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Seattle University Shifts to a Hybrid Admissions Process

Ashley Hagar, News Editor

There's no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced Seattle University to make changes across the board for the health and safety of its current students, faculty and staff. In addition, the university has had to adapt its admissions processes for prospective students.

James Miller, associate vice president and dean of admissions, explained that Seattle U has three elements of admissions processes they use for prospective undergraduate students.

The admissions team works together to develop a robust prospect list of students who have indicated interest in Seattle U or who could be satisfactory candidates. They use marketing communications through email, social media, print mailing and digital media. Lastly, they direct recruitment through high school visits, college fairs, information sessions and campus visits.

Miller explained that due to COVID-19, their processes have shifted to include more virtual experiences for prospective students. He added that while the change had some negative effects, it allowed the university to reach more students than before.

"We had to shift to digital recruitment, so a lot of the recruitment that I mentioned had to be converted to Zoom," Miller said. "While that was not an ideal experience for any of us, it opened up access to the university for groups of students who wouldn't normally have the ability to travel here or wouldn't get a visit at their high school, because there's over 20,000 high schools in the U.S."

Janet Shandley, director of graduate admissions, echoed Miller's statement, saying graduate admissions shifted similarly due to the pandemic.

"We find that we need to be giving people choices and meeting them in a variety of different places than we traditionally would. People want the virtual options because it allows those that are out of region, or even out of country, to still participate in those events," Shandley said.

Both Miller and Shandley shared that Seattle U is still receiving high application numbers, with an increase of international students, especially for graduate studies.

Shandley specifically pointed out that the university has increased efforts to recruit international students, which has been made easier because of the increased access available from digital tools.



“We’re trying to make a more concerted effort to reach out more broadly [to international students], which is something I think universities across the country are doing. We’re not all reaching out in the same ways, but it is something that you’ll find is happening at a lot of university campuses across the country,” Shandley said.

Lia Gonia, a third-year communications and media and theatre double major, was an orientation advisor during summer 2021. Because she had the opportunity to experience orientation in person, Gonia wanted to make sure students had a space to learn about the university—as it was still virtual.

“Other than the reason being COVID-19, I think this change has also made orientation so much more accessible to students, especially those who do not live locally in Seattle,” Gonia said.

She explained that due to the online format, the orientation team expanded the programming to be one-hour Zoom sessions every month over the summer rather than two days.

“In each [Zoom] session, we gave a space for incoming students to ask any questions they might have ... I think this made orientation less overwhelming, and it gave students more time to get to know each other and make connections,” Gonia said.

Since the university has now entered the post-quarantine phase of pandemic precautions, admissions has been able to host more in-person events such as Fall Preview Day and campus tours. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the health risk that COVID-19 presents, Seattle U still offers information sessions on Zoom.

“As we’re welcoming students back to campus and you start to see these groups, remembering that they are really excited to be back on college campuses and to see us in person is such a big deal. Saying hello or saying welcome [to prospective students] is really, really appreciated,” Miller said.