

Pleasing Google, Boosting Applications: SEO Insights for Universities Transcript

Hello everyone. This is Laurena Jech from Mighty Citizen. We'll get started in about ten minutes, so hold tight.

Alright, everyone. Good afternoon. My name is Laurena Jech, and I'm a Project Coordinator here at Mighty Citizen. We are here for the Pleasing Google, Boosting Application: SEO Insights for Universities Webinar. I just want to thank y'all so much for attending today. Before we get started, I want to take a few moments just to address a few housekeeping items. The first thing is that we'll go for about forty-five minutes and have time at the end for questions, so if you have any questions that arise during the webinar, please post them in the questions area of GoToWebinar and we'll take a look at those throughout the talk today. And the second item is that we'll send these slides and a link to the recording by the end of this week, so no pressure to take notes the whole time.

And now I'd like to introduce you to Patrick Wicker. Patrick is a Google certified Digital Marketing Manager, and he's been doing this for over nine years. Patrick has worked with a number of universities and is so excited to share his findings with you today, so without further ado, I'll hand it over to Patrick.

[Patrick]: Thank you very much, Laurena. I'm very excited to be with all of you today to talk about SEO for universities, but one of the first things that I'd like to be able to cover is a more general observation that we've made here at Mighty Citizen over the last couple of months about marketing, in general, to universities. That is higher education is arguably the most difficult market in the world to track overall marketing performance. And when we mean in

the world, we really mean in the world. Is there really any other market in the world that has all of these different factors at play for tracking overall marketing performance?

For example, multiple-year buying cycle. We're finding that sophomores are starting to check out schools, not just juniors and seniors. Depending on who at the university is asking, a lot of universities not only want to know, you know, what students are checking out their sophomore year, but how many of those students then go through application, admission, and enrollment and then actually finish their program there and get a degree? And then how many of those people will actually donate after they complete their degree? So, tracking the entire cycle of a student - not only pre-admission, through enrollment, through donations and alumni afterwards - can be a very long life-cycle.

There's also going to be multiple contacts within universities, so you're not just dealing with the student. You're dealing, of course, with their parents but also members of the school and other people that might be involved.

Multiple online and offline touchpoints, so marketing, of course, doesn't just involve the website and e-mail. It can also involve like the big packet that they send. It can involve phone calls. It can involve visits to schools or visits to cities, campus visits, those sorts of things. So, there's lots of different touchpoints, and are all of those being tracked in overall marketing performance?

There's also a lot of different departments to deal with. So, if you have, say, a request for information form on your website and a student has a question about a particular academic program, are all of those departments going to respond in the same way and with the same quality? And also, are those departments and schools going to provide up-to-date resources? Do you have resources, say, for somebody that's interested in a business degree, distinct from, say, a nursing degree because those are very different types of students? But universities are not made out of money so they oftentimes don't have the resources for all of that.

Also, if you're wanting to track overall marketing performance, the ability to track through application, admission, and enrollment is often very, very difficult because very often all of those are on completely different systems. So, Google Analytics, of course, is used to track a lot of the website analytics, but are you able to track that information through application, admission, and enrollment. It is often very, very difficult to do. Unless universities really have their website analytics and their CRM up-to-date and really working on all cylinders, it is often very difficult to do that.

And so, I bring this up to make the point for a couple of reasons. A, you and university marketing have one of the most difficult jobs in the world, especially when you're wanting to track everything. And we also need to be able to set our expectations about the scope for this webinar because of course, we're not able to conquer all of these different issues at once and so instead of doing that, we're going to deal with a very specific set of issues that we're trying to solve and trying to speak to today. So, by the end of this webinar, you should know how to make your university's website content more visible to search engines which should drive more organic search traffic to your website which should increase engagement from prospective students. So, let's talk a little bit about the increase engagement from prospective students below as far as the scope of what we're trying to discuss today.

So, what we just talked about, as far as the steps of the student prospect journey is if you have optimized pages, and we'll talk about what optimization means in a little bit, but optimized pages of content which are now more visible to search engines should have again, greater visibility on Google, should actually increase organic search traffic. So, search traffic, website sessions, to your website from the students that are interested, say, in the academic programs that their searching for. And then the next step is now that you have those students on your site, are those landing pages actually effective in gathering more information about students? And the difficulty is a lot of universities, we found, make their primary call to action online applications completed and so they want to find out, of course and it makes sense, and you absolutely want to make sure, that you're very clear on your website, for all the students that actually visit, how many are going to complete their online application? The trouble with that

is that most students who are still looking at a lot of different universities will probably not complete their application the first time they arrive. So instead, what we're going to discuss here, as far as the scope of what we're really trying to accomplish, is how many of those students that actually land on the site will complete a request for information form. Not a lot of universities have these request for information forms, but it's very easy to track these three steps, the increased visibility, the traffic, and the completion of forms, and this is really what we're going to be talking about today.

Another thing about the scope that I want to talk about right now is what types of terms are we going after? For all of the different ways that somebody is going to search on a search engine, what are the different types of terms that we're really going to be discussing today? And really, all of that is going to be academic terms. So, people want to know, as you can see over there in the left column, they want to know about degree programs and so they might search for "kinesiology degree programs," but they may, instead of searching for degree programs, may be more interested in the career, into what they want to become. So, while athletic training programs are oftentimes a part of the kinesiology program, they will search for that separately. They also will use the word "accredited," sometimes if they're looking for an athletic training program. They'll look for accredited athletic program, make sure that word is on the page, but yes, they'll look for degree and careers separately. They will also look, to a lesser extent, but they will look for specific degrees. So, they will look for "B.A. in English," "history master's programs," that sort of thing. Not as much as like general degree programs, but they will look for like "B.A. in English," and that sort of thing. Especially for two-year schools, we'll look at this more in a second, they oftentimes like the word "school." So, for community colleges or two-year programs like radiology tech schools, stenography schools, ultrasound tech schools, that sort of thing. A lot of search for "schools." For four-year programs, there's also a great deal of search for majors. So like "criminal justice major," and a lot of searchers will also look for these transition terms. So, they're wanting to find, "yes, I'm an RN and I want to be a BSN," so "RN to BSN degree." Or they're looking for "pre-med programs," so these kinds of transition type searches. And then you also have searchers that may not want a degree or are not looking for like a full-blown academic program, but they're somebody in the community that's just looking for a class. Maybe they just want to take theater classes or Spanish classes, and that's usually a very different type of audience from those

people that are looking to find a degree. So, having content, we'll talk about this in a second, having content about the classes that you offer in your community, not for every single one of your programs, but just for the specific program where people are searching, it's oftentimes a good idea to have content about that. So, these are some of the general ways that we, again, are going to focus for helping your website get found by search engines, these types of searches.

We're not going to focus on these things. What we're finding when we do research, and when I say 'research' I mean the Google Ad Words Keywords Planner. It's the best tool in the industry to understand how people are searching online for things and Google will even tell you how much search volume there is for particular terms. So, we've done quite a bit of research for a number of different universities. So, people generally are not searching, generally, for classes. "I'm looking for a class." If somebody is looking for a class, they're looking for a theater class or a Spanish class or something like that. They're a lot more specific. Nor are they looking for "B.A. degree." "I'm looking for a B.S. degree," "an M.S. degree." If they're looking for that kind of degree, most likely they're looking for a B.A. degree in English or history, an M.S. degree in kinesiology or something like that. So, people are much more focused when they're searching.

Also, if the searcher is looking for something that's related to your website, like how to apply to your university or your university library, if Google is doing its job, most likely they're going to be able to find your content, the correct content, within one-two clicks from the top one or two search results on Google. Give it a shot. If your website or the correct page of your website is not within one to two clicks from the top few search results on Google for these types of searchers, then you may have a problem and you're welcome to ask me about that at the end, but most likely Google is already finding your content for that, so there's really no reason to focus on that from an SEO perspective.

There's also a number of ways that people search that you're probably never going to be found for. So like "college financial aid." There is a ton of searches for this, of course, but there is so much content online about financial aid. Most likely you're not going to be found for it. When it comes to searches like, "best colleges in Texas," there are a lot of websites that will talk

about the top ten, top fifteen colleges, universities in a particular state, and so because there's so much content comparing different websites that most likely you're not going to be found for that. So, these are just some areas that we think are probably not worth focusing on which is the reason why we're going to be so heavily focused, in this presentation, on the ways that people search for academic terms.

So, I'd like to take a couple of minutes to talk a little bit about what Google wants. So, this is absolutely a gross over-simplification of Google's search algorithm. They've got hundreds of different factors in the search algorithm, but this is a way of condensing this and we're just really going to talk about a few of these, in this particular presentation, or really focus on a few of these, but it helps you to understand why Google will rank one page over another page in their search results. Why they would, say, put one page at number one and another page further down.

So first of all, Google really does care about content. They really do care what the title of the page is, what the pages are about. So, for example, as we saw before, you may have a kinesiology program at your university, but if you don't have any content talking about what you do for athletic training, if you don't have anything on your website talking about yes, we have an athletic training program, on our website, if there is no content, most likely your website will not be found for it. It's a possibility always, but it's much less likely if you do not have pages about athletic training, if you only talk about kinesiology.

It also needs to be high quality. So, one of the things we're seeing more and more from universities is that you can tell in some university websites, what departments or colleges are much more invested in content than others. So, you'll have some colleges that have tons of content, really good high-quality content and other colleges and departments that maybe have one or two sentences on a page. Because there is so much content on the internet about these particular degree programs, as we will see, unless you have some really good quality content on your page, most likely Google will not send searchers to that page. So again, good quality content is going to be really important on these pages for Google to send traffic there.

Also, and we'll talk about this more in a little bit, headlines metadata. What's the title of the page? There are things in the code that you can include to tell Google more about what's on the page, like the title tag, a description tag, and that sort of thing, and we'll talk about that in a little bit. So, content is extremely important.

So, again, if there are two things that are the most important that Google cares about the most, it's going to be content and links. So, this is really what made Google the search engine that it is today is that it really paid attention to who links to what websites. What websites, especially, have external links? So, links from quality sites and links from relevant sites and so if you have an external link, if you have different partners or different programs, I guess other universities, they need to have a place to link to. And the more links from external sites to these pages, the more that Google is going to think that those pages are important. Also, they should be relevant websites. Hopefully, websites that are relevant to the education industry as you would see. So external links, so links from external sites are important, but also internal links are important, as well. So, if, for example, you have three or four different pages that could be your top page for teaching, if somebody's looking for a teaching degree, but Google doesn't know which one is the most important, then it's hard for Google to pick and choose, you know, what is the best page on your website for teaching degrees. We'll look at an example of this in a second. So how you link internally to your top pages also makes a difference. Make sure you are linking to the most important pages on your website for what people are searching for. And link diversity. Link diversity is just having different links from different types of websites.

So, location, this is going to be extremely important because a lot more people are going to be saying, "I'm looking for 'English degree program near me,'" or "stenography program in Houston," or something like that. So especially for these searches that include the phrase 'near me,' or if they're including a city, Google will favor those that are closer to them geographically or that are actually in the particular city that they're looking for.

As far as accessibility goes, how easily can Google get to your content? So, I think fewer websites, especially university websites, are using Flash on their pages, or like really, really image-heavy stuff, so there's definitely more content that I'm finding on university websites. Just make it easy to crawl from a search engine prospective, and one of the best ways of doing this and probably one of the most important ways of doing this, is making sure your website is mobile accessible. So, you are welcome to actually end this presentation now if you want to because the most important thing to do, if you do not have a mobile-accessible site, is to make your website mobile-accessible, especially because so many prospective students are looking for these programs on mobile devices. So, making sure it's mobile-accessible is extremely important, and, we'll look at this in detail in a second, don't bury your best content. So, if you have really important pages, and we'll see an example of an undergrad history page that's really buried within the site. If Google sees that it's buried within the site, like five levels deep, Google is going to think it's less important and students are also going to think it's less important and may not click through. So, accessibility is important.

I'm going to go ahead and skip through some of these. A little bit less relevant. They are relevant for search engines but a little bit more difficult to track from a university perspective. One thing I would absolutely do is go into Google My Business, make sure that you can claim your Google My Business profile so that you can have access to it, fill out as much information as possible, and make sure, if you have additional campuses, that all your campuses are included under your one Google My Business account so you can track all of those different profiles under that one account. That is especially important if you're wanting to be visible to searchers in cities that are away from where the main campus is located.

So, let's talk a little bit, now that we have said what Google wants, why should we do this in the first place? Why even focus on SEO? So first of all, better optimization is going to lead to better visibility on Google for more or all of your programs. So, if you do some Google searches, most likely, what you're going to find is that you might find maybe some of your programs. So, if you look for like, say, 'English degree programs near me,' or 'kinesiology programs in Houston,' you might find your website visible on a few pages, maybe a third of your website, but two-thirds of your academic programs may not be visible at all and so it

really does help to make sure that all of your academic programs are visible, especially to searchers that are in your location.

It could also increase visibility on Google to searchers outside of your city. So, let's say you're Amarillo University, and there is no such thing as Amarillo University, but if there was an Amarillo University, what we've found is that websites hundreds of miles away that are better optimized can oftentimes be found more in higher search results for things like 'English degree programs' for searchers for Amarillo, as long as those websites are well-optimized for search. So, you can be found further outside of your geographical circle, the better optimized your website is. You also get free traffic to your academic program's pages, and by free, a lot of universities are investing in paid search and I think that's definitely a good idea to invest, say, in ad words for people that are searching for those degree programs, especially within a geographic area. But by having good SEO, it means you're constantly at the top of the search results. You don't have to pay for that traffic.

So again, more traffic to those pages, and hopefully those students that come there will take the next step which would be more RFI form completions. So again, a lot of those students that come the first time probably won't apply the first time that they arrive, but hopefully they would fill out a request for information for.

As we're going to see within the website, the more you implement some of these changes, especially the architecture changes, you're going to have better user experience and so your students are going to have a better experience on the website and will hopefully take the next step much earlier.

Another reason why we need to focus on SEO is competition. There's a lot of competition out there. As you well know, lots of universities in the U.S., probably your state. A number of people on this webinar are universities in Texas, and also in your city. So, there may be other universities in your city that you're competing with. The good news is that even though there's a lot of competitions from universities, most university websites that we found really have

poor optimization so those that really do actually focus on it can see good results just because so few universities are even doing the minimum to be found on search engines. The other difficulty, from a competition standpoint, is that there are a lot of education resource sites, a lot of these sites that are program-specific like specific for, say, criminal justice. So, you can see there criminaljusticeprograms.com. A lot of good content on these sites. I was talking about there are a lot of websites out there that have good content. Look at these websites. Lots and lots of good content on these pages. And so that's the reason why they oftentimes do well. You can still beat them for the terms that are relevant for you in your location, but you do need to have optimization if you're going to actually try to compete in this area. And of course, you're going to have a whole bunch of these ranking websites, like top 50 sites, from U.S. News World Report, best value schools, those sorts of websites. So, the more that you can do, from an optimization perspective, on your website, the more your website can get found over other websites.

So, let's take a little bit of time to talk about website architecture. By website architecture I mean how you organize your content within your website because that can make a significant difference in the way that your website can be found. And if there is one key observation that we have been making more and more in recent months, that is the best performing university websites link to top-level academic discipline pages within 1-2 clicks of homepage. So, when I mean academic discipline, I mean like a top-level kinesiology page. Everything you need to know about kinesiology is here or at least starts here, or English, or history. These top-level academic discipline pages, extremely important and they are found very, very close to the homepage. You don't have to click very deep into the site to actually find these pages. The difficulty and the challenge with this is that how does a university make a lot of different programs, so many universities that we see have hundreds of different programs: undergrad, grad, certificate classes, all sorts of things. How do you make all of these different programs easily accessible from the home page?

So, let's first look at an example of kind of the way I would recommend you do not do things. So, in this particular example, you see that the content here is buried, I just kind of highlighted that in white, five levels deep into the site. So, if somebody is looking for an undergraduate

history major, they have to click on 'academics' then 'colleges and schools' then 'college of liberal arts and behavioral sciences' then 'history, geography, and general studies' then 'undergraduate history.' Five clicks to get to this page, and the problem with that as I've kind of alluded to before, search engines are going to think less of that content if it's buried in the site. So, if they see something that's buried far into the site, especially if it's just kind of one page listed among a whole bunch of other different pages in the section, Google is not going to think it's that important.

The second issue is that, as I mentioned, student prospects with mobile devices probably aren't going to click five times to get all the way in, and so from a user experience perspective, it's not great. And also, we found, it's not that important for students, when they are looking for a program like English or kinesiology, to know what college or department they can find that program in on your website. So, they don't need to know that it's within this college in this department. They just need to be able to get to your kinesiology or English program quickly to a really high-quality, top-level page on your website.

So, as we just showed you, there are some university websites that organize a lot of their content buried within colleges and departments. The other option, which also has its hinderances, is what I call the 'long page.' A lot of universities do this. It's just a massively long page with all of the different programs that they offer, oftentimes including every single possible track that they can offer, as well. So, what you see over here at the right is an example of a university college of education. This is just one particular snippet of the entire long page of academic programs on their site. So, one of the first things that you should see is that people are not looking for these really complex department names or, I should add, really complex and creative names of programs. So, they call it, on this example, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. The thing is that people are looking for teaching degrees. It may not officially be called a teaching degree, but you still need to have a page on your website talking about the fact that you have a teaching degree because a lot of people are looking for that. The other difficulty with this is that if somebody is looking for a teaching degree, Google is probably not going to send them to the page about the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, A, because it's a department page, B, because it's not about teaching, it's about

curriculum and instruction and words really do matter when it comes to how Google will send people to pages because Google has a ton of other pages they could send people to that do have content about teaching degrees.

The last point that I want to make about this is that, if you're Google, what page would you want to send people to, as I mentioned before, that's simply looking for a teaching degree? You've got all these interdisciplinary study pages at the top that could be considered teaching degrees. You have teaching degrees below, early childhood, and middle level and secondary level. But there's not really a good high-level teaching degree page, and unless that page is on your site, most likely you're not going to get found for it.

The other thing that I should point out is that forcing students to choose this early in the process on whether or not they want, say, a BAIS degree or a BSIS degree, I've never even heard of those degrees before I did this research. I'm pretty sure that students aren't going to know either. So, choosing between a B.A. degree or a B.S. degree, again this early in the process is not all that relevant. What they really need to do is get to a page about teaching degrees generally and then on that page you can explain more.

So, I want to talk about just some things to stay away from, if you're wanting to be able to get people to all of your academic programs. I'll try to go through this quickly. First of all, I found this example where you have to click through literally eleven times to get to the last page to be able to see every single last program that they have. So, Google can sometimes see when you have to click and click and click and click to get to different pages so just try not to do this, organizing this way where it takes this many clicks to get to a program.

The last thing: it's perfectly okay to have a search tool on your website where you can search for your undergraduate or graduate degrees. Just make sure that there is a direct link to all of your academic programs pages, undergrad, graduate, online within one to two clicks from your homepage because if you just include a search tool, then Google doesn't have a link path to follow. They need to be able to find your content by, oh, start with the homepage, you go

to your academic's page, then you can get to this degree page. And if the only way they can find that is through one of these little search tools, then most likely Google is not able to find that page. So again, include the search tool, just make sure there are direct links to your academic pages within your website.

Very quickly, we have found with a number of different university websites that they will put a lot of their academic program content on separate website, separate sub-domains, like business.university.edu for their business school, or nursing.university.edu for their nursing school. The problem about using sub-domains or even completely different domains is that Google sees all of those as completely separate websites which means they have their own authority. So, try to keep, as much as possible, most of your academic program content on your main website because your main website, with all of the links it's receiving, with all of the content it already has, all of those links and all of that content really does give it better authority on that main website. Try to keep it on that main website, as much as you possibly can. Very common for us to see online programs on separate sub-domains. Again, if at all possible, try to keep that on your main website.

So, overall architecture recommendations on what to do and what not to do. So instead of organizing academic programs like by complex department name, like by Department of Curriculum and Instruction, try to organize things possibly by academic college. I'll show you an example of this. So, if you have a whole bunch of different business degrees, you can organize it by business degree, if it makes sense to include all of the different degrees within that particular college. But we've also found recently that a lot of universities will sometimes put different academic programs in colleges where it's not really very intuitive, so if somebody is looking for like an I.T. program, but it's stuck in the business school or it's stuck in some college where it's not really intuitively should actually go there. Try to organize then your academic programs maybe by descriptive category. So, by sciences, by information technology, that sort of thing and possibly not by academic college if your academic college doesn't really intuitively organize your programs very well.

So the second recommendation would be instead of having the long page where every single possible track is listed, as I mentioned before, try to focus on these overview pages for every academic discipline, kinesiology, English, these top-level pages where your internal links are heading to these pages and external links from external sites, if anybody is going to say there's the best page on the site about English or kinesiology, really have these core, top-level pages be the focus for the internal links and external links. And then you can include other sub-pages within these academic discipline pages. So, within your kinesiology overview page, you can have your B.A. in kinesiology page, you can have your athletic training page, you can have your M.S. in kinesiology page. All those pages can then live within these top-level academic discipline overview pages.

So, let's look at a couple of examples about some ways that we've seen this work well. So, this is University of Texas at Dallas. One of the things that you see is that all of these programs are not organized by departments but by the school or college. This is the School of Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences which is really kind of a long name but it makes sense because a lot of the programs you see under here really do seem to fit within economic, political, and policy sciences so applied sociology, criminology, economics. These are your top-level overview, academic discipline overview pages. Applied sociology, criminology, economics. These are the main pages that you really want to link to, that you really want people to get to, but then because it's in a table, there's also pages for your B.A. degree, your B.S. degree, your M.S. degree, your Ph.D. degrees. So, by putting it in the table, you're able to show people a lot more, it's really easy to understand and comprehend and we've also found for a number of different websites that they include all their undergrad programs, their graduate programs, and their online programs, and say, their certificate programs, all in separate pages on their website. So, this is a way to see everything all on one central page, so I think this is kind of the best of both worlds. And take a look at this page on the UT Dallas site, it is again within one click from the homepage and it also looks quite good on a mobile device.

So, the second cool idea that we've seen is from the University of Texas at Tyler. This was one of the primary examples of kind of a good, solidly-sized university that can be found across the state of Texas for programs simply because it's optimized very well. They have done a number

of things intentionally to be found by search engines and it really is working. So, one of the decisions that UT Tyler made is that they wanted their homepage to be extremely visible or they wanted people to be able to get to all of their academic programs within one click from the homepage. So, what they did, as you can see by these tabs up here, undergraduate, graduate, online, Ph.D., that if you click on all of those different tabs, you can basically see all of the different programs they offer linked right there from the homepage. It does, of course, take up a lot of room on the homepage. I would probably clean this up a little bit if I were going to be doing some user experience for this. But from an SEO perspective it works very, very well, and it really has helped them gain visibility for their entire website for a lot of these programs. So again, one click from the homepage for all of these different programs, both undergraduate, graduate, online, and Ph.D.

The other one that I want to look at, and I've talked to a number of different universities and they're familiar with Southern New Hampshire University for their online programs, but the one thing, they also do have campus programs. And so, I mentioned before that people do look for the word 'major,' so 'kinesiology major,' 'English major,' 'history major,' that sort of thing. In the navigation on their website, they have links to their top programs. So I understand that this is going to be a hard sell to a lot of different department heads if their top program isn't actually included in the navigation, but if you do have core programs in your university that you really want to emphasize, if you put those top programs in the navigation and then, as you can see down here below, link 'view all degrees' that shows all of the different campus programs that you offer, that means that those links will be on every single page of the website because they're in the navigation. So, this has worked extremely well for Southern New Hampshire University. They do rank well, I consistently see them in search results, again, far outside of New Hampshire.

So, let's talk now that we've looked at some of the ideas about architecture, about optimizing content, about what it means to actually change content on the page. And if you came to this webinar looking for some basic things that you could do to affect your search engine visibility today, this is the time that we're really going to go through that. So, one of the first things that I should mention is that we have created an article about doing keyword research. So, if you

want to find how people are actually searching for your academic programs, take a look at this article when you get the link to this guide, that is a clickable link right here in this presentation. You can go there and download the article and it will just tell you how to do keyword research using Google AdWords Keywords Planner, so a lot of good information that. I do recommend that you use that.

So, let's talk a little bit about on-page optimization. We've talked a bit about what Google generally is looking for as far as content, and links, and accessibility, and location, but for on-page, what is important to Google? So, these are some things that I really want to focus on in this particular section.

Keywords in page titles. So very often universities will just have let's say they have their history department page and all it will say is 'history,' or 'English,' or 'kinesiology,' so that's the only word that you have in the title of the page, and that's really a missed opportunity because people aren't just looking for 'history.' They're looking for 'history degree programs' and 'kinesiology degree programs.' So, make sure that the keywords that people are using to find you are actually in the page titles, the h-1 page titles that can be visible to search engines. When I mean h-1, that is the html heading, your web developer, the person who manages your website will understand what an h-1 is.

So, keywords also should be used in subtitles and sub-headings so I'm going to include some examples about the ways that subtitles can be used to bring keyword visibility on the page. So, this would be like h-2 and h-3 tags for these subtitles.

Keywords in body content. So, talk about it, and you don't have to like use the word fifteen different times in the page because that gets really annoying. But really try to make some of these keywords visible in the content as well as the page titles.

And there is something called the title tag, which is different from the page title, where you can include keywords and I'll show you how this is done here. So, this is something that is done within the code of the page. It's generally seen, or almost exclusively seen by search engines, and so if you ever see a Google search result like this, when you see criminal justice programs and then that bar and then find criminal justice degrees, that is text in the page title tag. So that is generally a field that you can find in your content management system. Make sure that keywords are included within that field. Try to keep them within sixty characters because Google will just stop showing them in the search results after about sixty characters. The text underneath the search result, so you can search for 'criminal justice law programs,' all this text down here Google will sometimes draw from the description tag. So, try to keep that content within about a hundred and sixty characters but, again, you can fill out that content. It is not included in Google search algorithm so they don't make that a ranking factor, but it does influence click-through. Because if it's crafted really well, if it really invites people to click on it and to learn more, then people that actually see that search result will be more likely to click-through to it.

So, let's talk a little bit now, and we're probably going to be closer to end at ten minutes to the hour than at fifteen minutes to the hour, but let's talk a little bit about how different people search for two-year programs and four-year programs and graduate programs. I'm going to try to go through this relatively quickly, but I think that there's a couple of things that are very important to know. First of all, if you're a part of searchers that are looking for two-year programs, much more likely to search for career kind of terms and for schools. So not as many searchers are looking for 'I want a stenography associate's degree,' or 'I want an ultrasound tech certificate.' They are looking for schools. They want a stenography school, they want an ultrasound tech school.' So, it's more difficult to optimize for these kinds of terms in the page sub-titles, so we'll kind of show you a way to include that content in the subtitle. But again, try to focus on, and especially in the content, talking about you're a stenography school, you're an ultrasound tech school. And speaking of that example, consider adding career sub-pages within these academic disciplines. So, where we already talked about kinesiology and athletic training, know that there is actually, while ultrasound tech is in some set a sub-set under stenography, and x-ray tech is a sub-set under radiology tech, there is more search across the board, for ultrasound techs than for stenographer. Or there's more search across the board for

x-ray techs than radiology techs, even though officially they kind of live within those other programs. So, if you, again, don't have content about 'hey, this is what we do for ultrasound techs,' 'these are our ultrasound tech programs,' most likely your website is not going to be found for people that are searching for that. And especially for like ultrasound tech, stenography, x-ray tech, pharmacy tech, radiology tech, those sorts of things, lots and lots of search, lots and lots of search online.

Also for two-year programs, and especially for these career kind of searches, a lot of search related to 'how to become.' So, if you're looking for things to talk about on your pages, these are the kind of searches that you find across the board, especially for if somebody is looking for how to become a certain type of career, like, and we'll just say ultrasound tech, or stenographer. So 'how to become a stenographer,' that would be kind of like your overall page. How much do stenographers make? How much does it cost to become one? How long does it take? What are your education requirements? So even if you can't have separate pages for each one of these, which would be ideal but it would probably take a long time to create that, having content separated by headings, so 'how much do stenographers make?' include content, 'how much does it cost to become a stenographer?' in the heading, like a sub-heading, and then include content underneath there. Very, very powerful because it answers a lot of the questions that people have about all these different programs.

And then classes. So, I talked before about the importance of having separate pages for different types of classes that people would be looking for. So, consider having separate pages for subjects like art, theater, and music, these sorts of things. People would definitely be looking for classes in their community related to kind of art, theater, and music. Or for foreign languages, Spanish, French, and German. They're also looking for things like welding and web design, accounting and bookkeeping. These sorts of things where they may not be looking for a degree, a certificate, or anything official but are really trying to have enhancement. But again, they're really only looking for these where, intuitively you would think, 'are people really looking for that?' So, you may have this really creative class name of this really creative thing that wants to be taught at the school, but the more complex and creative and new it is, most

likely people aren't searching for that and so it may not get a lot of search and it may not get a lot of traffic.

So, the other thing that you should also consider doing is, if you have a class in your large city like Houston, you can talk about, 'hey, these are our classes in Houston,' and you can talk about that because a lot of people will look for that sort of thing by city.

So, this is an example of how you might be able, as I talked about having your top-level academic discipline page and then your sub-pages underneath it, this is an example of how you would be able to do that for stenography, for your two-year program. So, you would have, your main academic discipline would be stenography degree and certificate programs. It's kind of a long title, I understand that, but trust me, it really is going to help these pages get found by search engines. And then you could include a subtitle that includes the word 'school' in it. So, like an accredited stenography school in Texas. Again, a lot of people are searching for 'in Texas' related to stenography school, ultrasound tech schools, that sort of thing. So that's a way that you can include titles and subtitles in your content, something easy that you could do today to really help that content to be more found by search engines. So also know that there is more search for stenography, generally, than for the specific name 'diagnostic medical stenography,' so you should still have pages about that, but you should probably associate that with a degree program so have a degree program called 'diagnostic medical stenography associate's degree program.' Very long title, but it will be worth it if you could include those long titles in there. And then you've got some other pages down there that you can look at when you get the slide deck.

So, a few things that I did want to mention about 4-year and graduate programs, I'm not going to really go through this in great detail. A lot of search for degree programs and as I mentioned, a lot of search for major. Major is not really a word that's used much for your two-year community college kind of programs, but it definitely is for kind of four-year kind of academic programs. There is search again, mostly for like degree programs and majors. Some search, there is a decent amount of search for like 'bachelor's degree in kinesiology' or 'bachelor of

science in kinesiology,' etcetera, but less than kind of generally degree programs or majors. And then you've got all these different searches for graduate programs down there as well.

I'm going to go ahead and just skip through this. You can see some examples here of some ways you can title your pages and include keywords in your sub-titles and your graduate programs as well so you can look at that offline.

And so, the last thing that I wanted to mention is, that would be important on pulling the whole thing together, bringing more people to your website, increasing your visibility on search engines which will increase your organic search traffic but then you need to have something to do. Instead of making apply now, applying to your school the top call-to-action, as I've already mentioned, really wanting to focus on request for information. The reason why again apply now should be the main CTA is, A, as I mentioned, most students who come to your site won't apply immediately, and also you need to be able to get the student e-mail and mailing address early, and a request for information form is going to help you do that. You don't learn the effectiveness of your digital marketing because if they arrive on the site and they don't take immediate action, it's harder for you, and you can again look at some attribution reports on Google Analytics and hopefully get a better idea of people that may come back later and complete the application, but if it takes more than thirty days, it's probably going to be less useful. So again, getting people to take action immediately is extremely important, and if you have apply now as the main CTA, students don't receive marketing materials. They just look at your website. So, getting something in front of them is also important.

As I mentioned, marketers can't often track how marketing affects the application specific for the apply now because, especially in the state of Texas, a lot of times if students are wanting to apply, they have to jump off to Apply Texas and you don't have any way to see, within Google Analytics, how somebody leaves your site and then completes their application on Apply Texas. You might be able to find that through your CRM, but it's a lot more complex and I don't know a lot of universities that are actually doing that right now. Or, especially for like the University of Texas in Austin, maybe they land on your college, but then you have to leave

your college or leave your department or whatever, go to the main UT system, and then apply, and then you've lost that student. You don't exactly know how that student is doing. So, lots of reasons why apply now shouldn't be your main CTA.

So, making request for information your primary CTA does a lot of things. It captures that student e-mail and mailing address for follow-up. Student can select a lot of different options. So, this is important too. They may not just want the big packet. They may want to ask for more information from a particular department. They may want to do a campus tour. You can offer them a number of different things within that request for information form. And again, you learn the effectiveness from your marketing campaign, which is really important.

The challenges, of course, to this RFI form, I might as well say it out loud, is if somebody is in the nursing program, are they going to receive content that's relevant to the nursing program? I know that's really hard to do. It's expensive to create really good, quality content for every single department, and so that may be a reason why you don't want to do the RFI. But again, getting a big packet is better than nothing. Try to get students to fill out that RFI form.

And also, if you send some of these specific questions to different departments or different colleges, are these different colleges and departments going to follow-up? And I know that again, marketing oftentimes doesn't have control over how these different colleges and departments respond.

So final thoughts. What should I do now? So, all of these different things you've said, Patrick, what are some of the big take-aways on what I can do today and what I might be able to do in the future?

So today, consider doing keyword research to determine how people are searching for your programs. We've already done some keyword research around a lot of different programs, so if

you want to get our help, we're happy to do that for you. It's always a good idea to go in and do some searches to find out how people are looking.

Update your academic page titles, title tags, and keywords. So, as I mentioned, there are examples within this webinar of ways that you can update those page titles and title tags with those keywords. If you do anything, page titles and title tags is the most important thing you could probably do to improve visibility on those academic program pages.

And then go into Google My Business, claim it, if you haven't already claimed it, update it, and make sure that any different campuses, especially if they're in different cities, are included within your main Google My Business profile.

And for the future, if there's any possible way to re-organize your site, maybe even just to have links on your homepage to make these academic discipline pages more visible on your site, try to focus on these academic discipline pages and really try to link to them more than any other pages in the site. Again, not burying them, not including them on these big, long pages, but really trying to focus on these high-level academic discipline pages.

Make your RFI form your central call to action, and then measure your performance in Google Analytics. Create goals on that RFI form within Google Analytics. So, you can see for the number of people that land on these academic program pages, how many people actually complete the RFI form?

So, thank you very much. That is it. Does anybody have any particular questions?

[Laurena]: Thank you, Patrick. This is Laurena. We did have a couple of questions that came through. So, the first one, I'll go ahead and read it. It is "I don't have the resources to overhaul

my website to make the academic pages one to two clicks from the homepage, so what can I do?"

[Patrick]: So, I think one of the best things that you can do - you're absolutely right. It can be very difficult because that really is a website re-design. You wouldn't want to have to jump halfway over a ditch when it comes to really overhauling your navigation. So, if there's a possibility of just adding one of those horizontal bars within your homepage, just kind of a horizontal bar of content. I think UT Tyler, I don't know if they added that, but that is something that they've done is they just have this horizontal bar on their homepage that has links to all those different programs. Even if you just add that bar and don't even add links to all your programs, but at least add links to some of them, it can really help.

[Laurena]: Awesome, thank you, Patrick. And the second question that came through is, "Higher education may be the most difficult market in the world to track overall marketing performance, but I have to start somewhere, so where do you suggest that I begin?"

[Patrick]: So, I think one place to begin is, I think it's always a good idea to look ahead into the future, try to be able to pull all of that together, at least be heading in a direction of pulling together all of those different pieces, so people who arrive on the site that complete the RFI form, that complete the application and then are enrolled. Try to see all of the different pieces at least within that whole process of, you know, what are all the different touchpoints that have happened for that particular student? That's the direction that you want to go, so like what campus visits they have, and of course you'll need to have a CRM to be able to pull that off, and so that is your long-term goal. But for short-term goals, find smaller, more self-contained goals like we've talked about today. So, a smaller, self-contained goal would be like optimizing pages to increase organic search traffic. So that's your small goal and the goal of that is once they get that traffic, have them do something, have them take an action. So, like once you get that traffic, they need to fill out the RFI form. So, if anything that you want to do, in many ways, heading toward that overall goal of really being able to see the entire picture, try to find these little, small ways that you can measure some small level of performance that

will give you an idea if you're at least heading in the right direction. But it needs to be measurable. There needs to be a way of seeing once they actually get to the website, what new action do they take? Once they get the e-mail, are they clicking on it, and then are they actually doing something once they click on it?

[Laurena]: Yes, that's so true. Thanks, Patrick. So, those are all the questions that we had come through this afternoon, so I just want to thank each of you for attending the webinar this afternoon, and like I said at the beginning, we'll be sending out a link to this recording along with this slide deck by the end of this week so be on the lookout for that. And if you have any questions about what Patrick talked about today, feel free to e-mail us at info@mightycitizen.com. Thanks so mu