

Student Journey Map | Barton Community College BARTonline Student



Meet Susie

- » Age 20-39
- » Married with one child
- » Working professional with connections to the military
- » Non-degree seeking – needs credits to transfer to a 4-year university/grad school
- » Largely Millennials; a little Gen Z
- » Millennials are optimistic, detached from institutions and highly connected with friends
- » Gen Z is on track to be the best educated and most diverse generation

Motivations

- » Convenience of online classes
- » Speed – shorter sessions are ideal to get classes done faster
- » Cost

Frustrations

- » Worried about not having classroom interaction
- » Cost/financial aid
- » Technology is overwhelming and intimidating
- » Nervous about the online process
- » Difficult finding information on the website

Objections

- » Worried instructors won't be accessible
- » Classes/sessions don't align with her timeline
- » Technology is overwhelming
- » Want face-to-face interaction

About Millennials

- » Grew up in the mobile-global generation
- » Optimistic and highly connected with friends
- » Value-driven and attracted to brands that stand for something
- » Grew up in an instant-access world – they are comfortable researching and sharing data and are less committed to traditional institutions
- » Heavily influenced by advertising, brand reputation and customer experience
- » Seeks information from multiple sources, including online research, social networks and word-of-mouth referrals
- » Leading activities on mobile devices are digital audio, social networking and mobile video

About Gen Z

- » Grew up in a time of hardship, global conflict and economic trouble
- » Mature and in control; makes decisions in a pragmatic way
- » Values individual expression and avoids labels
- » Cause-oriented
- » First generation to be raised with smartphones and social media
- » More likely to watch Netflix and YouTube than traditional TV
- » Takes in information instantaneously and loses interest just as fast; attention span is 8 seconds on average
- » Gravitates toward Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube
- » Craves hyper-personal experiences on social media and value online communities

Goals | Get a better job/promotion | Complete a degree | Get credit hours to transfer elsewhere



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Key Observations

Many data collection methods were used to inform this journey map, including:

- Journey map workshop
- Financial aid interview
- 5 student interviews
- Online survey among current students, non-returning students and people who inquired but did not attend Barton¹

The research findings were synthesized and are reflected in the journey map, but there were a few key findings that we wanted to highlight.

- **The high rate of non-returning students is because they are currently attending or planning to transfer to a 4-year institution or grad school.** When they enroll, they only intend to take a few classes at Barton because the college is their vehicle to: 1) More affordably complete general education credits, or 2) Complete the prerequisites needed to get into graduate school. All five students interviewed were either completing gen ed credits or grad school pre-reqs, and when non-returning online survey respondents were asked why they chose not to take additional classes at Barton, the responses overwhelmingly pointed to one of those two reasons.
- **Students can travel the entire journey in a matter of weeks.** Most are on a timeline to get in and get out. Those taking general education credits appreciate that a class can be completed in 6-8 weeks instead of taking an entire semester, and many students taking pre-reqs for grad school have a limited amount of time to complete the class(es). They are applying, enrolling and completing the class quickly.
- **Tight timelines is also why some students attend multiple online colleges at the same time.** Some have a short window to complete the courses they need, and sometimes class times and session lengths don't allow them to take all of the classes at Barton. Therefore they attend more than one college to get everything done.
- **Most online students are self-pay, so cost is extremely important to them.** During the fall and spring, only 10-15% BARTonline students receive financial aid, and only 5-6% of online students receive financial aid in the summer.
- **Students refer to the college as "Barton."** They do not call it BARTonline.
- **Overall, you are doing a great job.** Students had very positive things to say about Barton and their online experience. They described the process as easy and the instructors as nice, helpful and engaging. And most importantly, they reported that the class(es) they took at Barton did a great job preparing them for the next stage of their journey.

¹ At the time this report was written (October 15, 2021), 100 current students, 86 non-returning students and 6 people who had inquired had responded to the survey. Comments in this report are primary and reflect high-level observations.

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Recommendations

It's time to review and redesign your website.

Online students are not visiting your campus, which means you don't have the opportunity to convince them to attend Barton in-person. This process has to be facilitated online – your website is their “college visit.” Flaws of the current website noted in the journey workshop included confusing navigation and outdated information. Having an intuitive, responsive website experience, and messaging that tells potential students a story, are essential and key to keeping users engaged, interested, inquiring and applying to BARTonline.

Please note that they are referring specifically to the online courses portion of our website, not the whole website! We just did that!

Optimize your website for search and develop a robust digital marketing strategy.

Students are using Google to find answers and make decisions, so to connect with them you must be discoverable online. Your website information has to be visible to potential students at all stages of the journey.

Our site is already highly optimized for search and we are always actively working on that. This is simply a product they offer. ;) So we're already doing this.

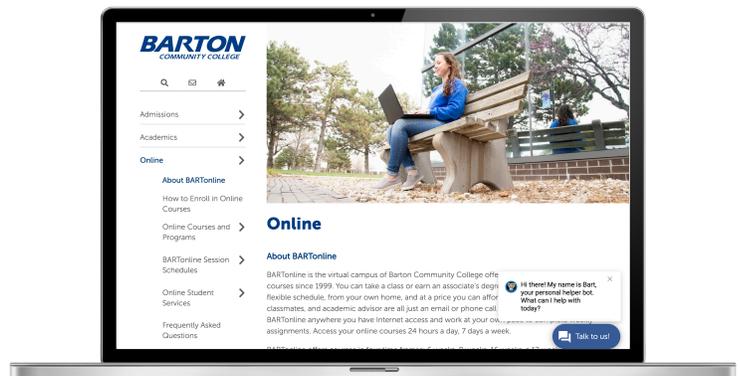
A combination of a search engine optimization strategy and paid media campaign will ensure your message is communicated to your target audience at key points along the journey. While each of these strategies individually can drive results, when you combine a strategic paid campaign while ranking high on those same keywords organically, you are doubling your chances of the user converting.

Review marketing materials to ensure the look and feel depicts an online learning environment, and the tone, voice and message speak to student wants, needs and feelings.

Because your students are not physically connected to your campus, they don't have a strong affiliation to your mascot. We recommend using the Barton Community College logo sans mascot on all marketing materials, and would also encourage you to consider developing a logo specific to your online campus, similar to what you've done for other campuses. The Barton Cougar logo is not relevant to this group, nor is the pawprint.

Photos should depict students in an online environment, not on campus. We want potential students to see themselves in the marketing. They can't relate to a picture of a student on campus.

These recommendations are solid and we will be incorporating most of them!



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Speak to online students on social media.

Right now your social media channels speak heavily to in-person student wants, needs and experiences – an online student would not be able to discern how Barton Community College can help them in their college journey. Incorporating more content specific to the online student journey will allow both student types to see themselves in the Barton Community College story.

Good stuff. We do post about our online sessions but we could use more content focused on the online-only student in this way.

Use more video content.

Working on moving this direction. Just need to free up more of Julie's time or bring on another content creator.

In terms of content creation, there may be no more important medium than video. It's engaging and evokes emotion with the added sensory advantages of sight, sound and motion.

Video will improve your SEO, enhance your social media presence, increase your reach and help you better engage with consumers. Videos are the best way to teach, engage and deepen your virtual relationship with prospective students.

Video content doesn't have to be expensive to produce. Use the professionals to produce evergreen content that you'll use for a longer duration. Use internal resources to create raw, authentic content for social media and select email communications.

Pull customers in with storytelling.

Good recommendations. We will shift some of our content creation priorities in this direction.

There are two ways to share knowledge – you can push the information out or you can pull potential students in with storytelling. Storytelling allows you to connect with students and allows them to see themselves in the story. It's part of humanizing the brand. A good story makes your organization real and relatable, and makes people care.

Tell your story through the voice of your students. There is nothing more powerful than a student telling other students about their experience at BARTonline. We all know word-of-mouth advertising is the most effective. This is a way to do word-of-mouth in a broader form and offer social proof that Barton is a good choice.

Your business development strategy is an important piece of your overall marketing strategy.

This one will take some collaboration from other departments - very worthwhile

Referrals from other colleges/universities and military entities are a big opportunity. Review your business development strategy to ensure current referrers have the information/tools they need, and work to identify other potential referrers that can be added to the pipeline.

Regularly ask students what you can do to make their experience better.

Hopefully this can be incorporated into surveys we already have in place.

Ask students how you're doing during key points in their journey. Was the application and enrollment process seamless or were there friction points? Student interviews revealed that the instructor can make or break the experience. Ask students about their instructors' performance and if they would recommend BARTonline to others. Collecting this data at regular intervals will give you the information you need to optimize what you're doing really

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well and identify potential problems before they become big issues. We recommend sending students a survey at two key points:

- When they start class: Send a survey about the application and enrollment process. Have instructors reinforce the importance of their feedback during class.
- After a class is complete: Email students an instructor evaluation, asking about the instructor and overall virtual classroom experience.

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Methodology

Objective

Analyze the BARTonline student's path to choosing Barton Community College. In order to achieve this objective, a journey map process was employed to uncover a student's thoughts, feelings and beliefs and the touchpoints students have with Barton as they walk the path.

The Process

1. **Define the Experience:** A student's journey varies drastically based on his or her unique needs and situation. For this journey, AMPERAGE analyzed the college selection journey of online students.
2. **Uncover the Truth:** Five, 30-minute student interviews were conducted, as well as a virtual Journey Workshop with BARTonline faculty and staff. In the interviews and workshop, we talked through the physical and emotional experiences students have during their journey. Key to this discussion were also the touchpoints students have with Barton as they walk the path. Additionally, AMPERAGE reviewed national trends related to student recruitment and reviewed BARTonline's website and social media content.
3. **Chart the Course:** AMPERAGE synthesized the key insights collected in Phase Two into a visual description of the student journey. Your map shows student behaviors, thoughts and feelings as they travel through each stage of the journey. Touchpoints, barriers and opportunities for Barton Community College are also defined on the map.