

Blackboard®

Research paves the way for enrollment growth



TEXAS TECH
UNIVERSITY.



www.ttu.edu



Lubbock, TX



15,000+ online students

Ranking 21st on Carnegie’s “Highest Activity Research” institutions for return on investment, it’s no surprise that Texas Tech University (TTU) values the role of research in its decision-making process. When the university’s overall enrollments began to stagnate, the leadership team decided to explore growth opportunities within its Worldwide eLearning program.

Ambitious goals

The university had set a goal of enrolling 5,000 new students in its eLearning program within a five-year period. What’s more, TTU wanted to increase the program’s standing within national rankings—no small feat, considering the leanness of the Worldwide eLearning team.

“Tech had been running a ‘shotgun approach’ to marketing,” explains Dr. Justin Louder, Assistant Vice Provost and Assistant Professor of Practice of Worldwide eLearning, TTU. “We knew we needed more students, but we didn’t know anything about them—what was important to them in a school, how to reach them, or even which programs to promote.” The team at TTU needed concrete insights to better focus its efforts if it was going to achieve its goals.

“It was critical that we engage an objective third party to help us,” continues Dr. Louder. “To look at our practices and the competitive landscape, and tell us what we needed to fix, without having any preconceived notions or invested interest in the findings.” After an extensive RFP process in search of the right partner to help evaluate the institution’s internal programs and practices, as well as assess those of its competitors, TTU chose Blackboard.

Tailored to TTU

Starting first with a fact-finding mission within the university, the Blackboard team hosted discovery sessions with stakeholders to better understand each organization’s practices and objectives. Blackboard then customized the research approach to meet TTU’s goals. The highly collaborative process involved collecting a breadth of both internal- and student-facing information, including marketing materials, website messaging and navigation, program and enrollment data, student feedback, and more.

Armed with a comprehensive view of TTU’s eLearning department, Blackboard applied a blend of third-party and primary research methods to benchmark TTU against its top competitors. Key dimensions included: cost, programs offered, delivery format, enrollment trends, brand, positioning, marketing activity and channels, recruitment and lead nurturing efforts, and media investment. The findings were both surprising and validating.

Within just six months,
Tech experienced a

17% INCREASE IN
APPLICATIONS

+ 25% INCREASE IN
ENROLLMENTS

in just one year—that’s
12,000+ STUDENTS
(fall 2016 – 2017)



A methodical approach

Blackboard uncovered new insights that provided a clear path forward with concrete recommendations. The methodical approach included:

- › Assessing the university's current online programs and potential whitespace growth opportunities (Program Viability)
- › Understanding competitors' strengths and weaknesses, and areas of opportunity (Competitive Analysis)
- › Uncovering ideal target student audiences (Audience Segmentation)
- › Identifying differentiators and leading benefits to inform messaging (Marketing Plan)
- › Understanding investment options and creating a plan of action (Financial Model)



Blackboard helped us build the case for change. They provided us with actionable information that has informed our go-forward strategy, and they presented the findings to our colleagues, which helped us gain buy-in across campus.”

Dr. Justin Louder, Assistant Vice Provost and Assistant Professor of Practice of Worldwide eLearning, Texas Tech University

The result: a comprehensive analysis that highlighted “low-hanging fruit” (such as website updates) as well as longer-term strategic wins (including competitive differentiation, messaging, and program selection). “We couldn’t have done this without Blackboard,” says David R. Hankins, Senior Director of Marketing eLearning and Academic Partnerships with TTU. “We simply didn’t have the resources or the expertise to thoroughly vet and quantify opportunities the way that Blackboard could.”



The information has been absolutely invaluable. I refer to the Blackboard reports on a weekly basis. We’re still unpacking the wealth of information, even a year later.”

David R. Hankins, Senior Director of Marketing eLearning and Academic Partnerships, Texas Tech University

Actionable insights

In addition to overhauling their website, the TTU team has implemented other recommendations as a result of Blackboard's research—from the way it nurtures enrollment leads and the portfolio of programs it offers to the types of students it targets.

Continuing the conversation

With the Worldwide eLearning organization's new plan underway, the university set its sights on strategizing the future of Tech's K-12 program, “TTU K-12.” Within two months of receiving initial brand findings from Blackboard, the program significantly improved its go-to-market strategy and perception within the marketplace.



Let's talk

To read more examples of how institutions like yours have solved student lifecycle challenges, visit: [Blackboard.com/lifecycleservices](https://blackboard.com/lifecycleservices)