

Reframing Liberal Arts for Career Readiness

University of San Diego College of Arts & Sciences



Table of Contents

03 Campaign Opportunity

04 Our Strategy

06 Campaign Results

07 Top Keywords and Assets

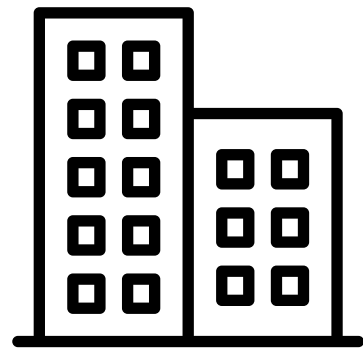
09 What Worked

10 What We Learned

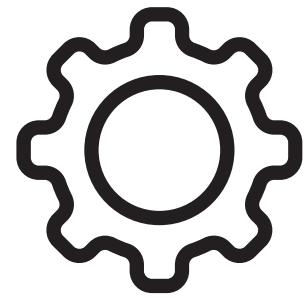
11 Strategic Pivots

12 Strategic Recommendations

Campaign Opportunity



Marketing Resource Gap



Looking beyond STEM



Opportunity to capitalize on career readiness and flexibility within the liberal arts by focusing on **discovery** and **outcomes**



Our Strategy

Career Readiness

Wanted to focus on career outcomes (“What jobs can you get with a liberal arts degree”) to meet the skepticism of parents/students

The “Undecided” Advantage

We targeted “Best colleges for undecided majors.”
Highlighting marketed CAS as the premier place to explore

15.9% CTR in Round 1

Liberal Arts Positioning

Marketing liberal arts core as a practical framework for the modern world.
Redefine Liberal Arts as the ultimate ‘Career Readiness’ Degree

From Testing to Results

Started Broad: Exploring Search Behavior:

We launched with a wide mix of general college and liberal arts keywords, including career questions and program discovery terms.

Key Learning: High reach, but users searched broadly for colleges rather than specifically for CAS

Expanded & Tested Key Themes:

We introduced a wider range of keywords around campus lifestyle, career outcomes, and academic flexibility to test engagement.

Key Learning: Increased visibility, but many broad terms lacked strong relevance to drive consistent clicks

Refined for High-Intent Performance:

We narrowed focus to keywords tied to career readiness, support resources, and decision-making (e.g., undecided majors, career outcomes).

Key Learning: More relevant targeting led to stronger click performance and improved efficiency

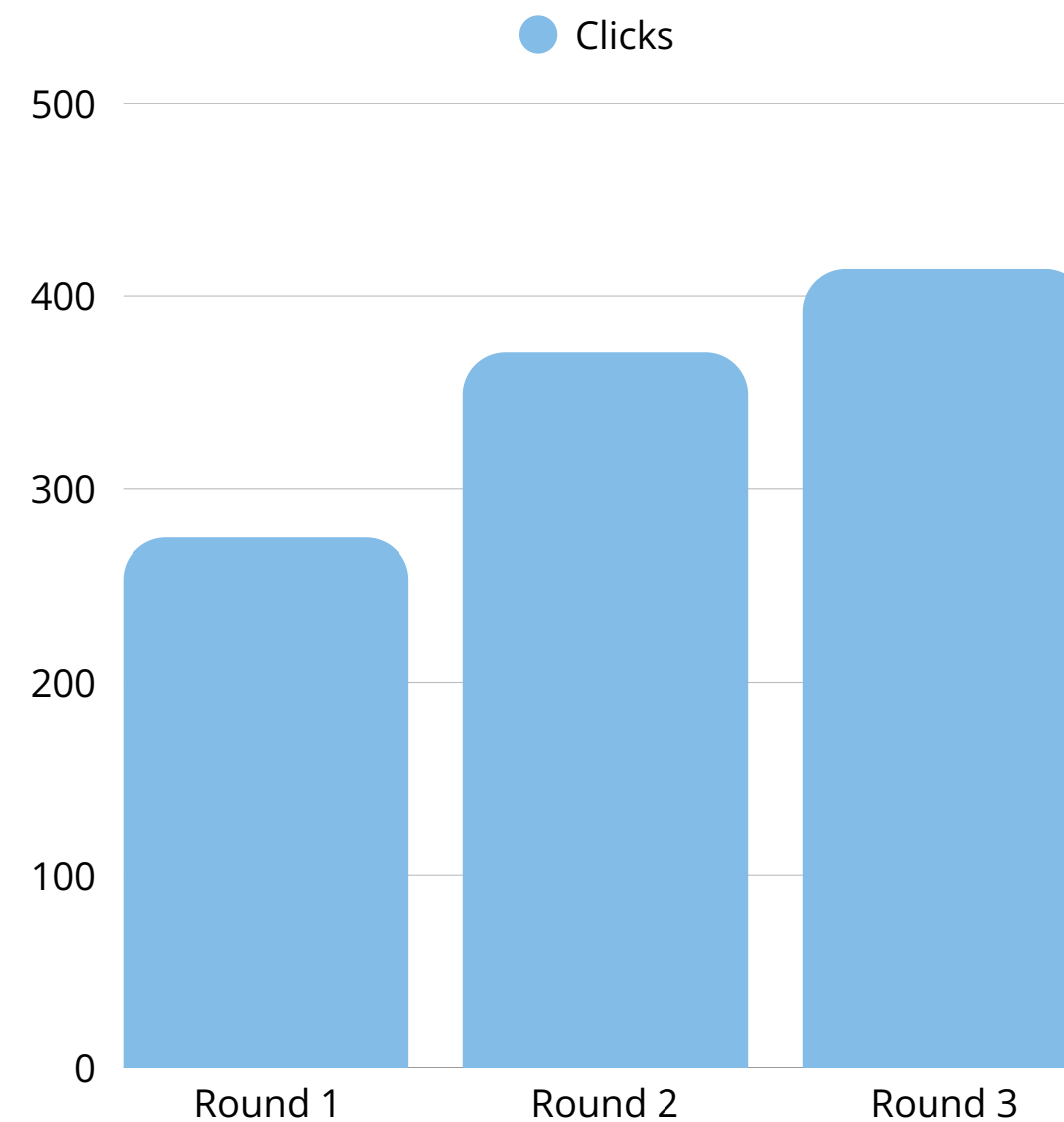
Growth Over Time

Consistent performance improvements across all three campaign rounds

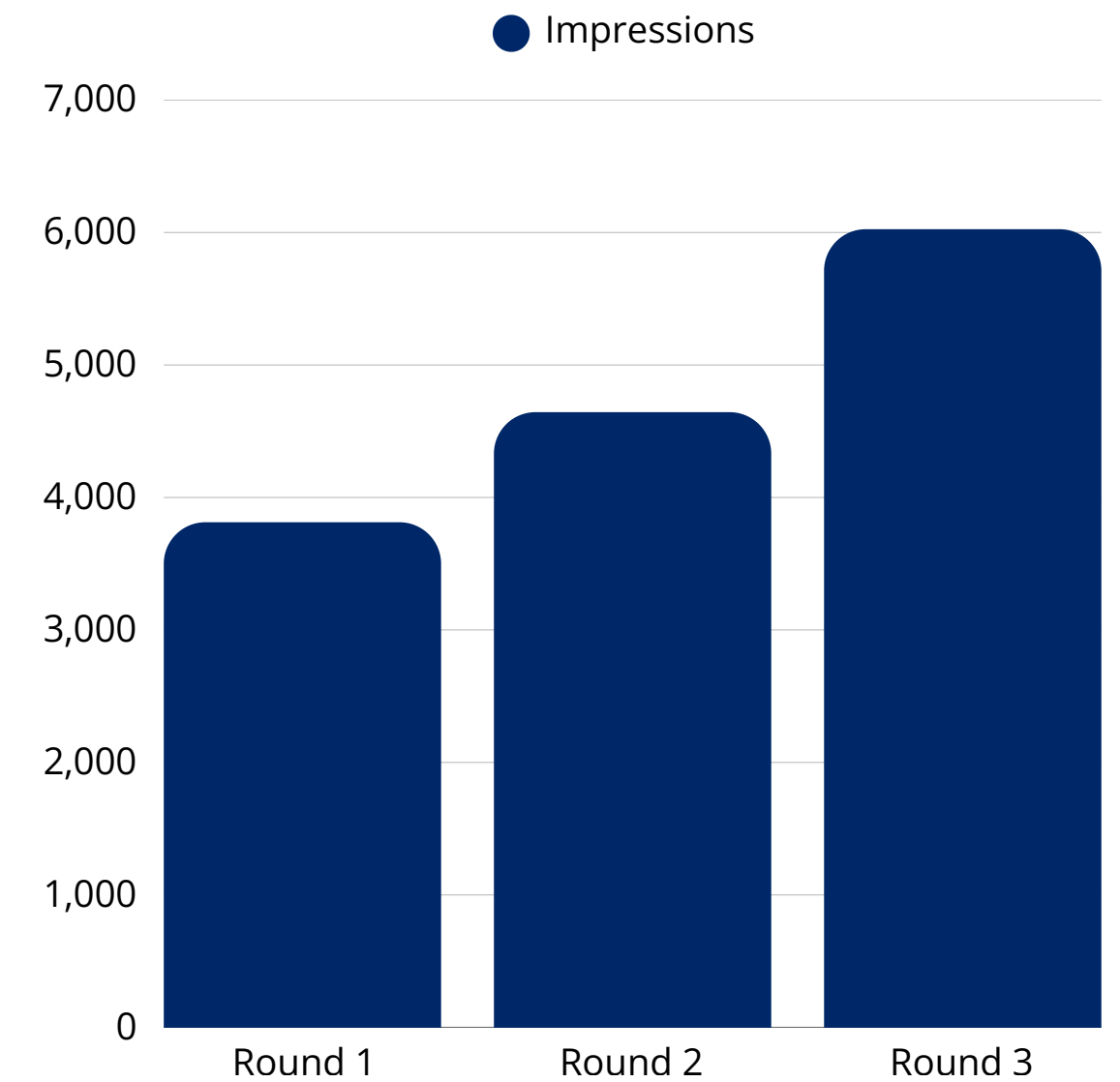
Insights:

- **Clicks increased by 50.55%** from Round 1 to Round 3
- **Impressions roughly doubled**, reaching 6,205 in Round 3
- **Strongest performance occurred in Round 3** after optimization
- Refinements in targeting and keywords drove higher engagement

Clicks by Round



Impressions by Round



Top Keywords and Assets

Category	Top Performers	Value Added
Keywords	<i>"Best colleges for undecided majors"</i>	Discovery Value: Specifically captured freshmen who are "not sure what they want to do."
Headlines	<i>"Explore Majors in San Diego"</i>	Value: Aligned with Undecided Advantage strategy, capturing students in the high-intent discovery phase while leveraging USD's geographic appeal.
Descriptions	<i>"Experience a nationally recognized campus known for beauty, academics, and community."</i>	Combines emotional USD's physical beauty with practical value of academic reputation and community
Sitelinks	<i>"Career Development (Compass Page)"</i>	Most clicked- takes the user directly to the "Career Readiness/Compass" page
Search Terms	<i>"Colleges with small class sizes California"</i>	Intimacy Value: (278 clicks) proved that the "Liberal Arts" brand is best sold through the promise of small, supportive environments

Our Winning Ad

The image shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "Best universities for undecided majors". Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "All", "Images", "Snorkis", "Videos", "Maps", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results show "About 159,000 results (0.53 seconds)". The top result is an advertisement for the University of San Diego, College of Arts and Sciences. The ad title is "Most Beautiful Campus CA | Top Ranked Colleges in the US". The URL is "sandiego.edu/cas/explore". The ad text reads: "Recognized in California for strong academics, faculty support, and student success." Below the ad text, there is a link "Explore Program" and the text "Discover Degrees That Fit You".

Google

Best universities for undecided majors

All Images Snorkis Videos Maps More Settings Tools

About 159,000 results (0.53 seconds)

Ad · university of San Diego › College of Arts and Sciences ▾

Most Beautiful Campus CA | Top Ranked Colleges in the US

Ad sandiego.edu/cas/explore

Recognized in California for strong academics, faculty support, and student success.

Explore Program

Discover Degrees That Fit You

What Worked

Top Impact Drivers

- **Lifestyle and Visuals:** (Awareness Stage)
 - “Most Beautiful Campus CA” (129 clicks)
 - “Global Community at USD” (131 clicks)
 - High-volume drivers
- **Intent-Based Long-Tail:** (Exploration Stage)
 - “Best colleges for undecided majors” (220 clicks)
 - “College with small class sizes” (278)
 - Captured students in decision phase
- **Future-Focused Messaging:** (Emerging trend)
 - “Liberal Arts in AI World” (112 clicks)
 - Resonated with career security concerns



What We Learned

- **Broad Match**
 - Local keyword's like "Top universities in San Diego" drove high impressions but low-quality clicks (1.2% CTR)
- **Niche Gap**
 - Keywords focusing on specific majors (eg "Spanish major") resulted in "Rarely Served" status due to low search volume
- **Process vs Outcome**
 - Users ignored "First Year Advising Programs" (process) in favor of "Career Readiness" (outcome)



Strategic Pivots

Identity Over Geography

Shifting focus from
“San Diego” and
“California” broadly
to a national Liberal
Arts and Global
Identity

Capitalizing on Discovery and Exploration

Consolidated
fragmented major-
specific bidding into
high performing
discovery hook

Value Based Messaging

Pivoting from
“Academic Process”
(First year advising)
to “Life Outcomes”
based messaging
(Career Readiness &
Faculty Mentorship)

Strategic Recommendations

Conversion Optimization:

- Our campaign focused on traffic and engagement (CPC and CTR)
- Our recommendation is to focus on actions that get them to the finish line and track the moments when a student moves from interested to ready to apply

Launch Geographically Targeted Campaigns:

- Data shows high engagement and efficient CPCs in Chicago, Miami, and Honolulu
- Recommend creating dedicated ad groups for these regions that emphasize the locational benefits of San Diego and CAS's academic reputation

Scale the "Beauty + Career" Messaging Formula

- Our winning ad combination proved that students respond well to a mix of aesthetic appeals and professional outcomes.
- Future campaigns should look more into the "Most Beautiful Campus" hooks with "Career Readiness" sitelinks

PRIORITY: Shift budget toward high-intent keywords and Career Readiness messaging



THANK YOU

Questions?