



# Increasing the Quality of an Applicant Pool at Olin College

Olin College of Engineering in Needham, Massachusetts, is dedicated to training engineers who want to change the world. Its groundbreaking curriculum integrates math and science concepts into engineering courses, with students completing upward of 35 projects before graduation. Olin alumni consist of in-demand engineers who can deliver the products, services, and systems needed to solve the most complex global challenges.

## Challenge

Its admission process is groundbreaking, too. Olin can't over-enroll; the college's capacity is acutely limited. The education it provides requires extreme amounts of personal attention and small courses. Like very few others, it has to hit the bull's-eye. Marketing to prospective students becomes an exercise in accurate targeting and specific messaging with no room for misdirected efforts or inefficiencies.

curriculum. And students who may have been a great fit learned about Olin's unique offerings too late in the college search process.

"We wanted a campaign that would help us grow for the right reasons and build authentic applicant pools, not just be added to a list," emphasizes Roper-Doten. "We wanted to be open and upfront about our academic model. And we wanted to deliver that message to students most receptive to, and interested in, attending."

**"Whiteboard delivered the exact campaign we wanted. It feels more like Olin than anything we've ever done."**

**EMILY ROPER-DOTEN, DEAN OF  
ADMISSION AND FINANCIAL AID**

The teams aligned with key stakeholders and determined the most effective, comprehensive narrative series of key messages. "We talked about things we wanted to see that may have been different from the tried-and-true solutions that work for other institutions," recalls Roper-Doten.

## Approach

"Our previous enrollment services provider hit on Olin's differentiators too late in the process," explains Emily Roper-Doten, dean of admission and financial aid. As such, the applicant pool included students who sought a more traditional

The Whiteboard and Olin teams developed the campaign's key themes, refined, and iterated upon them, and crafted a vibrant communication flow that represented Olin's voice. "We are really picky, but we felt heard," says Roper-Doten. "We had little control or ability to push back with

our previous provider. The open relationship amongst the teams has allowed the uniqueness of Olin to shine throughout the campaign.”

Language, photo choices, message sequencing, timing, tone, personality — all these were areas for fruitful collaboration and discussion. “The teams did everything to make sure we were 100% happy with the end product.”

“Olin is one of my favorite campaigns because it embodies who we want to be as a partner. We went through many iterations before we completed the final campaign,” says Whiteboard’s Jonathan Epstein. “I kept telling them that we would do anything and everything to ensure that we do not create a campaign that they ‘would sign off on’ but one that they all absolutely loved.”

## Results

Overall, Olin saw more than 1,000% return on investment (ROI) following the campaign and continued seeing outstanding engagement in its sophomore and junior search campaign. The deeper knowledge and interest of these prospects will undoubtedly carry forward to its senior searches, significantly enriching application pools in the future. The campaign enabled potential college applicants to fully understand the atypical curriculum model and make an educated choice.

**Two-thirds** of all students engaged in the Olin-Whiteboard campaign.

**90%** of all enrolling students engaged with the campaign.

**1,000%** return on investment (ROI) in Olin’s senior search

“Olin isn’t the right fit for everyone,” explains Roper-Doten. “As we had hoped, the campaigns increased the quality of applicants. Students that applied understood Olin better and really wanted to enroll.”

“The quality of the pool and the demographic mix looked great,” she added.

“We’re so pleased and proud of the campaign,” says Roper-Doten. “There’s a lot of excitement here on campus about this partnership and we’re in a great position to keep building on that first-year success.”



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