

Keeping  
the journey  
extraordinary.



# Finding Grinnell.

A small liberal arts college in the middle of Iowa.

That's how Grinnell was described to the Ologie team. Once we were on campus and within the city limits, however, we realized this wasn't even remotely the story. Of all the colleges we'd visited, the sense of place about Grinnell was truly and utterly distinct.

Students, faculty and staff go about their work and play as they would at a coastal Ivy, but surrounded by thousands of acres of prairie – its distinct ecosystems a point of research, preservation, and boundless pride.

Dozens of national flags hang in a student café, representing the international students who could have chosen any college in the world, but sought out Grinnell for its stellar reputation for academic excellence and intellectual intensity.

In fact, everyone here sought out Grinnell, to study deeply and boldly, far from urban distraction, at this college that's apart from the world and a world unto itself. Real and idyllic. Contemporary and timeless. Undeniably rural and oddly cosmopolitan.

It's a college and a town built on a basic truth: Extraordinary journeys seldom begin in obvious places.





CREATIVE PLATFORM

## Opening the conversation.

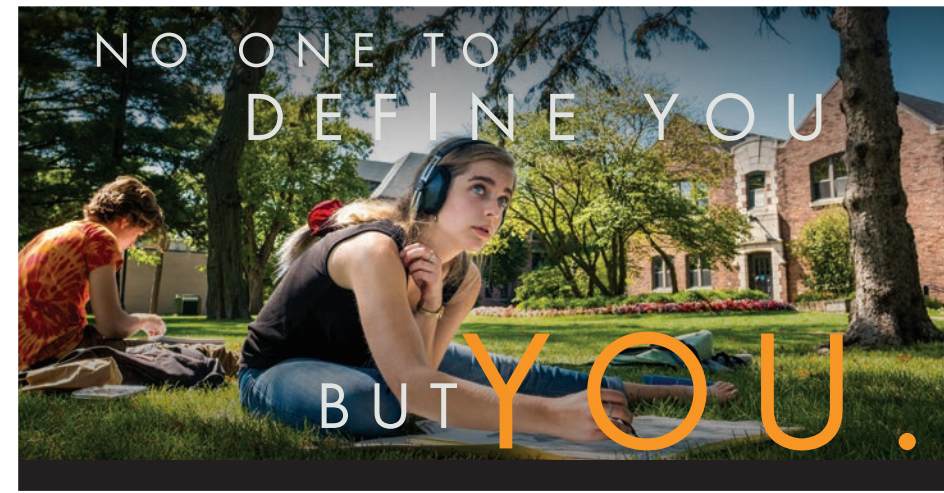
In 2016, when we made the first of our many, many visits to Grinnell, the bond between our teams was immediate. Struck as we were by Grinnell's unique character, we dug in for discovery.

We immersed ourselves on the campus. We conducted dozens of interviews with students, alumni, staff, trustees, and faculty. We reached hundreds of other stakeholders through surveys. Through all of this, we teased out Grinnell's story, which led to an enduring strategy and a new brand platform. It highlighted the college as a place of boundless imagination and fearless inquiry, with an indomitable sense of justice – all essential qualities of a Grinnellian.

Having established a clear sense of the college's spirit, and a broad and unbounded brand platform, we codified the tenets of the Grinnell brand in guidelines, and launched a comprehensive enrollment campaign.

In the years since, the Grinnell brand has evolved, refreshed, and innovated. Across digital platforms and on light pole banners. On sports uniforms and through website launches and refreshes. The soul of the brand platform we created together in the previous decade resonates through into this one.

**Chalk it all up to an extraordinary partnership.**





*"It's been incredibly satisfying to see the work evolve, while still being able to recognize the essence of the brand platform we created together so many years ago."*

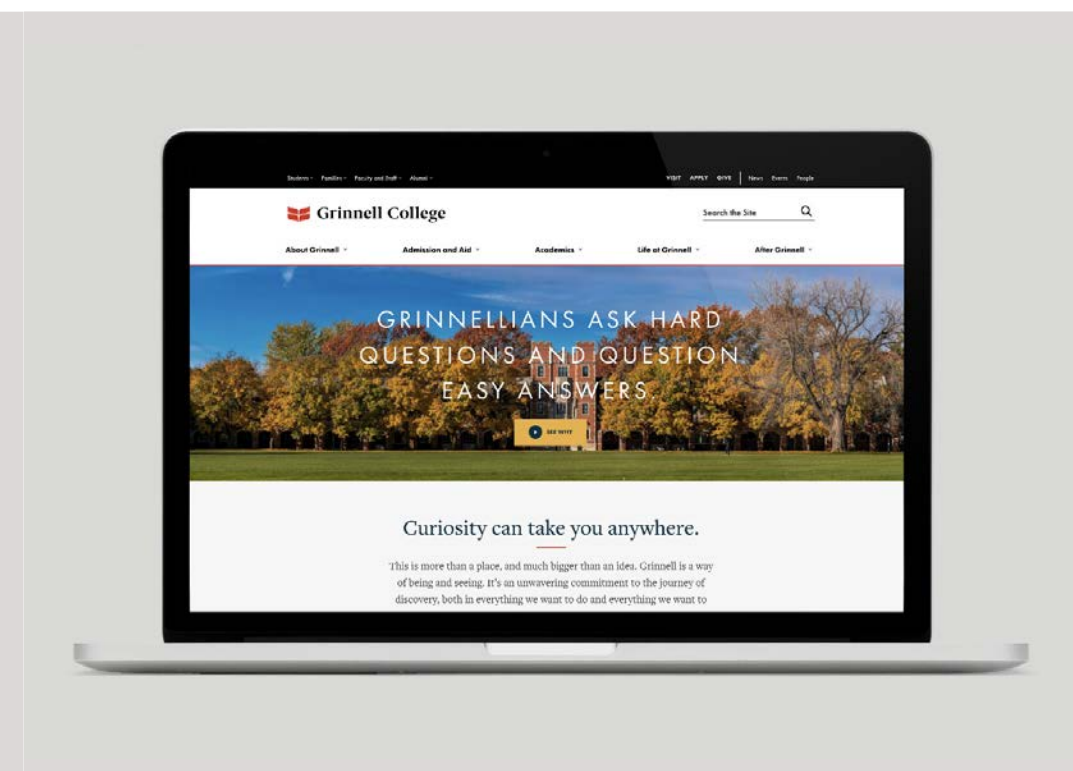
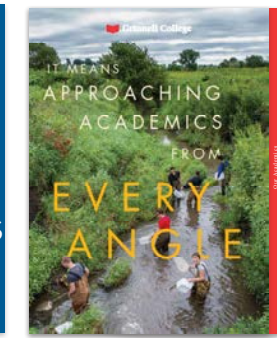
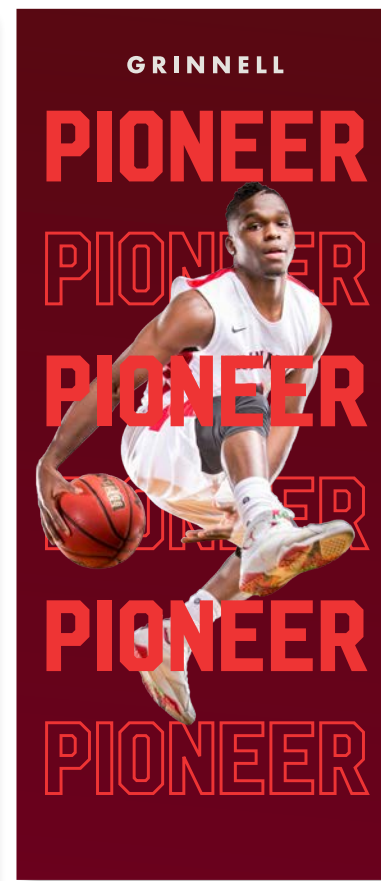
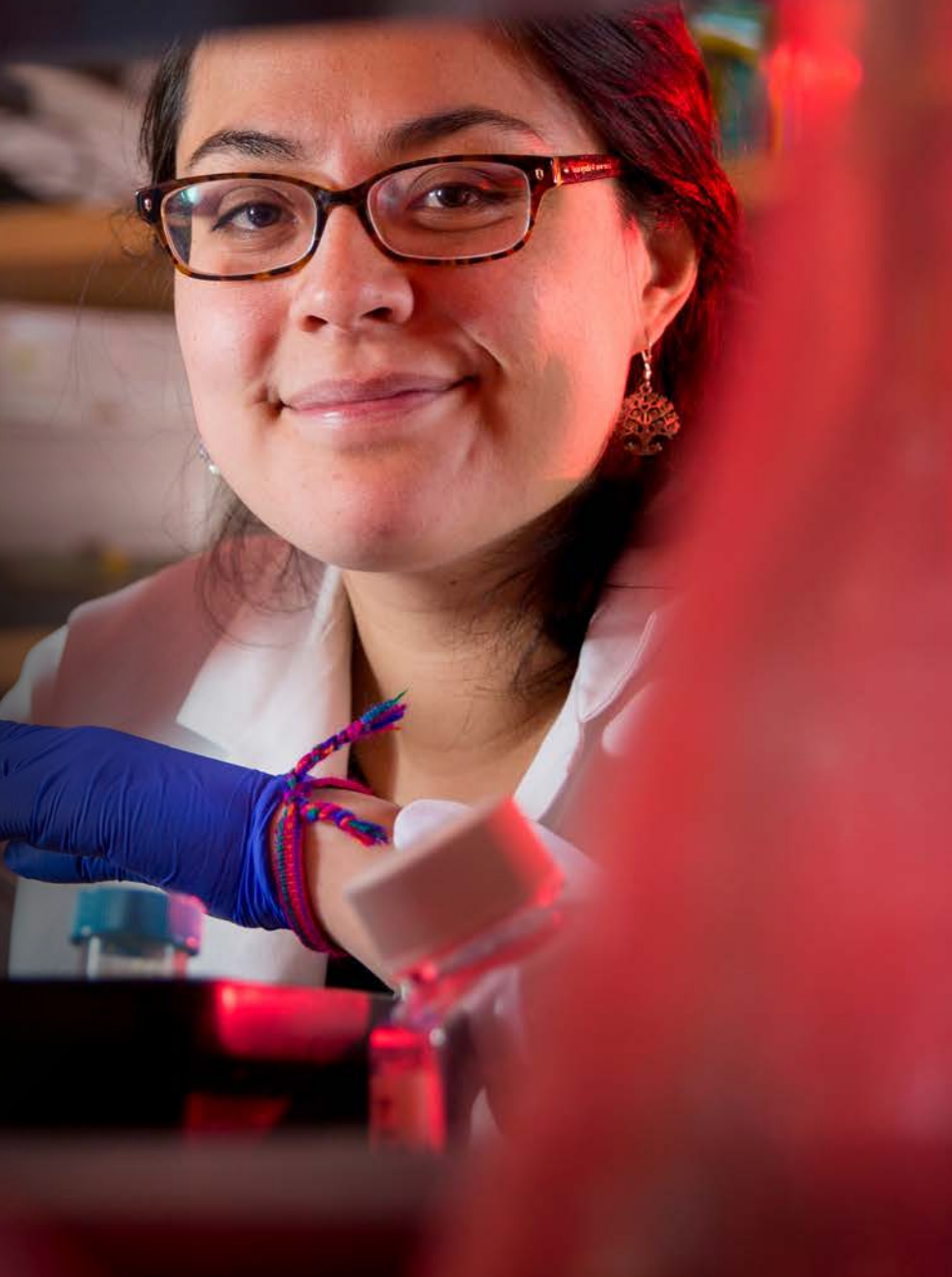
*Jim Powers, Executive Director of Special Projects and Assistant to the Vice President, Grinnell College*

## Taking the long view with a wide angle.

In our partnership with the college, we've continually invested our strategic and creative energies in keeping the work consistently and compellingly *Grinnellian* – a word which is both a demonym and an adjective describing the nature of a Grinnell graduate. (The term would later become the centerpiece of several campaigns.) Across seven years, two sub-branding projects, an updated athletic brand, and multiple enrollment, reputation, and alumni campaigns, we've evolved the brand story without ever losing the script.

How? By making thoughtful and incremental adjustments to a strong brand platform. And by being open to embracing – and sometimes pioneering – new technological approaches to perennial challenges.

Our work together with Grinnell has been a balance of consistency and flexibility, of targeted action and comprehensive scope.



2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023



2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

Market Research

Brand Development and Logo Development

Admission Campaign

Admission Microsite

Anthem Video

Sub-Branding

Social Strategy

Website Overhaul

Reputation Campaign

Athletics Branding

Museum of Art Identity

Enrollment Media Campaign

Brand Refresh

Yield Campaign

Environmental

Alumni Campaign

Awareness with Reputation Media Campaign

Website Refresh

## Steps along the journey.

Where our extraordinary relationship with Grinnell started, and how it's going. And going.

The new **Grinnell brand** launched quietly but broadly with environmental tactics, an anthem video, and a robust suite of enrollment materials.

In parallel with the rebranding, we developed an **admission campaign**, with suites devoted to rising high school juniors, full-fledged seniors, and international prospects.

International enrollees (who are unlikely to visit Iowa before move-in day) received a 48-page flipbook, which offered them a tangible version of a virtual campus tour.

A **website refresh** brought the new brand to the digital space, and garnered previously unseen engagement.

The "Go Forth Grinnellian" **reputation campaign** highlighted extraordinary students and graduates, underscoring the value of "having a Grinnellian at the table."

Ologie partnered with the college to refine its **athletics brand**. We distilled the character of Grinnell's unusually driven scholar-athletes for the "Like a Pioneer" brand, and a campaign with the refined design.

To reposition and expand the understanding and engagement of the college's Museum of Art, we developed a new identity that clarified the group's purpose and connection between the college and city communities.

A second **enrollment campaign** zeroed in on Grinnellians as passionate and purposeful people, which also set the stage for a subsequent yield campaign.

By 2020, a **brand refresh** was in order, and we delved deeper into the values and accomplishments of Grinnellians.

A **direct-to-device digital yield campaign** reached – and converted – an unprecedented number of prospects, resulting in a 16 percent lift in applications.

With an updated **awareness campaign**, a young alumni campaign, and an early-decision enrollment campaign, we invited peers and prospects to see: "That's What Grinnellians Do."

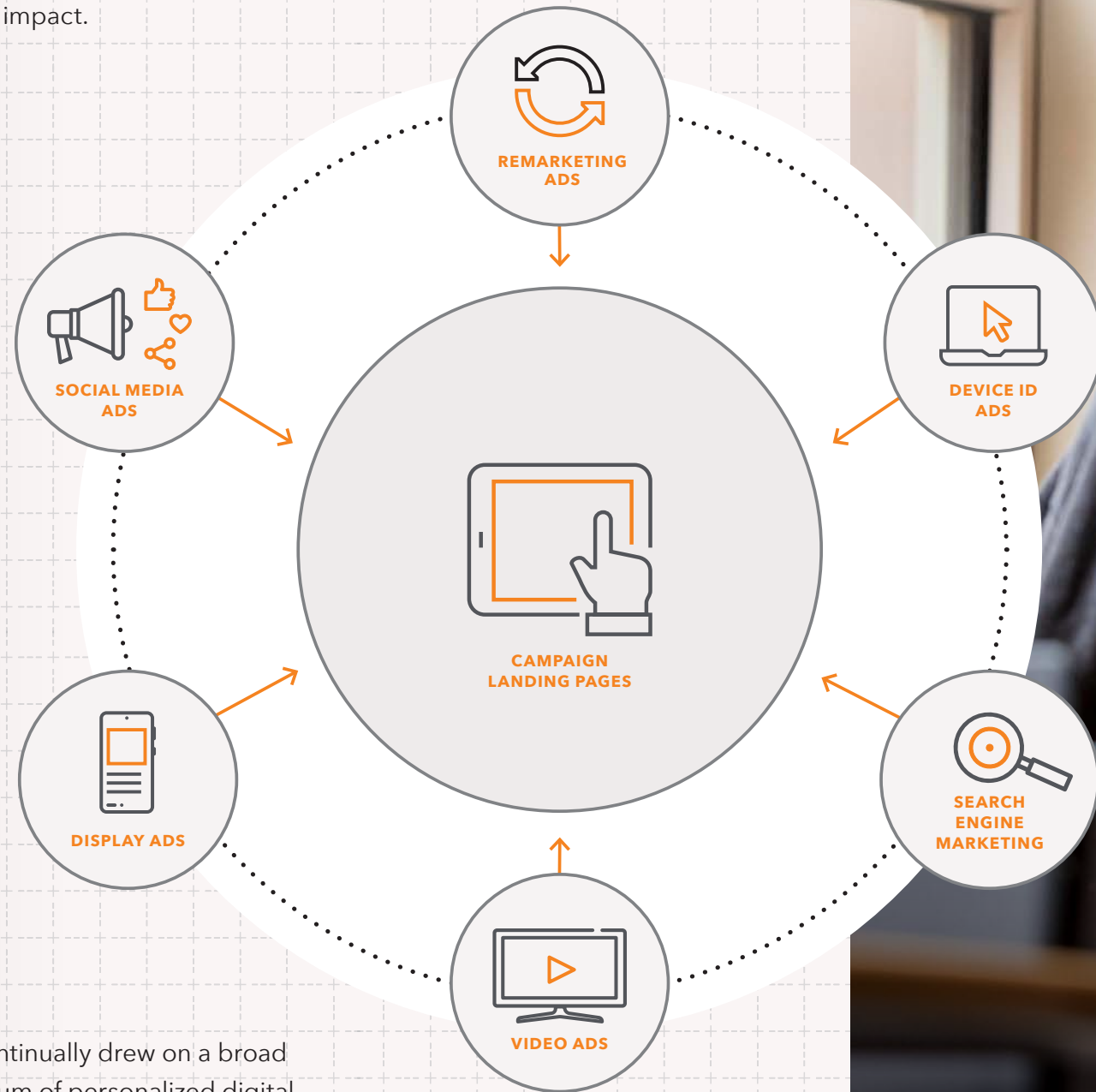
The latest **reputation campaign** flexed toward the strategic, focusing on Grinnell's unique approach to hands-on learning and its highly curated curriculum.

To capture and activate the evolved brand, the Grinnell **website** got another update.



## Knowing what's out there, and knowing what works.

With each campaign, Grinnell had different goals and definitions of success, but each step drew more and more heavily on digital strategy. And as the college's digital presence grew greater, so did the sophistication of our approach to assessing and optimizing the work's impact.



We continually drew on a broad spectrum of personalized digital tactics to drive prospective students to the campaign's landing page.

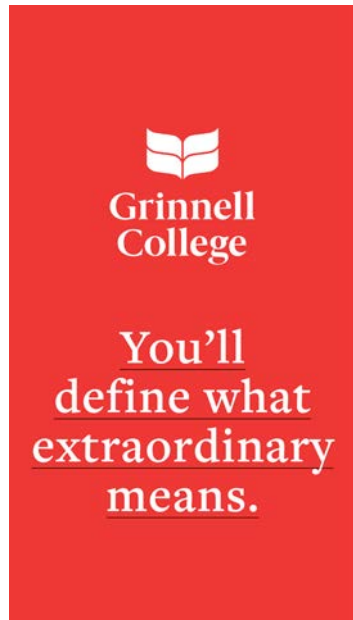
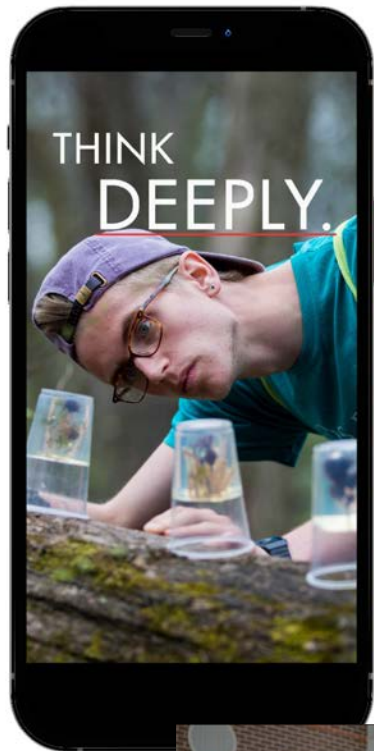
*"Bringing a client new and flashy solutions is fun, but what matters most is taking what we know about who we want to reach, and applying the precise solution for reaching those people."*

*Fernando Bergás-Coria, Executive Director, Digital and Media, Ologie*

The knowledge we gained together has continually built on itself. This wouldn't have been possible without an in-house approach based on constant innovation and customization.

Having the expertise to tap the right expertise, and having the freedom to use precisely the right tools to meet Grinnell's specific needs led to decisive success, year over year and campaign after campaign.





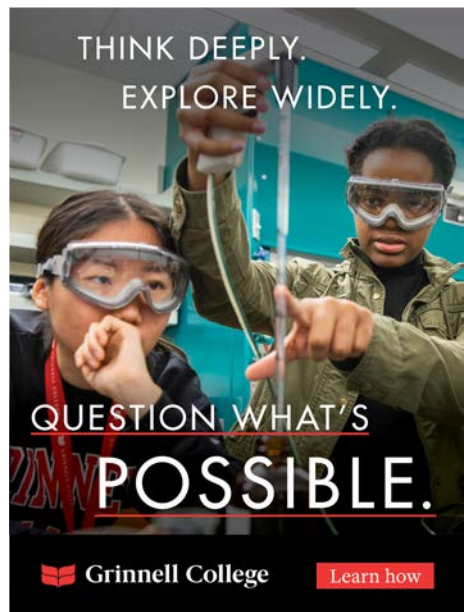
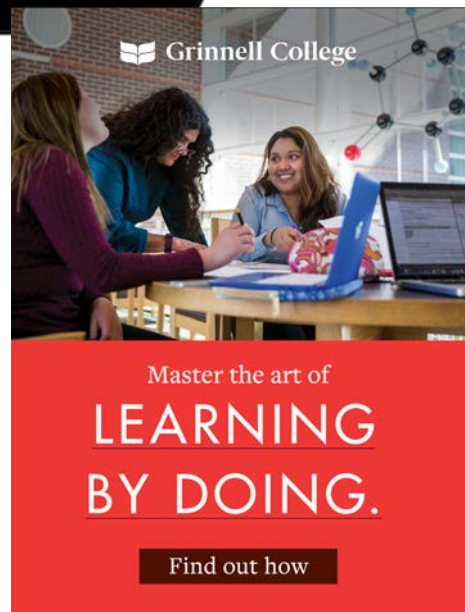
More extraordinary journeys.

LESS DEBT

along the way.

Grinnell College

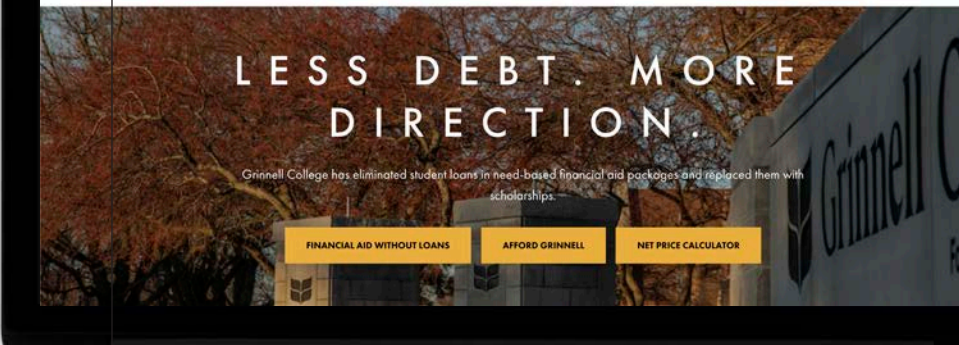
Commit Today



Opportunity for all.

Welcome to a place that thrives on individuality and diverse perspectives. As you explore and begin to find yourself in your own college experience, you'll find your ways of shaping the Grinnell community.

Request Info Schedule a Visit Apply



## Built for success.

The conversation about privacy rights in advertising is real and necessary. In response, companies such as Apple have implemented policies that have significantly undercut the effectiveness of social tracking and third-party cookie data.

But despite this shift in the digital marketing paradigm, we were able to help Grinnell make a measurable impact with prospects, while also reducing budget waste and increasing accuracy. It began all by addressing five fundamentals.

### FIVE FUNDAMENTALS FOR EFFECTIVE DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS

1. **Connecting messages** to marketing and enrollment efforts, as opposed to general messaging.
2. **Tracking efforts** with tools such as Google Analytics, Hotjar, and Mouseflow.
3. **Updating the flow of communications** with messages that build on one another.
4. **Directing email, ad, and text responses** into your CRM, keeping prospects engaged and moving them down the funnel.
5. **Personalizing the web experience** by directing responses to campaign-specific landing pages, rather than the .edu home page.





## Starting the process.

Fortunately, Grinnell had robust data on its prospects, a good sense of how to group and segment its lists, and a solid approach to design and copy.

Here are the key steps we took to generate awareness and yield a robust pool of potential Grinnellians.

**Export the CRM data** – Grinnell exported the full data sets they had (full name, addresses, areas of interest, and so forth) for prospects who were already in the funnel.

**Validate and segment the audiences** – Incomplete and duplicated data was filtered out, and then audiences were segmented by program, major, and interests.

**Create ads for each segment** – Using the Grinnell brand platform as a jumping-off point, we developed compelling, segment-guided, offer-driven ads.

**Launch the campaign** – We uploaded the ads to our network of placement, management, and validation partners. Then, after establishing user journeys and tracking parameters for landing pages, we tested conversions to ensure that they were tracking without errors.

**Track, report, and optimize** – As we monitored ad rankings and responses to different ad versions, we updated flights and budgets, based on the best-performing creative by segment. We then performed this step repeatedly, continuing to review and optimize our efforts.

## Going direct.

For Grinnell, direct-to-device marketing proved an effective approach.

The beauty of it? We achieved unprecedented results without a crumb of outdated, inaccurate, cookie-based ad tech.



We started with location data for prospects' devices.

+



We synced it with the data that prospects had already shared with Grinnell.

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We delivered less obtrusive and highly personalized messages.



## Putting it to work.

Now, let's take a detailed look at how the process unfolded for Grinnell's 2020 direct-to-device enrollment and yield campaign.

### STEP 1

Exporting the CRM data provided us a generous and detailed set of data, which, once validated and segmented, generated two audiences:

#### AUDIENCE 1: TEST GROUP

94.6% prospects who provided data we could match and verify

For this group, we would use the direct-to-device approach to its fullest, working to reach these prospects by syncing their location and provided data.

#### AUDIENCE 2: CONTROL GROUP

5.4% prospects who provided data that we were unable to match or verify

We would attempt to reach these prospects by fulfilling their requests for marketing materials from Grinnell admissions.

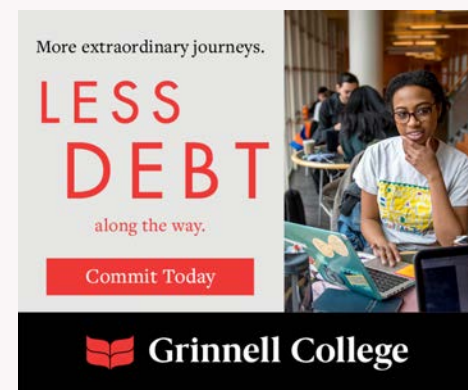
### STEP 2

We created ads for each segment group, focusing on three messages:

#### CAREER OUTCOMES



#### LESS DEBT AT GRADUATION

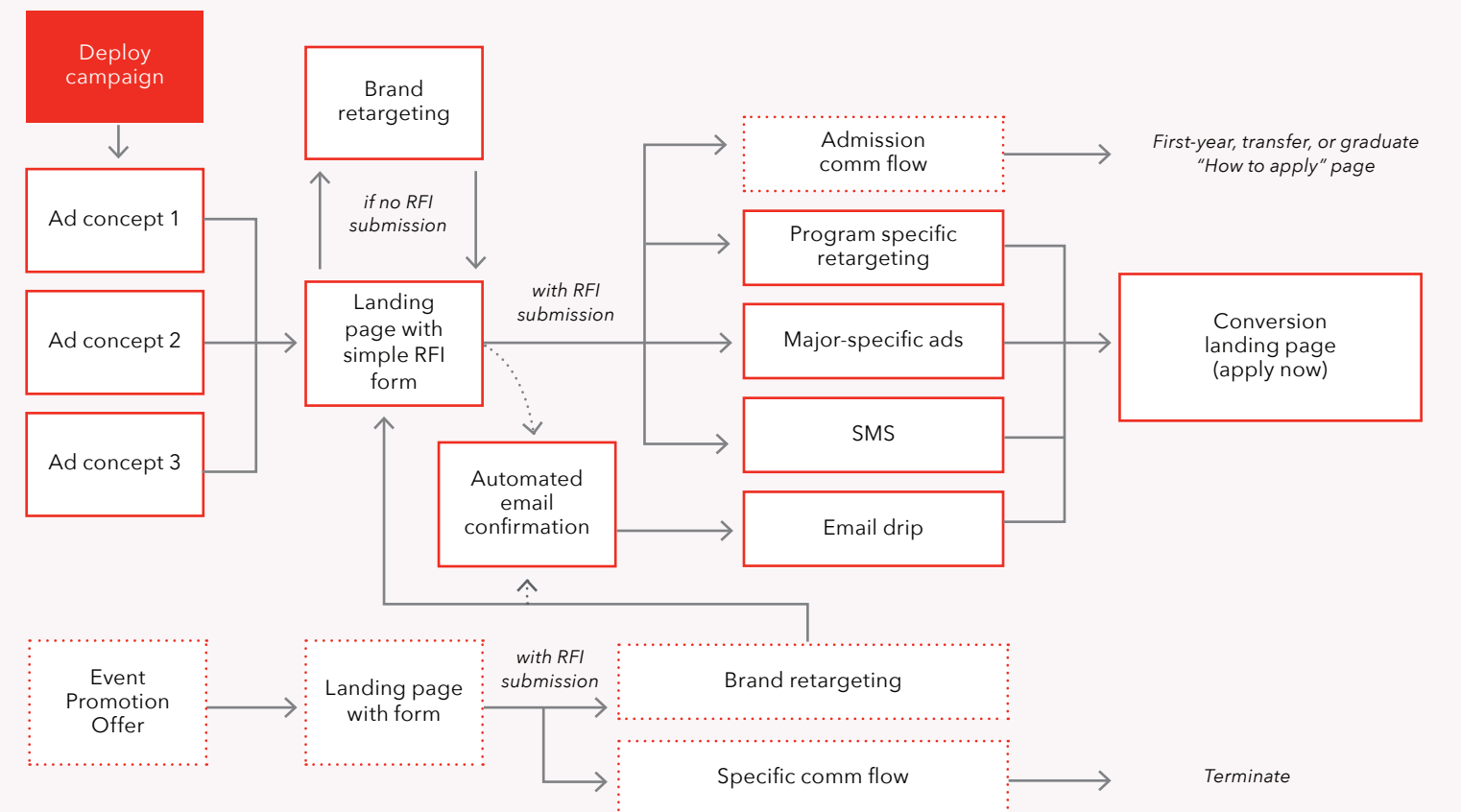
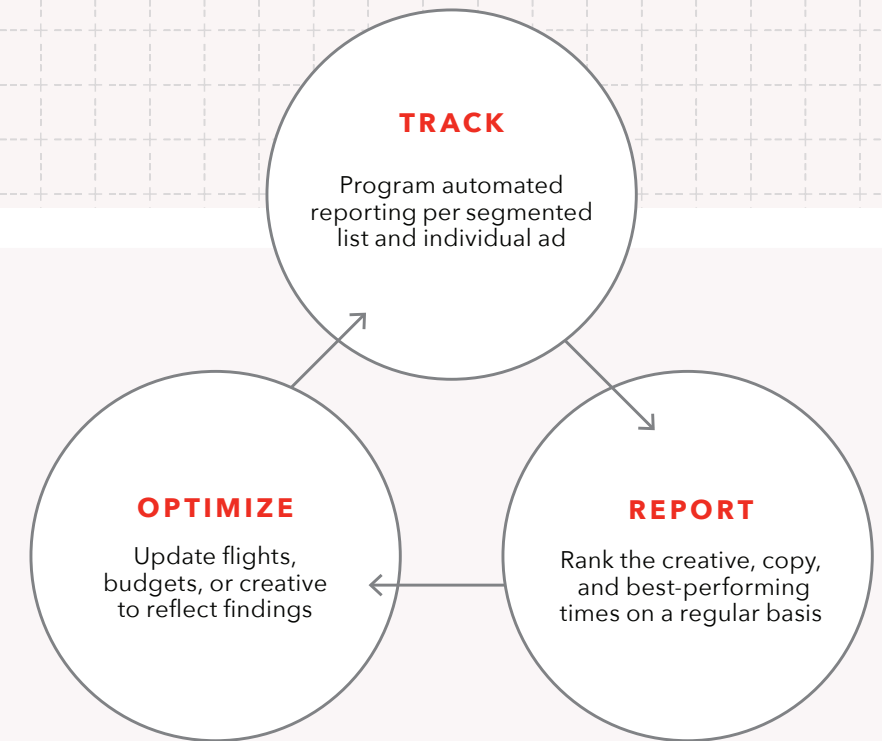


#### GLOBAL LEARNING



### STEP 3

The campaign launched and flowed along according to plan. We tracked responses, optimized the ads, and focused our communications on the most engaged prospects.

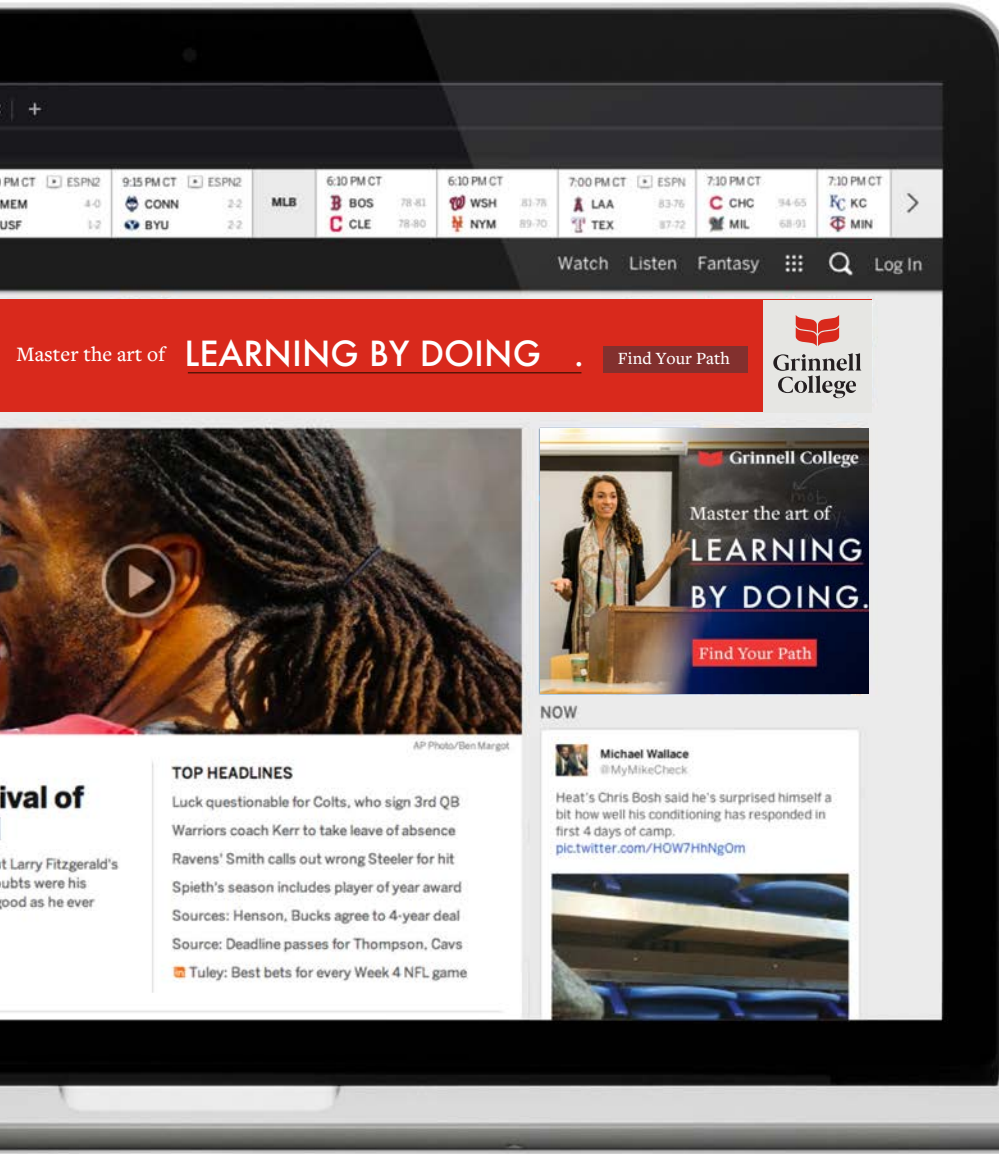




RESULTS

Numbers speaking.

Grinnell's direct-to-device enrollment and yield campaign was, in a word, effective. In numbers, however, it was simply extraordinary. Results were well above previous efforts, which had drawn on third-party cookies and more traditional tracking technology. Engagements and conversions were more efficient and, even better, far more meaningful.



AWARENESS: DISPLAY ADS

4,453,776

TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

6,642

CLICKS

0.06%

CLICK-THROUGH RATE

19,918

CONVERSIONS



YIELD VIDEO

82,526

AD IMPRESSIONS  
(served to 566 targets)

57.44

AVERAGE AD IMPRESSIONS  
(per target per week)

145.81

AD IMPRESSIONS  
(per target served total)



AWARENESS: SEARCH ADS

160,547

TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

5,139

CLICKS

3.2%

CLICK-THROUGH RATE



ADMIT RATE  
FELL FROM

**28.9%**

TO

**10.5%**



YIELD RATE  
INCREASED FROM

**26.5%**

TO

**42.5%**



**12%**

increase in prospective students  
who are "very familiar" with Grinnell

**64%**

application growth  
since 2020

**14,809**

addresses that were  
matched to prospects

**16.1%**

increase in targeted inquiries  
that became applicants

**2,202**

new applications  
from matched group

**166%**

increase in applicants  
compared to control group



“By testing messages in real time and pivoting as data would suggest, we’ve appreciated the opportunity to use empirical evidence to inform marketing decisions.”

He’s been there from the very beginning of our relationship with Grinnell, and he’s been essential to every success along the way. Here, Joe Bagnoli reflects on what’s made this journey just so extraordinary.



**JOSEPH BAGNOLI, JR.**

Vice President for Enrollment,  
Dean of Admission  
and Financial Aid

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**Q: How has your partnership with Ologie impacted the trajectory of the Grinnell brand?**

**JB:** Over the years we’ve partnered with Ologie, the evolution of Grinnell’s brand has been profound. In the early years of our relationship, we developed a signature brand ethos, unified type treatments, disparate logos, and an eclectic approach to marketing and advertising. It’s gratifying to hear from prospective students and their families that Grinnell’s materials and voice offer a refreshing and distinctive take on publications and advertising, in comparison to other colleges and universities. Most importantly, I believe our brand is a dignified, coordinated, and energetic reflection of who we are as an institution of higher learning.

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**Q: Most recently our work together has been focused on enrollment and yield campaigns – a targeted approach to getting more students to Grinnell. By emphasizing a digital media strategy, how have these two campaigns benefited one another?**

**JB:** Like other top-tier colleges, we compete against the biggest brands in higher education. It’s been hard to elbow our way into the conversation with admitted students who have great college choices. At various stages of the recruitment life cycle, our targeted digital media strategy has contributed to yield rates that are twice what they were before we partnered with Ologie.

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**Q: We’ve done a lot of work to optimize our creative along the way for both campaigns, so that we can modify messaging based on what’s performing well. How has this approach helped to achieve your team’s goals?**

**JB:** In a crowded market among competitors with louder brands, it has been essential for us to make mid-cycle choices based on “game day” performance metrics. The alternative is to wait until the end of a recruitment cycle to re-evaluate our strategy and deploy new messages based on the final results of an enrolling class. But that’s a surefire way to underperform on the class we’re recruiting this year. Applications for admission are up 250 percent over the last ten years; timely, performance-based choices have helped us achieve visibility we could have only dreamt possible 10 years ago.

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**Q: Monitoring campaigns, measuring results, and evaluating outcomes is more important than it’s ever been. How has Grinnell seized on this reality and adjusted its processes?**

**JB:** We have introduced a number of initiatives in recent years – becoming test optional, replacing loans with grants, and updating our messages in response to market research. With new variables comes uncertainty about what will work to our advantage with prospective students. By testing messages in real time and pivoting as data would suggest, we’ve appreciated the opportunity to use empirical evidence to inform marketing decisions.





# Building brands. With purpose.

Ologie is a marketing and branding agency focused on higher education. We are dedicated to helping colleges, universities, and other educational organizations build their reputations, recruit new students, and gain philanthropic support. We do this with a results-oriented mindset, a digital-first approach, highly targeted marketing strategies, and emotional storytelling that moves people to take action.

ologie®

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