

Goodwin University | GU Sees Continued Growth in Lead Volume Through Partnership with Synapse

Goodwin University

Goodwin University is a NECHE-approved, non-profit institution of higher learning, and one of the fastest growing universities in Connecticut. Specializing in career-focused education, Goodwin offers Nursing, Manufacturing, and variety of additional vocational degrees at the Certificate, Associate, Bachelor's and Master's levels.

"Partnering with Synapse has been one of the best professional decisions I have made. The knowledge, entrepreneurial spirit and technical expertise of Synapse is second to none. The strategies put forth by Synapse and Goodwin College have resulted in incredible results that are hard to believe. I have complete trust in Mark and the Synapse team and full confidence that our incredible performance results will continue year after year. Synapse's work is of the highest quality and is a very good value in the price-inflated digital marketing vertical. If you're looking to bring your digital marketing efforts to the next level, contact Synapse. I promise you that you won't regret this decision!" - Dan Noonan, Senior Vice President, Enrollment, Marketing & Communications

THE SCENARIO

Goodwin College relies on their website presence as their primary means of prospective student lead generation and recruited Synapse SEM to build, launch and manage an SEO strategy in 2015. After working with an existing paid search agency for several years, Goodwin also transitioned their Google Ads and Bing Ads management to Synapse SEM in the fourth quarter of 2018. Synapse and Goodwin have since been partnered on the SEM/SEO channels, consistently reaching higher inquiry levels each year, despite largely flat marketing budgets. Following consecutive years in 2022 and 2023 of +50% YoY growth in SEM lead volume, paid search budgets were increased a substantial 25% year over year in 2024. Synapse was tasked with managing those budgets to continue the momentum in inquiry growth and avoid CPC inflation and other diminishing marginal returns on investment.

THE ACTION PLAN

With increased budgets now available, Synapse uncapped Goodwin's most productive keyword sets to maximize impression share on top-converting themes. We also carefully tested network expansion with new Performance Max campaigns to increase exposure into additional Google properties like YouTube, Display and Gmail. We collaborated with Goodwin's marketing team to develop new program-level guides for potential students—a softer CTA that could be used on landing pages for students not yet ready to speak with admissions staff members. We also executed a full-scale Quality Score improvement strategy including RSA, ad extension and landing page copy overhauls. Our goal was to improve Quality Scores to mitigate CPC increases that had hindered the effectiveness of past SEM budget increases. Finally, we also began importing deeper-funnel conversion data like qualified applications and enrollments into Google Ads from GU's student management system. This allowed us to test deeper-funnel bidding models with a focus on lead quality rather than quantity.

THE RESULTS

Our budget expansion strategy was highly successful in FY24 with a 38% year over year increase in SEM leads—an increase that exceeded the roughly 25% increase in fiscal year budgets. The push to include secondary CTAs on landing pages with content guides proved highly successful—adding 417 incremental conversions throughout the year. Our Quality Score improvement strategy yielded an 11% YoY improvement, which helped us decrease CPCs by 18% year over year, despite Google reporting 15% YoY inflation in CPCs for the higher education industry. Deeper-funnel bidding strategies also significantly improved lead quality, and in our high priority Nursing campaign, qualified applicants increased 133% year over year.



+38% YOY

Growth in SEM Conversions



15% YoY

Reduction in Cost-Per-Lead



18% YoY

Reduction in CPCs

