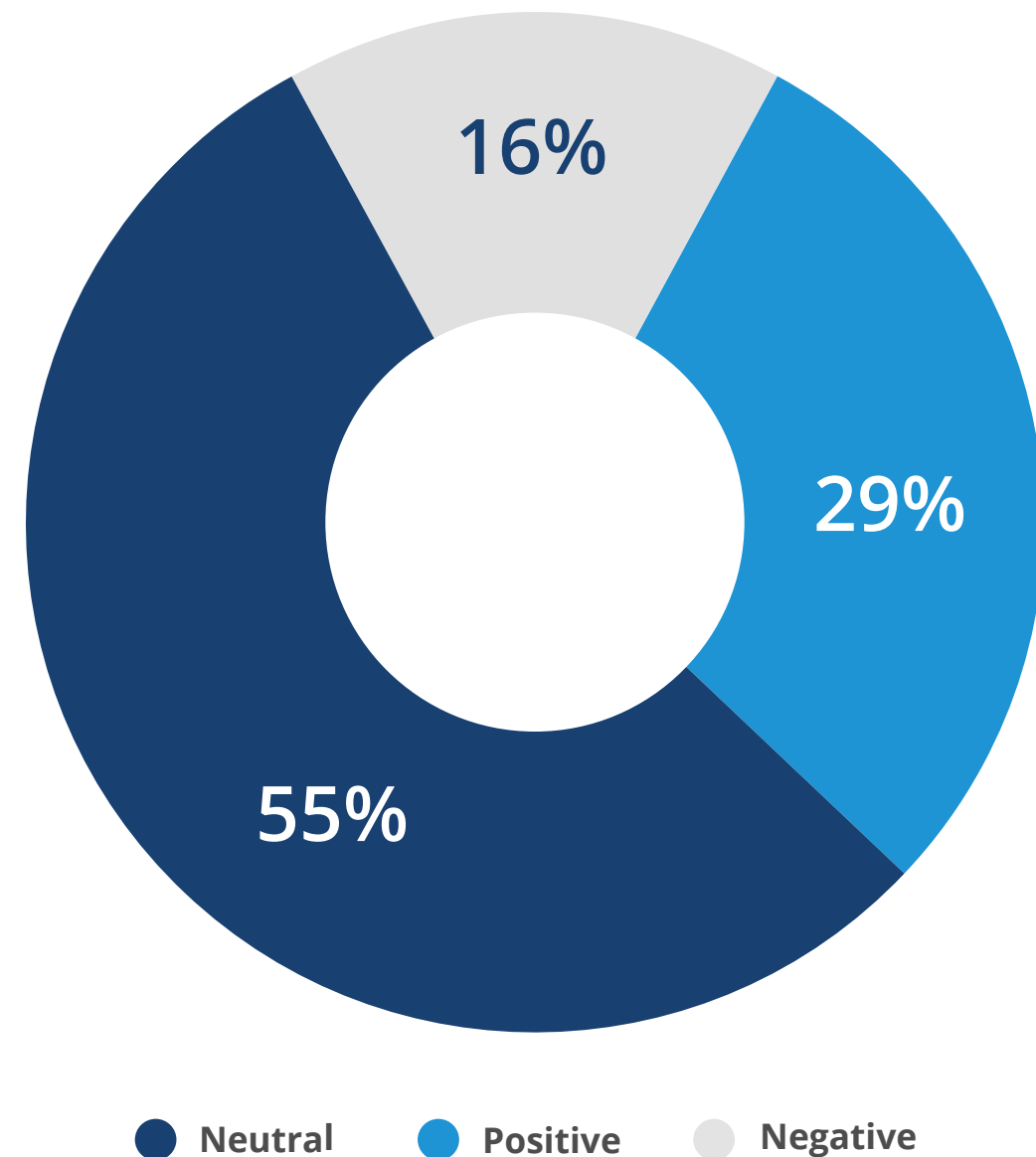
The sentiment of the conversation was overwhelmingly negative or neutral—and it shifted seasonally. In late summer application anxiety was top of mind with students mentioning:

- Impostor syndrome.
- Uncertainty about qualifications and likelihood of acceptance.
- Life-changing decisions regarding career shifts.

In spring, the conversation shifted to making decisions.

Our analysis found the majority of the conversation on forums (60%) with 47% on Reddit and 13% on other forum sites. Social media was also a main source with 27% of the conversation on X (formerly Twitter).

How Do Individuals Talk About Graduate Education?



Issues & Opportunities: Hurdles to Entry



ISSUE 1

Fear over leaving existing comforts.

Apprehension over a major career or job change.

- Include your career center staff in the admissions process.

Concerns related to relocating to campus or an unknown community.

- Provide support for student networking and community building.



ISSUE 2

Mental or physical health challenges.

Lifestyle changes that significantly impact daily routines.

- Explain the flexibility available in a graduate curriculum or course schedule.

Medical conditions requiring regular doctor visits or treatment.

- Add medical providers and contact information in your communication plan.



ISSUE 3

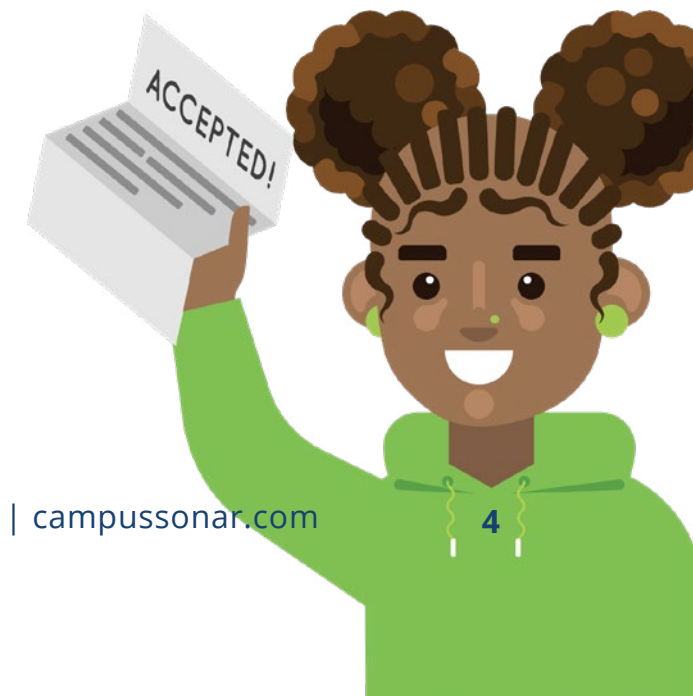
Academic barriers.

Lack of confidence related to previous failures or rejection.

- Be transparent about the admissions decision process.

Questioning the perseverance needed to succeed.

- Share realistic expectations for graduate student success.



Issues & Opportunities: Enrollment Process



ISSUE 1

Confusing transcript requirements.

Request process for undergraduate transcripts.

- Provide instructions on how to request UG transcripts.

Application review with unofficial transcripts.

- Make it clear if you accept unofficial transcripts for application review.

Deadlines for official transcripts.

- Note deadlines, especially for submitting official transcript.



ISSUE 2

Expectations to gain admission.

Academic cutoffs versus a holistic review process.

- Be transparent about your application expectations and the review process.



ISSUE 3

Uncertainty around extenuating circumstances.

Process for considering non-academic disciplinary issues.

- Clarify how you evaluate non-academic disciplinary issues.

Process for considering academic suspensions and dismissals.

- Clarify how you evaluate academic suspensions and dismissals.

Issues & Opportunities: Cost, Financial Aid, Value



DOMESTIC STUDENTS

Fears of taking on additional debt.

Existing personal debt and undergraduate student loans.

- Highlight graduate assistantships.

Total cost of attendance.

- Provide information on educational loan deferral.

Student loan debt initiative.

- Share resources on external scholarships, employer reimbursement, and military benefits.

Return on investment.

- Share alumni outcomes.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Anxiety over total costs and relocating.

Tuition and fees.

- Convey transparency over cost of attendance.

International student visa process.

- Provide information on curricular practical training (CPT) and/or optional practical training (OPT).

Related educational expenses, housing availability, and rental rates.

- Make connections with International Student Services, the housing office, and residence life.

Return on investment.

- Activate current student ambassadors
- Share alumni outcomes.

Recommendations

Leverage these insights into the decision-making process in your targeted recruitment messaging.

- ➔ **Hurdles to Entry:** Emphasize the resources available in your community and opportunities for students to connect and find the support they need.
- ➔ **Cost, Financial Aid, and Value:** Be transparent about costs, provide information and resources to assist with financial needs, and demonstrate outcomes to alleviate concerns about the return on investment.
- ➔ **The Enrollment Process:** Give clear and concise instructions regarding deadlines and the steps required in the application process.

To find out more about our social intelligence research, visit campussonar.com or [contact us](#).

NAGAP, The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management is the only professional organization devoted exclusively to the concerns of individuals working in the graduate enrollment management environment. The mission of NAGAP is to engage and advance Graduate Enrollment Management Professionals by promoting excellence and collaboration through education, research, and professional development.