



Scaling Enrollment Coaching to Recruit Future Graduates at Penn State World Campus



PennState
World Campus

INSTITUTION:
Penn State World Campus

TYPE:
Large online campus of a public university

STUDENT BASE:
Traditional, adult and part-time students

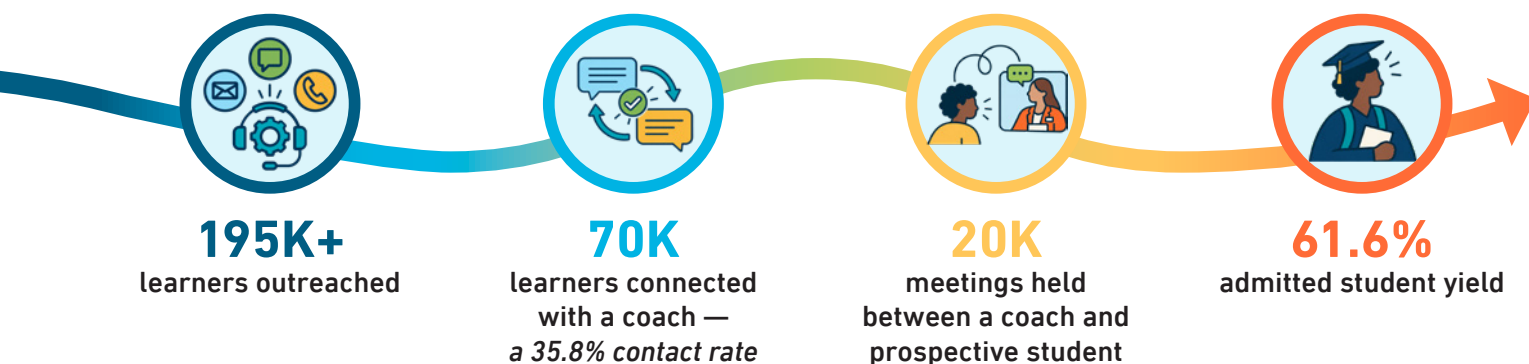
INSIDETRACK SOLUTION:
Enrollment Coaching



Human connection drives meaningful enrollment outcomes

By combining personalized, human-centered support with proactive outreach, [InsideTrack Enrollment Coaching](#) has driven strong student outcomes across every stage of the enrollment funnel at Penn State World Campus — significantly boosting application, admission, enrollment and yield rates.

2021-2026 Enrollment Coaching Impact



Outreach occurs when a coach attempts to get in touch with a learner. Contact occurs when a learner connects with their coach. Meetings occur when a learner has an interaction with their coach that the coach identifies as resulting in learner advancement.

Coaching improved conversion at every stage of the funnel

Compared to non-coached peers, prospective learners who connected with an InsideTrack success coach achieved:



Expanding institutional capacity to meet learner goals

Beyond direct conversion gains, this partnership:

- ✓ Ensures timely response to 100% of prospective student inquiries
- ✓ Delivers 1:1 guidance to students throughout the enrollment process
- ✓ Ensures prospective students connect with the best-fit program
- ✓ Offers the flexibility to scale outreach to meet shifting enrollment demands
- ✓ Alleviates staff bandwidth constraints
- ✓ Gathers student insights to optimize institutional policies

“I received my acceptance letter yesterday. My coach was so helpful with this process, and if it wasn't for her support and guidance, I wouldn't have accomplished my goal. I am eternally grateful.”

— Prospective B.A. in Law and Society student, Penn State World Campus

A long-standing commitment to high-quality online education

[Penn State World Campus](#), the online campus of The Pennsylvania State University, is committed to delivering the university's renowned educational experience to anyone, anytime — focusing on convenience, flexibility and quality for their online students. Launched in 1998, they offer more than 200 accredited undergraduate and graduate programs — growing from 8,500 enrolled students in 2010 to now serving more than 19,000 students. Their online learners earn the same diploma and learn from the same expert faculty as on-campus and hybrid students, setting the institution apart from other fully online colleges and universities.

WELCOMING UNDERGRADUATES FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS

55%

part-time
students

35%

first-generation
students

33%

student-
parents

29

average
learner age

8,210

undergraduates across all 50 states, 3 U.S.
territories, 63 countries and all 7 continents

Building a trusted partnership

In 2010, Penn State World Campus partnered with InsideTrack to launch a comprehensive [Enrollment Coaching](#) program with the goal of maintaining a high-touch, personalized experience while rapidly scaling their programs. Through Enrollment Coaching, dedicated InsideTrack success coaches provide individualized, one-on-one support to prospective students — helping them clarify educational goals, navigate the application process and prepare for a strong start.

Over this trusted, 16-year collaboration, **InsideTrack has supported more than 600,000 prospective students, with over 41,000 engaging directly with a coach.** While undergraduate enrollment support remains the core focus, this partnership has evolved over the years to meet the shifting needs of the university — expanding to include retention support, re-enrollment campaigns, and [Coaching Development and Training](#) for internal staff.

This case study focuses specifically on undergraduate Enrollment Coaching data and student outcomes from 2021 through 2026.



Outsourcing prospective student outreach to InsideTrack continually adds value for our institution and our learners. Enrollment coaches act as a seamless extension of our team, helping learners develop the skills needed to enroll and persist. Our students receive detailed guidance about their academic pathways, but life happens — especially with adult learners — and that brings challenges throughout the enrollment process. InsideTrack coaches help them figure out how to navigate these challenges.

— DR. CLAYTON STEEN
Associate Vice President for Online
Education Enrollment Strategy,
Penn State World Campus



Building authentic student connections in a competitive landscape

Across online higher education, learners expect fast, personalized and supportive communication. Yet [research from UPCEA](#) shows that 44% of prospective student inquiries never receive a response — and those that do often experience significant delays. That's why Penn State World Campus set out to expand their capacity in 2010, partnering with InsideTrack to deliver a **100% response rate across all managed prospective student inquiries** — ensuring every learner receives prompt, high-touch support.

Partnership goals focused on high-impact support

To meet the growing interest in their online programs while continuing to uphold institutional excellence, Penn State World Campus and InsideTrack collaborated on five strategic enrollment goals:

- 1 Delivering a high-quality experience from day one:**
Providing consistent, personalized communication across every stage of the journey, from initial inquiry through the start of classes
- 2 Expanding staff capacity and operational flexibility:**
Alleviating bandwidth constraints for internal staff, freeing admissions counselors to focus on tasks like reviewing application files, evaluating transfer credits and guiding admitted students through onboarding
- 3 Focusing on program fit:**
Ensuring prospective learners find the program best suited to their long-term educational and career goals
- 4 Setting clear expectations around academic rigor:**
Ensuring learners understand the time commitment and dedication required to earn a Penn State degree online
- 5 Measuring success through meaningful connection:**
Defining impact by prompt outreach to all inquiries and strong contact and meeting rates — rather than solely increased headcount



For us, enrollment isn't just a numbers game — it's about helping our students find the best fit and setting clear expectations about the rigor of a degree. We don't need everybody; we need the right people for the right programs. InsideTrack aligns completely with our culture — their coaches move past transactional interactions to provide the human-centered support that helps learners enroll with confidence.

— WILLIAM FRITZ
Senior Director of Admissions and
Military Enrollment Operations, Penn
State World Campus

Boosting enrollment while remaining student-centered

Designed to integrate seamlessly into Penn State World Campus's systems, InsideTrack coaches operate as a natural extension of the admissions team. This allows coaches to manage prospective-student engagement while internal admissions counselors focus on streamlining other crucial student experience milestones.

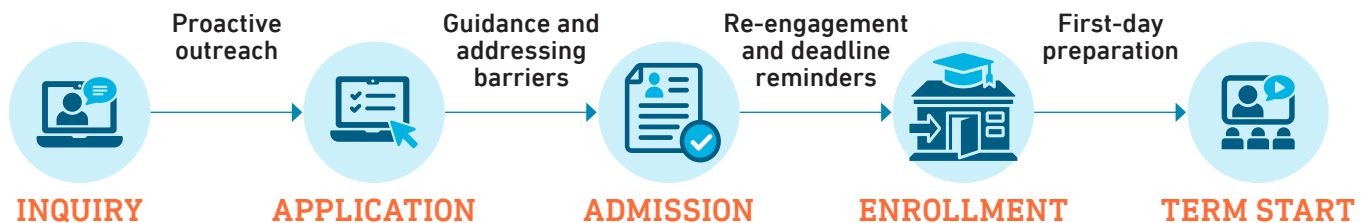
InsideTrack Enrollment Coaching delivers this personalized support at scale. **Coaches leverage InsideTrack's custom coaching platform to respond to all assigned undergraduate program inquiries**, helping prospective learners:

- Define long-term goals
- Identify best-fit programs
- Connect to relevant resources
- Prepare for registration deadlines
- Feel a stronger sense of belonging to the university

"Managing the volume of inquiries is impossible without InsideTrack. They act as the air traffic controller for us — making introductions, building relationships and seamlessly handing students off to our staff. **InsideTrack gives adult learners that individual attention that our internal team simply wouldn't have the bandwidth for otherwise.**"

— DR. CLAYTON STEEN
Associate Vice President for Online Education Enrollment Strategy,
Penn State World Campus

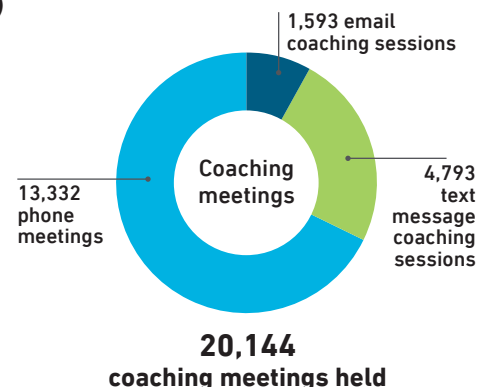
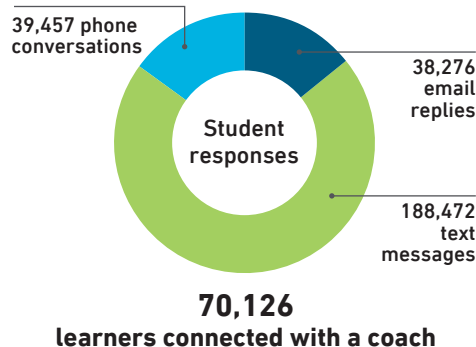
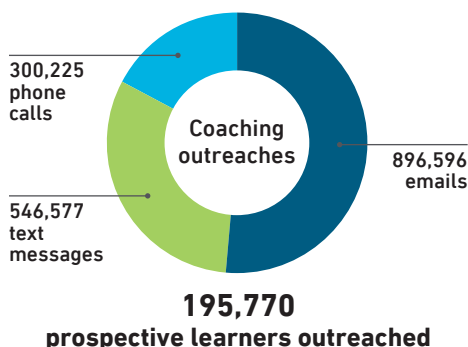
ENROLLMENT COACHING MILESTONES



Tangible results from proactive, multi-channel coaching outreach

Across all stages of the enrollment journey, coaches outreach to prospective learners via their preferred channels to build trust and maintain momentum. From 2021–2026, **text messaging became the most-used channel for real-time student connection**, while phone conversations served as the primary mode for high-impact, 1:1 coaching meetings.

COACHING ENGAGEMENT (2021–2026)

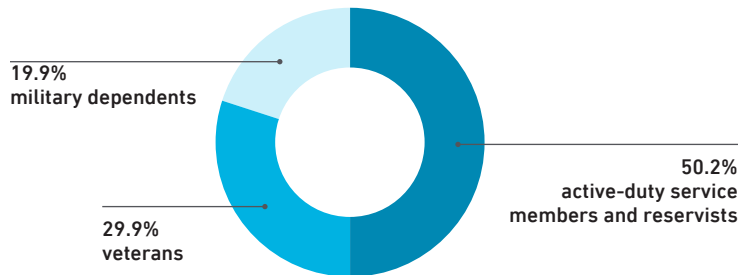


■ EMAIL ■ TEXT ■ PHONE



Dedicated support for military-affiliated learners

Penn State World Campus is ranked the **#1 online school for veterans nationwide** by *Military Times* and serves more than 3,000 enrolled military-affiliated students. From 2021-2026, InsideTrack supported **nearly 36K prospective military undergraduates**, including:



To meet the needs of this population, InsideTrack provides a dedicated military enrollment coach who supports military-affiliated learners throughout their enrollment journey and serves on the Penn State World Campus Military Advisory Council. In this role, Coach Rob Andrews provides tailored guidance to help learners navigate complex, military-specific challenges — such as navigating GI Bill®* benefits and balancing military responsibilities with coursework. Having an expert military enrollment coach has driven high prospective-student engagement, **maintaining contact rates above 50% since 2024.**

“Military learners face unique barriers, from navigating VA benefits to managing deployment schedules. Having made the transition from the military to college myself, I know the importance of having someone in your corner and building a strong relationship from day one. **Coaching helps these learners, many of whom are first-generation, explore their educational options with confidence, getting clear, concise guidance aligned with their career goals.**”

— ROB ANDREWS
Military Enrollment Coach,
InsideTrack



Flexibility is an essential reason we continue to partner with InsideTrack — from scaling up or down to helping other campus offices with outreach for retention and conversion. To use a sports analogy, InsideTrack gives us a ‘deeper bench’ — a trusted partner ready to step up when we have limited resources and an immediate need.

— WILLIAM FRITZ
Senior Director of Admissions and Military Enrollment Operations, Penn State World Campus

*GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill.

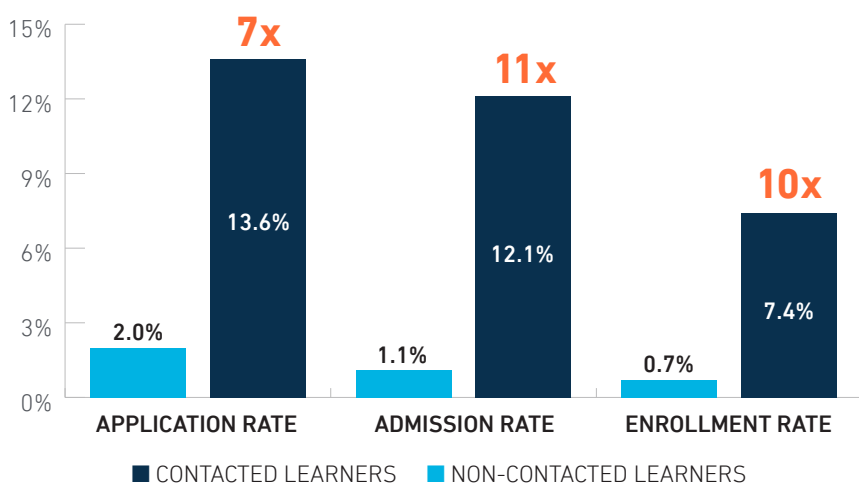


Elevating enrollment outcomes and expanding staff capacity

In online enrollment, speed, clarity and personal connection make all the difference. That's why **100% of Penn State World Campus inquiries receive an immediate response**, followed by personalized outreach from a success coach within one business day.

An analysis of 2021-2026 coaching data found that **more than one in three prospective learners responded to coaching outreach**, with 24.3% of contacted learners engaging in at least one coaching meeting. This proactive outreach translated initial student motivation into decisive action, as **learners who engaged with a coach were significantly more likely to apply, be admitted and ultimately enroll** at Penn State World Campus. Coaching support also helped 61.6% of admitted students make the informed decision to enroll, navigate financial and registration milestones, and clear any roadblocks before the start of classes.

COACHING IMPROVED CONVERSION AT EVERY MILESTONE



35.8%
of students made contact with a coach

24.3%
of contacted learners met with a coach

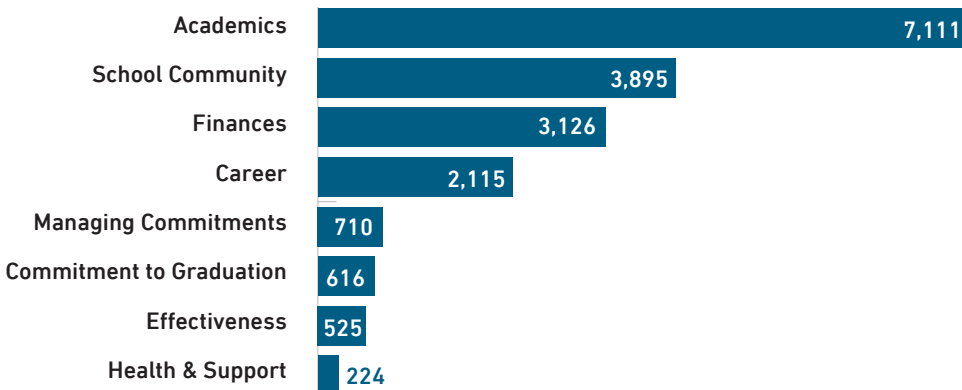
61.6%
yield

How human-centered coaching supports the whole learner

While meeting enrollment targets is vital, leaders at Penn State World Campus also define success by student fit and degree completion. Coaching is grounded in the goal of recruiting future graduates — **helping prospective learners clarify career objectives, choose best-fit programs and prepare for the academic rigor of this degree.**

While initial contact provides immediate momentum, coaching meetings rooted in [InsideTrack's evidence-based methodology](#) allow for deeper 1:1 engagement. These conversations help prospective learners increase confidence and persistence; deepen feelings of belonging; understand the value of their degree; and develop the necessary knowledge, skills and beliefs to complete their education. By helping students create a clear plan, coaches bridge the gap between initial inquiry and first-day enrollment.

COACHING MEETINGS ADDRESS THE FULL CONTEXT OF A LEARNER'S LIFE



The top three focus areas covered in coaching meetings from 2021-2026 were **academics, school community and finances**, demonstrating that establishing a sense of belonging during the enrollment process is just as critical to student success as navigating program fit and financial preparation.

Leveraging coaching insights to improve enrollment processes

Beyond everyday enrollment support, InsideTrack coaches gather information on the primary risk factors that prevent prospective learners from enrolling, as well as their key motivations for choosing Penn State World Campus. Along with competitive analysis and top-of-funnel research, InsideTrack regularly surfaces coaching trends and insights to inform strategic recommendations, allowing Penn State World Campus to address information gaps, highlight key value propositions and adjust policies.



Beyond providing applicants with a level of individualized care and customer service that our team is unable to consistently provide with our staffing resources, InsideTrack also brings valuable expertise and experience to our outreach efforts. **The coaching and training they've provided to our team over the years has strengthened our ability to effectively support and communicate with applicants.**

— CARLI DONOVAN
Assistant Director of Admissions,
Penn State World Campus

COACHING INSIGHTS

Coach-reported non-start reasons:

- Application fees
- Transcript requirements
- Complex credit-transfer process

STRATEGIC IMPACT

Penn State World Campus incorporated a **fee-waiver process** directly into the application and improved the **credit-transfer process**, making it easier for learners to complete application requirements.

InsideTrack's annual "Secret Shopper" research reports and competitive analysis identified strategic messaging opportunities and information gaps, including:

- Centralized career tools, resources and outcomes by degree program
- Parent and family resources
- Financial aid literacy and scholarship tools

Penn State World Campus **enhanced their prospect-facing website** to provide greater awareness, clarity and transparency about the affordability and value of a degree for undecided students.

The lasting impact of Enrollment Coaching



FOR STUDENTS

Individualized, holistic support ensures each learner enrolls at Penn State World Campus with confidence in their program choice, clear academic expectations, a strong sense of belonging, and the mindset needed to persist and complete their degree.



FOR PENN STATE WORLD CAMPUS

Outsourcing prospective student outreach to InsideTrack provides a flexible, seamless partnership. Coaching delivers a personal touch at scale — driving high contact, application, admission and enrollment rates — all while freeing internal admissions staff to focus on specialized support.

Evolving together to meet future goals

As Penn State World Campus looks toward future growth goals, the partnership continues to adapt to meet shifting needs. Building on the foundation of undergraduate Enrollment Coaching, Penn State World Campus has turned to InsideTrack for additional support:

- **Expanding enrollment outreach:** Scaling coaching support to reach “stealth applicants” (learners who apply without inquiring first) and prospective online MBA graduate students
- **Supporting campus transfers:** Assisting actively enrolled students who are navigating transitions between Penn State campuses
- **Navigating system migrations:** Providing strategic consultation and flexible support to ensure seamless continuity during major data-system transitions
- **Building a campus-wide culture of care:** Delivering [Coaching Development and Training](#) to student-facing staff in order to create a continuity of care throughout the entire learner journey

“InsideTrack gives us the operational agility to adapt to changing learner needs while staying true to our mission. Looking ahead, expanding coaching skills across our own staff will ensure that **every learner experiences a consistent, human connection from their first inquiry all the way through graduation.**”

— WILLIAM FRITZ
Senior Director of Admissions and
Military Enrollment Operations,
Penn State World Campus

See how our evidence-based coaching methodology delivers measurable student outcomes across all institutions:

[insidetrack.org >](https://insidetrack.org)

Partner with InsideTrack to drive enrollment growth:

LET'S TALK

