

# Burning Questions: Market Research Themes for 2016

Q&A

When higher education leaders seek answers to the same market research questions across the industry, there are clear competitive trends at play.

In a recent “Higher Ed Live” webcast, Joselyn Zivin, Huron Director, spoke about higher education’s current market research outlook. Detailed below are a few key discussion points from the webcast:

**Q: Why are colleges and universities investing in custom audience research if we have big digital data available to us?**

**A:** Right now, big data is somewhat smart in telling us what people are doing, but not why they are doing it.

Harvested digital data is not yet intelligent in helping us understand peoples’ motivations, the tradeoffs they make, and the perspectives they bring to their decision making. For those questions, you have to talk to people through primary market research.

**Q: You have been working in the higher education field for nearly 20 years. In your experience, how has the buyer and questions being asked in market research changed?**

**A:** It has been a seismic shift. When I started working in higher education market research, the questions were mostly designed to inform communications.

.....  
“Harvested digital data is not yet intelligent in helping us understand people’s motivations, the tradeoffs they make, and the perspectives they bring to their decision making. For those questions, you have to talk to people through primary market research.”

— Joselyn Zivin  
Huron Director  
.....



To hear more from Joselyn Zivin on this issue, follow **@Huron** for up-to-date webinar, events, and speaking engagements, and **subscribe** to our monthly Future of Higher Education newsletter on timely higher education news.

At Huron, we are now just as likely to see an institutional market research buyer be a provost or a COO, bringing primary strategy questions about what the institution might need to stop doing or start doing.

**Q: What are the top questions they are bringing to you now?**

**A:** One of the primary questions continues to be around prospective student profiling and segmentation.

Compared to the past, when the focus was on moving up the brand ladder, institutional buyers are more concerned with understanding who their true consumers are and learning as much as possible about them.

This reflects the powerful demographic pressures hitting these institutions.

A second very dominant theme is new program testing and evaluation. Institutions are making sure there is a market for new programs and that they can compete effectively.

Another really important category of market research today relates to current student satisfaction as part of student lifecycle management. With the increasingly heavy emphasis on retention, institutions are checking with current students to make sure their needs are met.

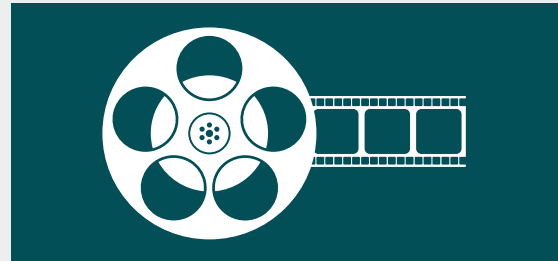
Finally, there is a really productive turn in alumni research towards a much broader assessment of the type of involvement that alumni would like to have beyond writing an annual gift check.



To learn more about Huron's market research capabilities, you can learn more about our services, and contact us, by visiting:

[www.huronconsultinggroup.com/  
ConstituentResearch](http://www.huronconsultinggroup.com/ConstituentResearch)

## Burning Questions: Market Research Themes for 2016



In a recent "Higher Ed Live" webcast, Joselyn Zivin, Huron director, speaks about higher education's current market research outlook.

The live broadcast covered insights from Huron's Constituent Research practice and addressed the top questions higher education professionals are asking today.

You can access the full webcast by clicking [here](#).