



CASE STUDY:

COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

ENROLLMENT-FOCUSED DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

This engagement demonstrates evok advertising’s ability to support enrollment-focused digital marketing for a higher education institution serving diverse, nontraditional student populations. CSU’s audiences include adult learners, military members, first responders, and working professionals, each with distinct motivations, barriers, and decision-making paths. The work highlights evok’s experience conducting deep audience research, developing data-driven digital strategies, designing audience-specific digital experiences, and collaborating closely with internal stakeholders to inform enrollment marketing decisions.



INDUSTRY
EDUCATION



AUDIENCE
PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS



CATEGORY/TACTICS
BRAND POSITIONING & MESSAGING
PERSONA MARKETING
INTEGRATED MARKETING CAMPAIGN
DIGITAL MARKETING
PRINT MARKETING & COLLATERAL
VIDEO PRODUCTION
STREAMING & BROADCAST
LANDING PAGE DEVELOPMENT



CHALLENGE.

Columbia Southern University needed to improve the effectiveness of its digital recruitment efforts by better understanding and engaging multiple prospective student segments across programs and degree levels. The challenge extended beyond creative execution to include identifying who CSU's priority audiences were, how they researched education options, what influenced their enrollment decisions, and how digital marketing could more efficiently move them from awareness to inquiry within a competitive online education landscape.



CSU Prospective Students



APPROACH.

Since 2023, evok has served as CSU's strategic marketing research and digital strategy partner. The approach centered on building a research-backed foundation to guide all digital marketing decisions, including audience targeting, messaging, channel selection, and landing experience design. By combining primary and secondary research with media ethnography and competitive analysis, evok provided CSU with actionable insights that informed both near-term digital execution and long-term enrollment strategy.



Meet Stan,
The Returning Scholar



Meet Devon,
The Seasoned Transfer



Meet Ally,
The Value Seeker

Proposed Personas



EXECUTION.

Audience Research & Persona Development

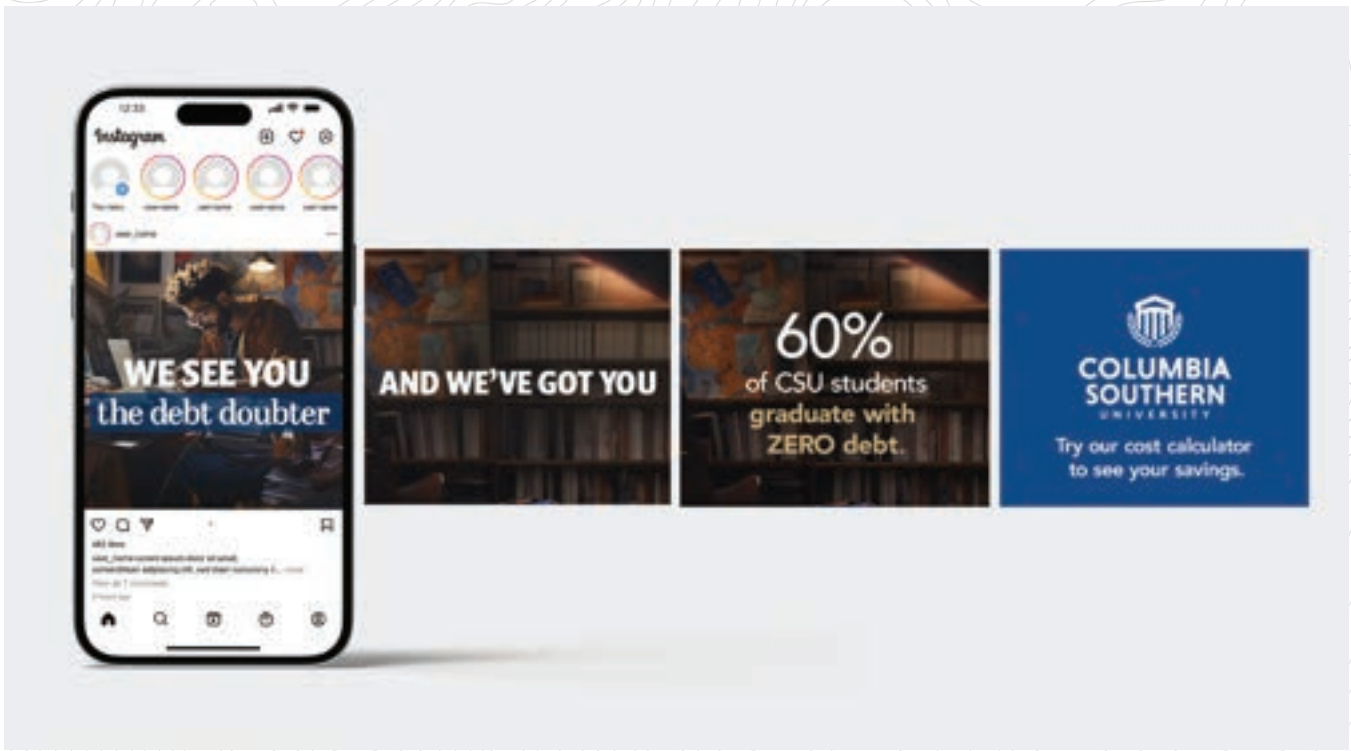
Evok conducted comprehensive research to develop detailed student personas representing CSU's diverse learner populations. Personas incorporated demographics, psychographics, career motivations, educational barriers, media habits, and enrollment decision drivers. These personas became foundational tools used to guide digital messaging, creative direction, landing page content, and channel prioritization.

Program-Level Audience Segmentation

Audiences were further segmented by academic program and degree level, identifying unique characteristics and behaviors for disciplines such as business, criminal justice, fire science, occupational safety, information technology, and health sciences. This enabled CSU to move beyond broad targeting toward more precise, program-specific digital strategies and messaging frameworks.

Media Ethnography & Enrollment Journey Insights

Evok conducted media ethnography research to understand how prospective students consume media, research education options, and move through the enrollment funnel. Findings revealed platform preferences, content engagement patterns, peer influence, and information needs at each stage of decision-making. These insights directly informed digital channel strategy, content emphasis, and landing page design.



Targeted Social Advertising

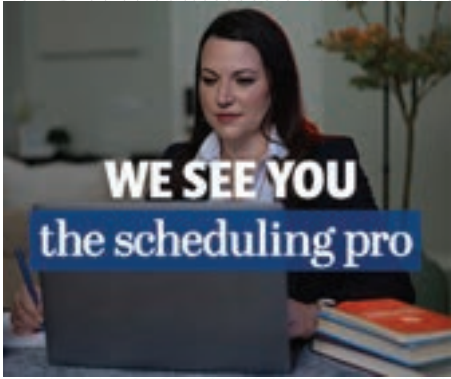
Digital Media Strategy & Planning

Based on research findings, evok developed multi-channel digital media strategy recommendations aligned to CSU's enrollment cycles, program priorities, and competitive environment. This included channel mix guidance, budget allocation frameworks, geographic considerations, and sequencing strategies to support awareness, consideration, and inquiry generation across the funnel.

Website Optimization / UX

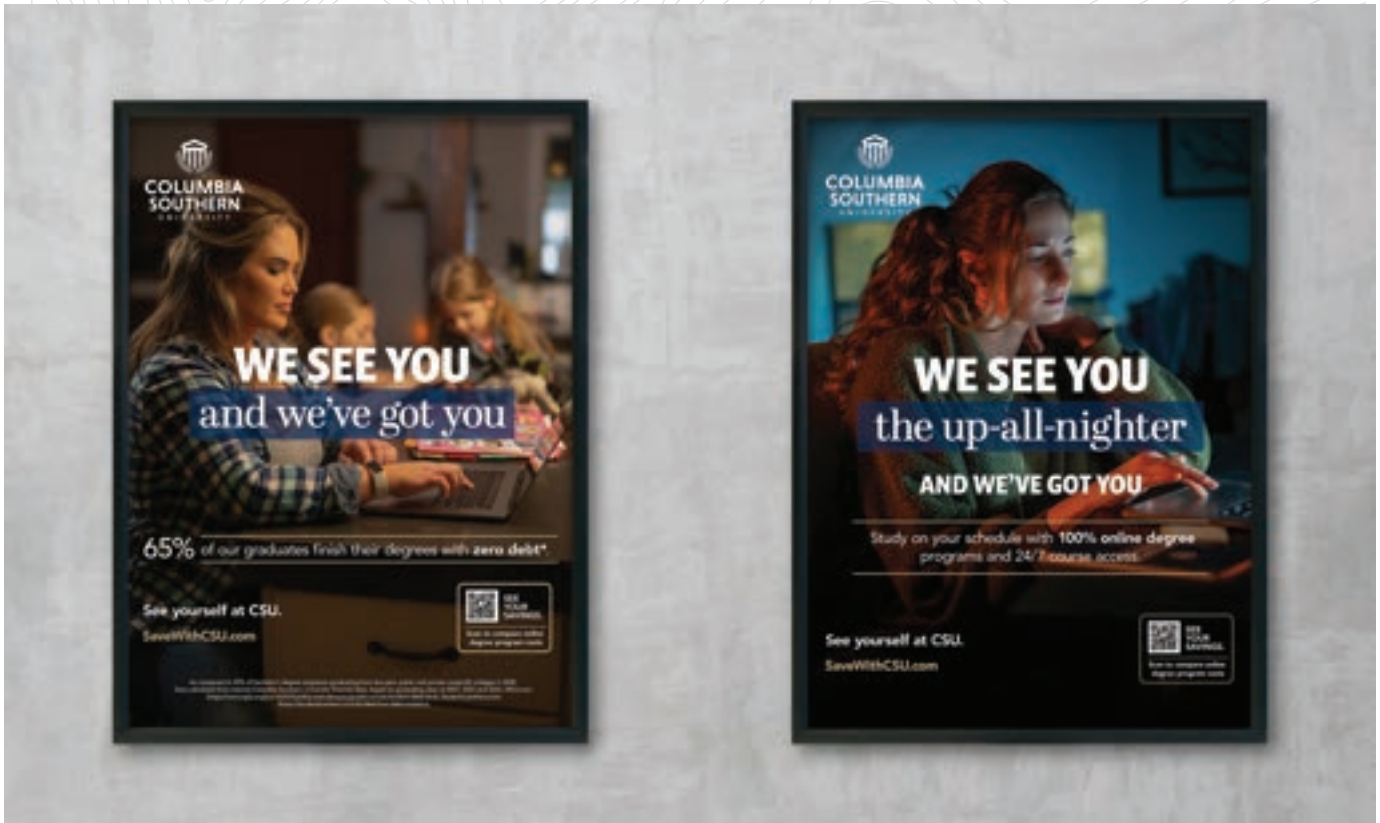
Evok designed and developed audience-specific landing page experiences tailored to distinct prospective student segments. Page structure, content hierarchy, and UX flows were intentionally designed to reduce friction and present program, career, and support information most relevant to each audience. Landing experiences prioritized clarity, usability, and mobile responsiveness, ensuring prospective students could easily understand value propositions and next steps regardless of device.

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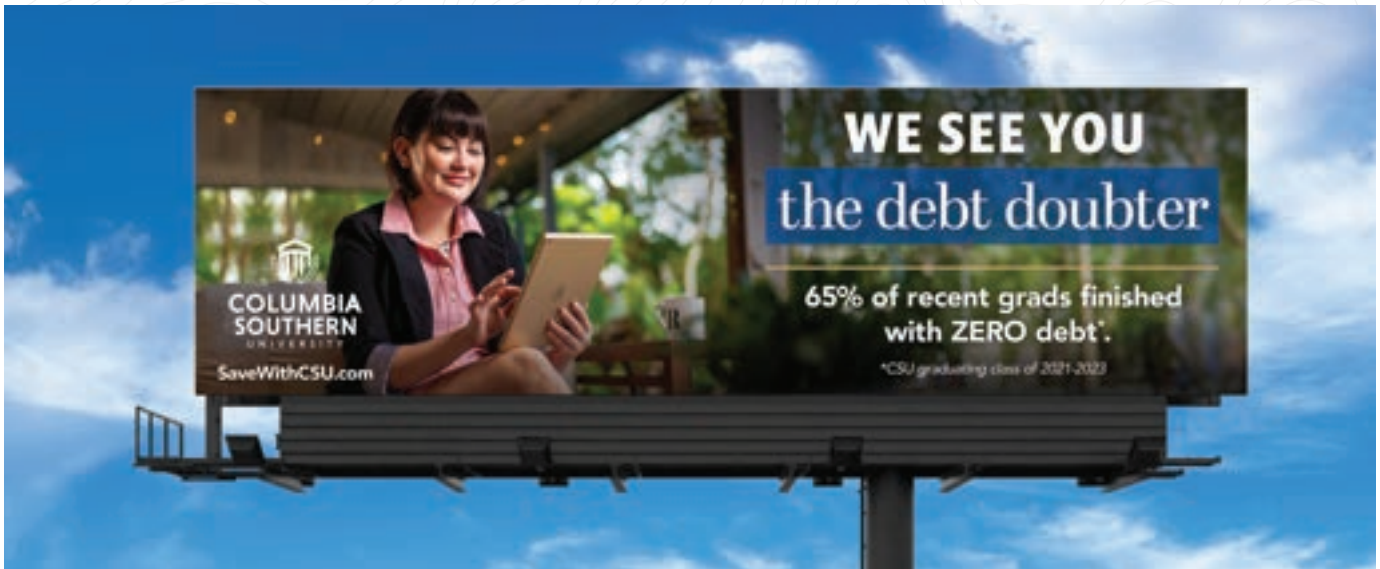


Persona-Segmented Digital Display Ads

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Print Advertising



Out-of-Home Advertising

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Print Advertising

CRM / Funnel Alignment

Landing experiences were structured to align with CSU's enrollment workflows, supporting a clean handoff from marketing engagement to admissions follow-up. Lead capture and attribution considerations were incorporated to ensure digital activity could be meaningfully evaluated within CSU's broader enrollment process.

Internal Stakeholder Coordination

Throughout the engagement, evok worked closely with CSU's marketing, enrollment, and leadership teams to align research findings, strategy recommendations, and digital execution. Regular collaboration ensured insights were actionable, stakeholder priorities were reflected, and recommendations could be operationalized across internal teams without disrupting existing processes.



:30 TV Commercial

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Out-of-Home Advertising



RESULTS.

Evok's research-driven digital strategy and audience-first execution delivered measurable gains in engagement, awareness, and enrollment consideration for Columbia Southern University. Campaign messaging grounded in affordability, flexibility, and transparency resonated strongly with prospective students, validating the effectiveness of CSU's positioning and digital experience strategy.

- **Increased Engagement:** 92% of prospective students responded positively to the “We See You” campaign ads. Two-thirds of them expressed interest in learning more, and 66% said they would click on the ads or scan a QR code.
- **National Brand Awareness Growth:** Columbia Southern University saw a significant increase in national brand recognition, growing from 14% in 2023 to 19% in 2024. In key markets like Columbia, SC, and Jacksonville, FL, awareness reached 40% and 36%, respectively.
- **Campaign Effectiveness:** Post-campaign interest in CSU grew, with 82% of prospective students expressing an interest in enrolling after viewing the campaign materials. The affordability message and CSU's flexible online learning model were top reasons for interest.
- **Effectiveness of Messaging:** The campaign's focus on affordability, flexible learning options, and transparency struck a chord with prospective students. Approximately 90% of students found the Cost Comparison Calculator tool to be a valuable resource when evaluating CSU against other universities.
- **Program Interest:** The campaign successfully drove interest in CSU's top programs, including Business Administration, Psychology, and Information Technology/Cybersecurity. These programs remained consistently appealing across all key demographics.
- **Increased Likelihood to Enroll:** Following exposure to the campaign, 82% of prospective students expressed a higher interest in learning more about CSU, marking a significant increase in consideration for enrollment.

Collectively, these results demonstrate how evok's audience research, digital strategy, and experience design strengthened CSU's ability to connect with prospective students, improve consideration, and support enrollment-focused outcomes in a competitive online education marketplace.