WINNING THE RACE FOR BEST-FIT STUDENTS
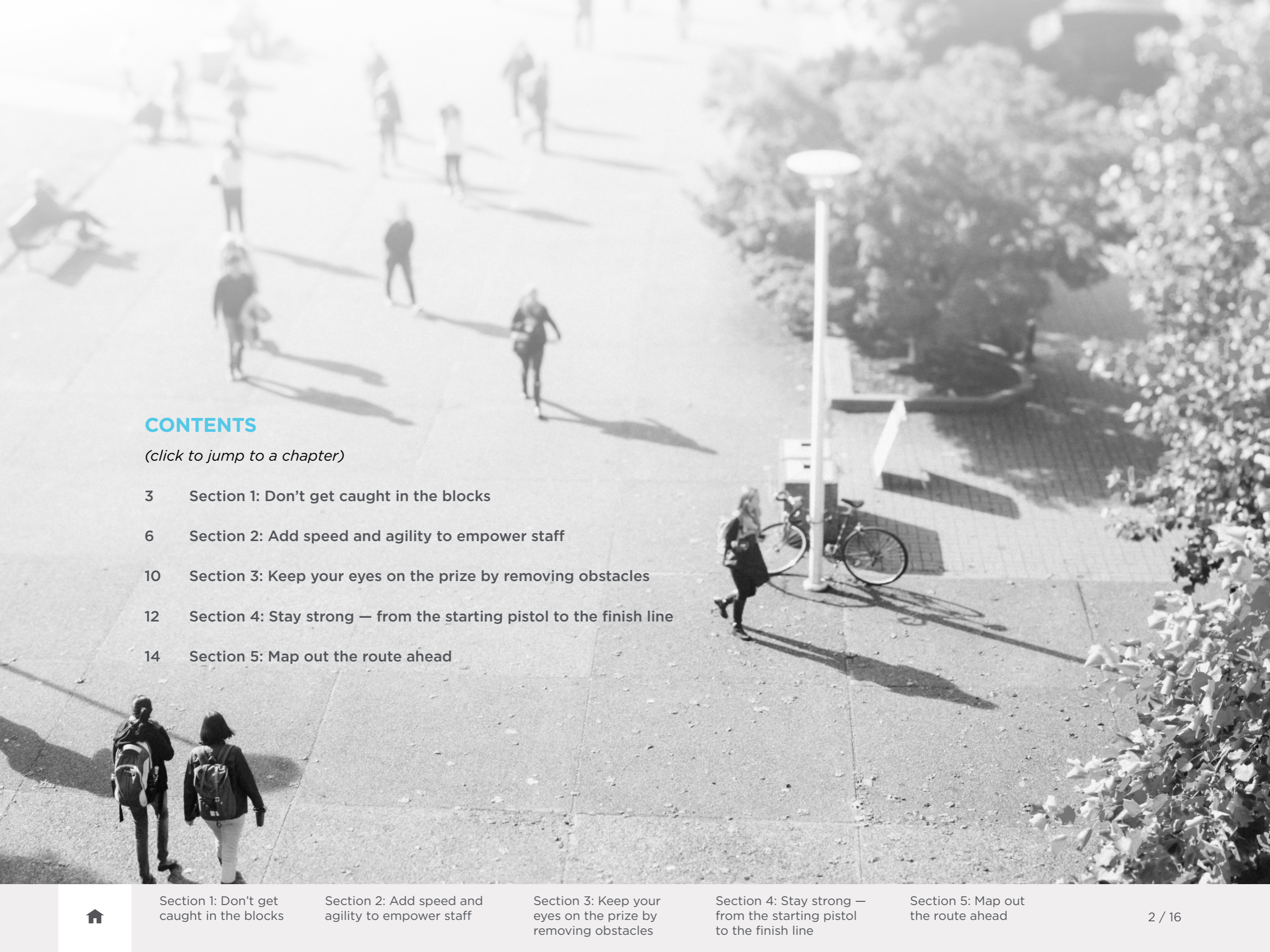
Finding an advantage in automated transcript capture

Hyland®

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Don't get caught in the blocks

With a declining student applicant pool over the last few years, higher education institutions face an ever-increasing challenge of meeting recruitment goals and target populations. This turns the admissions and transfer processes into a competitive race to respond quickly and accurately – with the coveted trophy of securing the best-fit students. If your institution still relies on paper-based, manual transcript capture and transfer credit evaluation processes, then the race can quickly turn into a crawl and be detrimental to your institution's overall status and appeal.
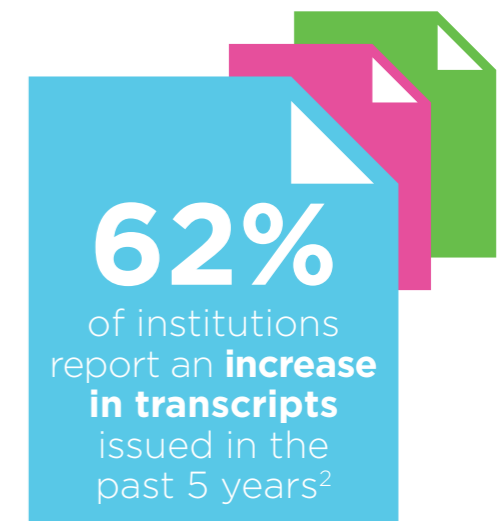
On average, two million high school graduates enroll in college each year[1], and have transcripts that need reviewing prior to admission and enrollment. At the same time, the transfer population is increasing — and it's not just students switching from two-year to four-year institutions. Schools continue to see an increase in currently-enrolled students taking external classes while still enrolled that need credit for those courses.

This means the typical college transcript is multiple pages long. And though PDF, EDI and XML can speed up some processing, many schools use paper transcripts or don't fully leverage the benefits of electronic transcripts. As a result, it takes an average of 20 minutes for someone to manually key in the essential institution and course information from a "simple" college transcript. Multiply that by thousands of students each year and it's easy to see the inefficiencies.

When your transcript capture and evaluation processes revolve around paper, manual data entry and transcript reviews by hand are the norm. This stretches out the decision period and forces students to wait weeks or even months to receive admission, course equivalency and financial aid decisions. This puts you at a massive disadvantage when compared to other institutions with more efficient transcript review processes competing for the same students.

So how do you overcome these challenges and ensure you get out of the starting blocks faster than competing institutions?

The answer is simple: *Automated transcript capture and evaluation.*

62%
of institutions report an **increase in transcripts** issued in the past 5 years[2]

GETTING A JUMP ON THE COMPETITION

Investing in an automated transcript capture and evaluation solution provides your institution with the tools to help drive faster decisions as well as fast — and more accurate — course equivalency reports. That means you can get answers and information into the hands of students ahead of your competition. And that can be the difference between securing or losing out on a best-fit student for your institution.

To do that, the right transcript solution should provide:

- **Electronic transcript capture:** This tool removes the need to manually key in transcript data sent into the school. Whether transcripts come in electronically or as paper, the right solution should be able to identify and capture necessary information from transcripts automatically without human intervention. It also empowers your institution to store all transcript information in one central, electronic location so staff can instantaneously pull up required information when questions come up.

- **Automated transfer course evaluation:** This tool cuts out the reliance on staff to manually review transcripts to determine an applicant's transfer equivalency report. The right solution allows you to build out a template that will take a transcript from any given school and automatically identify which credits will and will not transfer. This removes process bottlenecks due to lack of staff bandwidth.

- **SIS integration:** By choosing a transcript solution that integrates with your student information system (SIS), you cut out manual data entry and improve the ability to build your articulation database. Staff no longer need to pull up multiple screens to enter information from separate databases. One system shares necessary data with the other to cut down on errors and empower staff to focus on higher-value work.

OVER
1/3 of college students have *transferred at least once* [3]

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Add speed and agility to empower staff

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If you're going to win a race, you need to be fast and agile. A paper-based process is anything but. By investing in a solution that automatically captures and processes transcripts, you remove manual steps from the front end and empower staff to focus on what really matters: the student behind the paperwork.

When a student applies to transfer to your institution, there are four key decisions they will wait on to determine their future:

- **Admission:** First and foremost, do they meet the standards to be accepted into your institution?

- **Transfer credits:** Will their existing credits transfer for equivalent courses?

- **Financial aid opportunities:** Do they qualify for one of your institution's financial aid packages?

- **Academic pathway programs:** Can you use their existing credits to determine a clear and cost-effective path to graduation?

The right transcript solution should help speed decisions in all four of these areas. *Here's how.*

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ADMISSION DECISIONS

Automated transcript capture empowers your staff to focus on faster admission decisions, not data input. Whether it's evaluating a high school transcript for GPA, class rank and other admission factors, or looking at a college transcript to determine student classification, each applicant has at least one transcript for your staff to review. Manual transcript data input takes up staff time that could be used in better ways. The right transcript capture solution will be able to capture the important information from a transcript — whether it comes in as paper or electronically — and route that data into the right hands for review.

By automating these processes at the front end of review processes, you free up staff to focus on the actual decisions and dramatically cut down on the amount of time it takes to get to them. That way, you return the focus of the process where it belongs — the student — while also giving you a leg up on your competition by responding to students faster.

TRANSFER CREDIT EVALUATIONS

Transferring to a new school is a big decision for a student, so it is important to inform students how their courses will fit into their chosen academic programs quickly, providing them with ample time to make the right decision. Manual transfer credit evaluations take up unnecessary time and, even worse, run the risk of containing errors.

A good transcript solution reads data from transcripts accurately so students are awarded the proper credit the first time. It is also much faster, as your system can identify which credits transfer automatically based off of articulation rules for each external institution. And when a course comes through that doesn't have a pre-determined equivalency, the system should bring this to your staff's attention and empower them to quickly define the new equivalency and add it to the database. All of this allows your institution to get out course equivalency decisions at the same time as admission decisions, giving you an advantage over your peers.

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FINANCIAL AID OPPORTUNITIES

Finances will always be a large determining factor in whether or not a student chooses your institution over another. That's why it is crucial to provide students with any potential financial aid information as quickly as possible. The school that leaves a student hanging on aid decisions will most likely be left in the dust at decision time.

The right transcript capture and evaluation solution should automatically send necessary data to your financial aid system, like proof of high school completion. That way, financial aid staff have everything they need to make award decisions with the click of a button. This helps to remove the risk of losing best-fit applicants because staff can't keep up. You also improve the speed and quality of customer service, as your staff can answer questions quickly on the first call.

In general, paper-based and manual transcript processes slow down the decisions that are most important to the student. Implementing an automated transcript processing solution can be the difference in students making the decision to choose your school.

PROVIDING A CLEAR ACADEMIC PATHWAY TO STUDENTS

It is also crucially important to students that your institution is able to help guide them towards the most efficient and cost-effective path towards degree completion. Equivalency decisions are crucial here, as external courses taken by enrolled students play a large role in shaping their path to graduation.

The right solution will provide your institution's staff with immediate answers to questions about equivalency so they can help keep students on the right path that doesn't waste their time or money. This helps to drive student satisfaction and retention.

45%
of transfer students
have attended
**3 OR MORE
COLLEGES**[4]

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Keep your eyes on the prize by removing obstacles

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When your transcript capture and evaluation process revolves around manual, paper-based processes, your staff's focus will too often be turned towards documents and data input — not the student. But a large piece of the decision process relies on your staff's ability to quickly respond to applicant questions and keep their focus on student outreach activities that can't be automated. You don't want the race to secure best-fit students to be decided on how quickly your staff can run to a filing cabinet.

By investing in the right transcript processing system, you can guarantee that your staff will have all the information they need at their fingertips when applicants come calling.

This digital transformation ensures received or missing information, course equivalency, financial aid decisions and more are all stored electronically and in one central location so students don't meet a brick wall when questions arise. And, as many schools move to centralized information centers, it allows better collaboration and information sharing without requiring time from admissions and registration specialists

This level of access has usefulness far beyond an applicant's decision to attend your school. By arming advisors with the most current information, they're able to guide and encourage students to register for the correct courses from the beginning. That goes a long way towards ensuring students remain satisfied with your institution — which is crucial if you don't want them transferring elsewhere.

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Stay strong — from the firing pistol to the finish line

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From the moment you receive an application through that student's graduation, accurate and efficient transcript capture and evaluation is crucial to securing best-fit students and keeping them happy during their time at your institution. Cutting out unnecessary steps and slowdowns associated with paper and manual processes gives you the best chance to win the race.

That's why finding the right transcript solution should be a key component in your efforts to building your digital campus. Your effort shouldn't end with merely capturing documents electronically. Strive for a system that pushes information into the right hands so the focus remains where it belongs — on your students.

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Map out the route ahead

DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?
FOLLOW THIS PLAN FOR SELECTING THE RIGHT TRANSCRIPT CAPTURE AND PROCESSING SOLUTION

1. **First, sit down and take stock**

- How does your organization currently receive, process and store transcripts?

- What percent of your processes rely on paper-based and manual processes?

- What systems do you already use to store student information?

- What are the biggest challenges you face with your current transcript evaluation processes?

2. **Identify the scope of the project, and determine best practices to execute on your goals**

- Talk to your staff and determine what they see as the largest hurdles in the way of providing excellent student service.

- Ask your peers what systems they use, or turn to industry experts and analysts for help targeting the solution that best fit your institution's needs.

3. **Focus on your most pressing transcript-related challenges first, and expand your solution from there**

- What is your biggest hurdle to reducing response times and improving student satisfaction?
  - Storing/retrieving transcripts?
  - Manually entering data in existing systems?
  - Determining equivalent credit?
  - Communicating answers to students?

- Make that biggest issue your first priority, and invest in a platform that can grow to solve your other problems in the future as well.

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Learn more at **Hyland.com/HigherEducation**

SOURCES

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