



# Data-Driven Strategies for Growing Enrollment in a Pandemic

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*How University of Dallas Increased Graduate Enrollments by 22%*

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## Poll

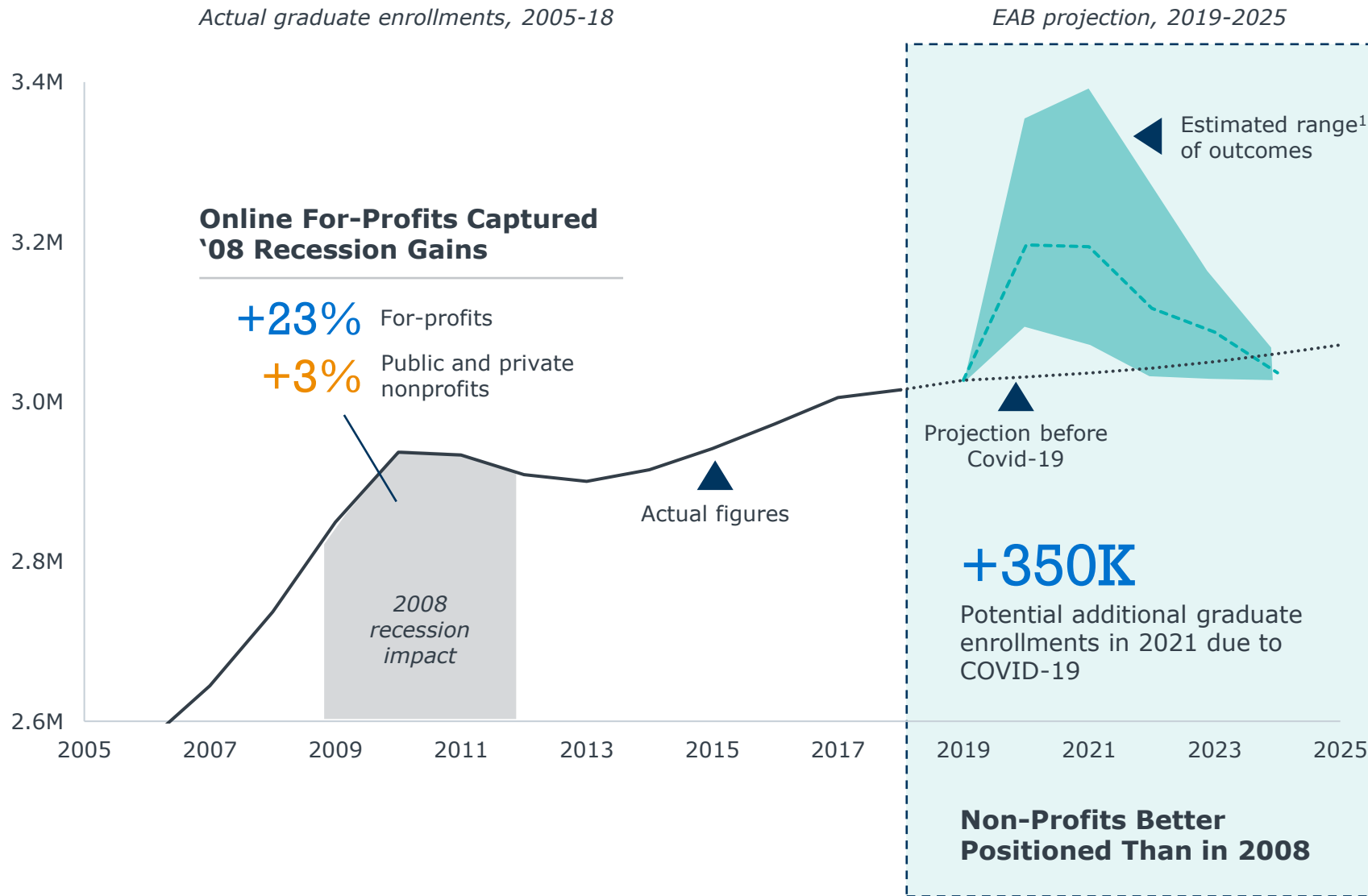
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### **Which of the following is your greatest concern currently?**

- Generating leads for long-term enrollment growth
- Meeting my fall 2021 graduate enrollment goals
- Optimizing my existing program portfolio
- Quickly designing and marketing programs to offset revenue declines during COVID-19
- Scaling recruitment marketing efforts

# Pivotal Opportunity for Graduate Growth

Expecting a Countercyclical Boost in Graduate Enrollments from COVID-19



1) Range of possibilities is not a confidence interval.

Source: BLS US Unemployment Statistics, IPEDS Fall Enrollments 2005-2018, EAB Analysis.

# With Visionary Leadership, Institutions Can Accelerate Out of the Crisis

## Crisis Planning Is Demanding Leaders' Attention—Often at the Expense of Long-Term Strategy

*Dozens of Scenarios to Plan*

*Only Core and Lab Courses F2F*

*Postpone Fall Semester To S*

*Delayed Fall Start*

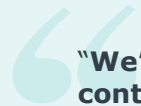
*Low-Residency Model*

*Only First-year Students Return*

*Early Summer With Mid-Fall C*

*Only Grad Students Return*

*Staggered Fall Starts*



**"We're spending so much time planning for fall contingencies—how do we decide who comes back, what about social distancing in the dorms, how do we test people who come back, it goes on and on. None of this matters if we have to go fully remote when there is an outbreak. In the meantime, we're missing the opportunity to think about our overall survival and strategic advantages in the market.**

VP Strategic Initiatives  
Mid-Sized Private University

*ourses  
me Online*

*Full Return To On-Campus Operations*

*erate  
le by Age*

*Students Live in Dorms, Learn Online*

*n Campus,  
mote*

*Modularized "Mini-Mesters"*

*emote  
on*

*Simultaneous Online and F2F Instruction*

## However, a Long-Term Perspective Can Yield Outsize Benefits During This Turbulent Time

*Planning on Multiple Horizons*



Next Few Months

### Crisis Management

*"How do we anticipate and prepare for the next wave of COVID-19 **emergency issues**?"*

Next 3-6 Months

### Scenario Planning

*"How bad will things get and what difficult **decisions and trade-offs** will we need to make in the fall?"*

End of 2020 and Beyond

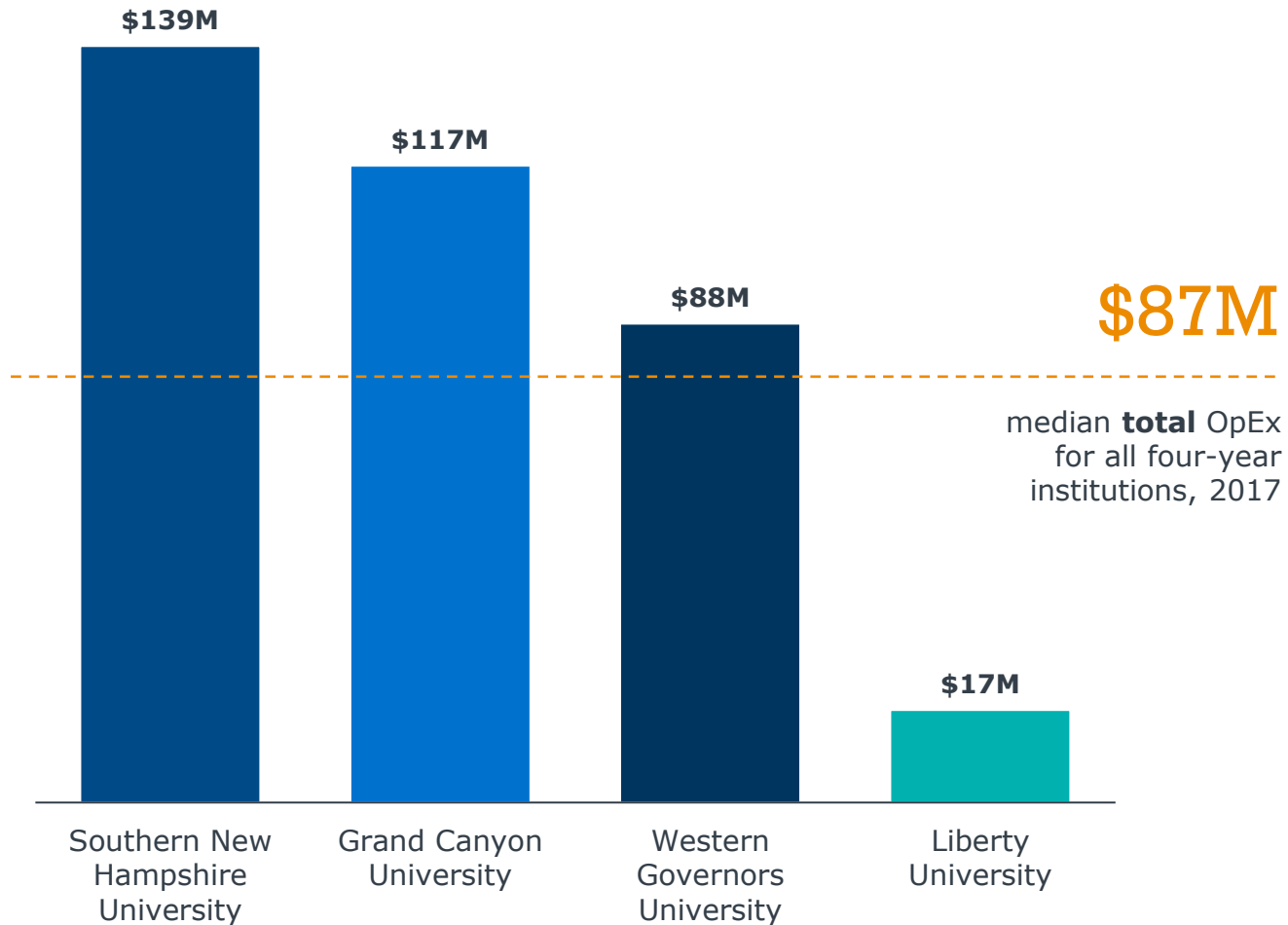
### Visionary Leadership

*"What will **competitive differentiation** look like in a radically altered higher ed landscape?"*

# Some Institutions Will Compete Based on Spend

## Few Able to Match the Spend of Top National Competitors

Dollar amount each institution spent on advertising and promotion<sup>1</sup>, 2017



1) Part IX, line 12 of IRS Form 990.

# Your Four Challenges to Growing Graduate Enrollment

1

## Prioritizing Areas for Growth

### A Maturing Adult Learner Market



Requires strategic investment in a limited number of high-value opportunities

### Tough Questions for Leaders to Answer

- *What are the best areas for expansion?*
- *How do we develop a sound online strategy?*
- *Do we need to let some programs go?*

2

## Organizing for Sustainable Growth

### Lack of Internal Coordination



Direction (and often, added budget) needed from senior leadership

### Internal Organization That Struggles to Keep Pace

*"Our org model and policies are more a product of historical accident than intentional strategy...we spend time and resources fighting amongst ourselves."*

*-Provost  
Research university*

3

## Finding Prospects in a Huge Market

### A Comparatively Large and Diffuse Market



Prospective adult learners are more difficult to identify than traditional undergraduates

### Current Tactics Aren't Reaching Them

**9 out of 10**

*adult learners first learned about their program through sources other than direct recruitment outreach*

4

## Engaging Prospects at Scale

### Many Different Mindsets and Behaviors



Prospects have diverse concerns, obligations, expectations, and career aspirations

### Wide Variation in When and Why Prospects Engage

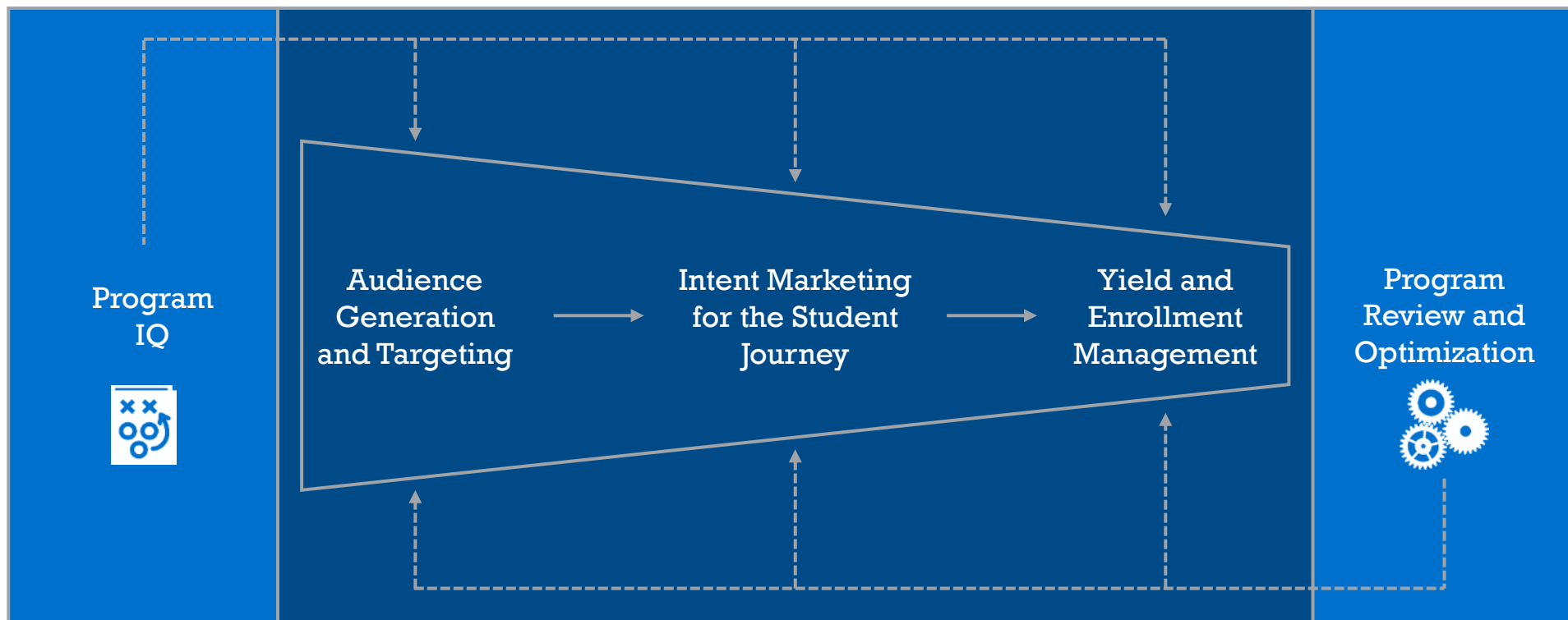
*"I need more school to take the next step in my career"*

*"Maybe when my kids are older"*

*"I want to invest in my future, but can I afford it right now?"*

# The Smart Growth Solution for the Adult Learner Market

Our **strategic enrollment solution** combines consumer analytics, intent marketing, and strategic services.



## DATA & CONSUMER ANALYTICS AT SCALE

1.5B+

Student interactions analyzed annually

100+

Data and analytics experts on staff

500+

Field marketing tests performed annually

7,000+

Custom market demand briefs completed since 2012

# Overview: Gupta College of Business, University of Dallas

## UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

*The Catholic University for Independent Thinkers*

- ▶ Private Catholic university located in Irving, Texas
- ▶ Total enrollment of approximately 2,500 students
- ▶ UD has offered business programs since the launch of the MBA program in 1966
- ▶ The Satish and Yasmin Gupta College of Business enrolls about 700 students across master's, doctoral, and certificate programs.
- ▶ 82% of UD Business students are working professionals
- ▶ 90% of College of Business graduates are employed within 3 months of graduation

## Challenge and Context



- After years of strong, steady enrollment, the College of Business began to experience enrollment declines
- In 2019, we sought to update marketing tactics and pursue a more strategic approach to portfolio management and program development

## Approach and Results



- University of Dallas partnered with EAB's Adult Learner Recruitment initiative in 2019 to support their growth goals for the College of Business.
- EAB helped UD recruit best-fit students and grow applications through personalized, intent-based marketing.
- EAB also worked with UD to identify programs with the highest growth potential and made suggestions on the positioning of these programs.

**+48%**

Increase in applications for 2020 compared to 2019

**+22%**

Increase in enrollments for 2020 compared to 2019



# Deploying Data-Driven Targeting and Student Journey Marketing

## Before 2019



### Limited Staff Capacity

The College's one-person marketing team lacked the resources to execute comprehensive campaigns.



### Lower-Quality Leads

Although leads grew over time, UD struggled to identify right-fit prospects.



### Conversion Rate Hurdles

UD historically focused on top-of-funnel metrics, and effectively converting leads into applicants at high rates proved challenging.

## With EAB Partnership



### Crafted Student Personas

EAB developed in-depth student personas to inform targeted marketing strategy



### Determined Best-Fit Students

EAB used test taker targeting and identified prospective students in key geographic areas to find right-fit prospects



### Launched Personalized Marketing at Scale

Designed highly responsive, multichannel campaigns based on student personas and intent

## Impact of EAB Campaigns

**100K+**

Prospective students reached via digital ads

**564**

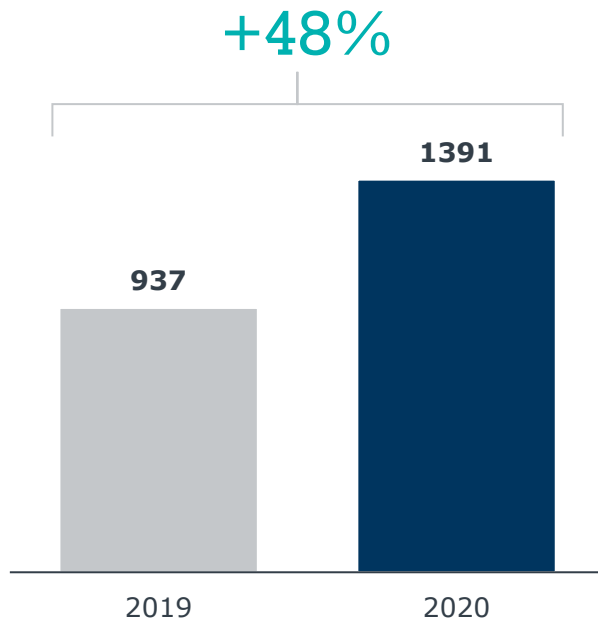
Applications influenced by EAB campaigns in 2020

**325**

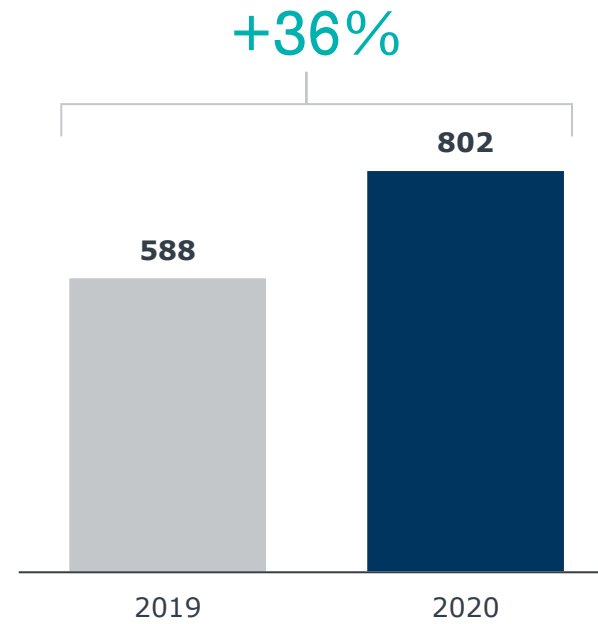
Admits influenced by EAB campaigns in 2020

# Results

**Completed Applications**



**Admits**



**+22%** Total enrollment growth in 2020

# Looking Forward: Redesigning the Portfolio for Future Growth



## Portfolio Redesign Goals

- Determine which programs represent the greatest opportunities for growth
- Identify curricular changes to make programs more competitive
- Build consensus around changes to program portfolio

## Approach



### Custom Labor Market and Competitor Analysis

EAB analyzed local and regional employer demand and competitor enrollments to identify programs with highest growth potential



### Assessment of Competitive Advantages

EAB performed competitive analyses to identify UD's key differentiators to highlight in marketing



### Audit of Application Requirements

EAB recommended updates to program prerequisites based on best practice research



### In-Depth Workshop with Key Stakeholders

EAB presented actionable next steps to UD's Board of Trustees

## Early Impact

- ▶ **Generated list of high-potential programs** to guide strategic updates to UD's program portfolio and investment of marketing budget
- ▶ **Surfaced key competitive advantages** to better position programs and inform improvements to program webpages
- ▶ **Reached swift consensus and identified next steps**, including immediate program improvements and strategies to grow alumni engagement and employer partnerships

# Facilitated Q&A

**Owen Crean**  
Senior Director  
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**Elizabeth Griffin Smith**  
Assistant Vice President of Enrollment  
University of Dallas



## **Brief Post-Session Poll**

*We appreciate your feedback on this material.*



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