

How Wichita State University achieved ongoing online enrollment growth in a turbulent market

Through a commitment to research and data-informed marketing, Anthology® Online Program Experience (OPX) has worked closely with Wichita State University to drive online enrollment growth for more than half a decade.



Anthology has played a pivotal role in helping us drive ongoing student growth for our online programs. We're really proud of the results that we've been able to achieve throughout the partnership.

Dr Amber Anderson

Online Enrollment Management, WSU Online

INSTITUTION TYPE:

FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATION:

WICHITA, KANSAS

ORGANIZATION SIZE:

16,000+

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCT:

 Anthology Online Program Experience



An early online pioneer from the state of Kansas

Founded in 1895, Wichita State University (WSU) supports more than 16,000 students at six colleges and several satellite locations.

WSU made their first steps into the world of online programs in 2013, with the launch of seven programs. Whilst one was a success, the other six failed to reach the enrollment goals that had been set. Anthology was contracted in 2016 to understand why some of these programs weren't reaching expectations and design a strategy to achieve growth.

Over the ensuing half-decade, several challenges emerged in the turbulent online market:

1. **Identifying core programs:** As stated above, WSU's initial strides down the online path were challenging. However, core areas such as Business, Nursing, and Dental Hygiene provided programs that offered early promise – and have remained important to WSU Online's program offering throughout.
2. **Isolating areas for growth:** The next step was to further expand their online offering. Program areas such as Early Childhood Education, Special Education, Criminal Justice, and Homeland Security have allowed for growth, while increasing interest from students outside of WSU's traditional catchment zone.
3. **Dropping university enrollment:** College enrollment has been in decline across the United States in recent years, and sadly the state of Kansas is no exception. Data shows overall college enrollment in Kansas in Fall 2021 was down 3.7% versus the previous year.
4. **COVID-19 pandemic:** Amongst all of this, the huge shock of the pandemic has added increased complexity since 2020. This caused job losses and financial hardship for many in the area – making recruitment difficult across all program types and demographics.



A data-led, flexible marketing plan has been essential to WSU's growth

Anthology's Research and Performance Marketing solutions have combined to form a data-led, go-to-market plan, with regular optimization to account for new challenges and trends in market.

The initial stages of the program involved a four-pronged approach, with Anthology and the WSU team working closely together on each step:

1. Review market conditions and demand for different program areas
2. Thorough analysis of relevant student demographics and segmentation
3. A detailed marketing plan combining unique creative assets and tactical paid media
4. Proactive outreach to convert leads into enrollments

These initiatives delivered an immediate uplift in enrollment; however, to drive ongoing success, the approach has been constantly refined. Major optimizations have included:

- Development and refinement of dedicated microsites
- Ongoing SEO optimization
- Expansion to paid social media, including Instagram and LinkedIn
- Expansion of geo-targeting, moving beyond the I-35 corridor to target relevant students elsewhere in the country
- Constant refreshing of creative



The result: more than half a decade of continuous online growth

By regularly optimizing the enrollment campaigns, WSU has seen impressive year-on-year growth across all key metrics. Across the duration of the partnership, WSU's fully online student cohort has **increased by 3.6x!**

| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| New Enrollments | 167 (UG 105, GR 62) | 260 (UG 214, GR 46) | 426 (UG 297, GR 129) | 617 (UG 445, GR 172) | 633 (UG 404, GR 229) | 743 (UG 421, GR 322) |
| YOY Growth | | +57% | +64% | +45% | +3% | +17% |
| Total Enrolled Students in Online Programs | 459 (UG 335, GR 124) | 738 (UG 568, GR 170) | 1236 (UG 912, GR 324) | 1536 (UG 1091, GR 444) | 1688 (UG 1134, GR 554) | 1650 (UG 1074, GR 576) |
| YOY Growth | | +61% | +67% | +24% | +10% | -2.3% |

Product highlighted in this success story:

Anthology Online Program Experience



Learn more at anthology.com

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