

Speaker 1 ([00:04](#)):

Hello and welcome to today's webinar. My name is Erin Kelly and I will be moderating today's discussion. Before I hand things off to our host, Darian Leader and guest, Tommy Newton, I have a few quick resources to point out for you. First, your questions are very, very welcome. Please submit questions using the question box feature in your control panel. Questions will be answered at the end of today's session, at which point we'll also invite you to request any additional information. Alternatively, if you are with us via a recording of the webinar, there will be an opportunity at the end of the video to fill out a form for more information. That's all for me for now. So I'm going to pass the mic over to our host, Darian Leader to introduce herself and today's guest, Darian.

Speaker 2 ([00:54](#)):

Hi everybody. Thank you so much for joining us and happy Halloween. What a fun day to get to do a webinar and be together. My name is Darian Leader. I am a client service manager here with Ardeo, and previously I have over 12 plus years of higher ed experience working both with traditional non-traditional transfer adult students. So I've kind of run the gamut. I've really enjoyed my time working in enrollment management, and now I love working with multiple different colleges and universities, thinking strategically and helping with enrollment in a different way. So I'm so excited to be here today with you and I'm even more excited to introduce our guest speaker, Tommy Newton, who is the vice president for Enrollment Management at Lyon College, who is celebrating their biggest year of enrollment in 14 years. So very excited to have him with us today to share some of his experience and his story. And Tommy, would you like to give a little bit of a bio on yourself before we get rolling?

Speaker 3 ([01:49](#)):

Oh, sure. Again, my name's Tommy. I've been at Lyon College. It'll be six years on December 1st. So about a month away from my six year anniversary. I've worked at six colleges, both public and private, but again, got to Lyon just as soon as I could and we love it here.

Speaker 2 ([02:06](#)):

Awesome. So I'm going to start off by just explaining to everybody what we do, who we are and how LRAPs work and serve our population. So essentially our big goal in life is to remove the fear of student loan debt for your students. So everyone on this webinar knows that student loan debt is something that is always top of mind for families and students. It's something that families consider and students consider when they are looking for colleges. And it's often the biggest reason a student will pass up on their first choice school or university because they're afraid of taking on student loan debt. So what we like to do is partner with universities and colleges and help them to enroll more students thus growing their net tuition revenue. Now, how do we do this? I'm going to dive into that, but before I do, I want to let you know we're not new at this.

Speaker 2 ([02:54](#)):

This is something that we are awesome at doing. We've helped over 225 colleges and universities across the country. Over 32,000 students have benefited from our services. And this model, the LRAP, which stands for Loan Repayment Assistance Program, it began at Yale where our president was once faced with the decision to pass up on intending Yale Law School because he was afraid of student loan debt. So he was offered the opportunity to have an LRAP to support him to make that important decision, and that's why he came up with the idea to serve hundreds of colleges and universities across the country. So what is an LRAP? How does it work? So in a nutshell, obviously it's an enrollment tool. That's what we

want to be able to arm our admissions counselors, our financial aid team, our strategic thinkers on the enrollment team. It's a tool that offers a promise to your students. It says student, if you come here, if you persist and graduate and you make a modest salary, we are going to kick in and help you pay back your student loans. We cover federal parent plus and private alternative loans. So it's promising them that if they make the smart decision to invest in themselves and attend your school, you're going to make sure that they don't have that fear of student loan debt on the backend.

Speaker 2 ([04:15](#)):

This is a lovely little roadmap that kind of breaks down exactly how our services work. So first year college will decide who gets the LRAP. You are totally in the driver's seat. You can decide to offer it to everyone, all incoming freshmen, all incoming transfers just like Tommy does at Lyon. Or you can be very strategic and say, Hey, we're growing this new major. Let's offer it to only music majors and see if we can help with that enrollment. Or Hey, let's offer to students who are pursuing majors that we know don't have a massive salary on the backend. So it's your choice. You can offer to whomever you'd like and you can change that strategy at any time. So once you let us know, we reach out to those students and those students learn the benefit of the LRAP and we speak on your behalf and let them know this wonderful thing that you're offering them.

Speaker 2 ([04:59](#)):

Those students accept the offer, they enroll into your school, they must persist and they must graduate from your institution. It's a massive retention hook. And then it's so important to know that you will only pay for the students who end up enrolling and ultimately borrowing loans to attend. So even if we help you recruit 1,000 thousand students, if five of them end up coming, that's who you pay for. And then on the backend, when students begin their career, we take care of all the graduate services. So we take care of making sure that they get those loan payment reimbursements. That's nothing that the college or university has to do. So now I'm going to turn it over to the man of the hour. Tommy is going to tell us a little bit about how he's used and he's got massive bragging rights right now coming in with their biggest class ever. I don't want to steal any thunder, so I'm going to turn it over to you. Tommy. Can you tell us a little bit about Lyon College, what you're known for? What are some fun facts or interesting facts, and we'll take it from there.

Speaker 4 ([06:00](#)):

Have we lost Tommy?

Speaker 3 ([06:04](#)):

I'm so sorry. I was on mute. I was yapping without being off of mute, my bad. Anyway, Lyon College is a small, private, religiously affiliated college in the middle of nowhere, Arkansas, right? So we're off the beaten path. We're far away from interstates like a couple hours from the interstate. We're in Arkansas's oldest town, Batesville, we like to call it Bates Vegas baby. And we've just held the largest southern Scottish fest in the country this past weekend. It was also a homecoming parents weekend and one of our open house programs as well. And if things go according to plan, we do hope to launch the first vet school in the first dental school in the State's history in the summer of 25. We are pet friendly, which is one of those things that makes us different than other colleges. And I think that many colleges like Lyon, whether you're a big land grant or a regional public or a private school, and when you're talking about your competitors, it's hard to differentiate.

Speaker 3 ([06:57](#)):

So being pet friendly would be one of those things. And being a school that offers the LRAP program is another, we see the Ardeo LRAP tool as a recruitment tool for incoming students. This was a program that initially we used only for, I guess, education majors, art majors, those were your passion and profession. Maybe when they intersect initially, it's not a great paying job in some cases, but I had a problem with that Darian. And the problem was how do you have an open house where you have a hundred people in the room and you go, Hey, okay, all the teachers, all the artists, okay, come over here and let's talk about this special program. Everybody else, nothing to see here, folks, nothing to see here. So I really felt like it was important for our institution. I wanted to sell this program to all of our students because I do believe that it is a recruitment tool.

Speaker 3 ([07:51](#)):

I do believe it's a retention tool. This program is not transferable, so you can't leave with it and still have the coverage, right? It's a differentiator. That's a huge reason why we wanted to do it. I love the fact that the LRAP program is based on each institution that uses it. It's branded to your institution. So at Lyon College, we don't sell or share the LRAP or our DO, we share the Lyon Pledge. And the Lyon Pledge is that if you're not making 40 thousand dollars a year upon graduation, then you've taken out some loan debt, then we're going to put something on it. And so we really, really love to be able to do that for everyone. Specifically when it comes to closing, whether you have rookie admission counselors or seasoned admission counselors, one of the toughest times of the year, it's not the app, it's not the app completion, it's conversion.

Speaker 3 ([08:44](#)):

It's really trying to get that enrollment deposit. And I really feel like this is a program that helps us close those conversations. It's an easier conversation to have. There's so many that are loan averse and maybe some of them think they won't even need loans. But the reality is that some of them are going to have to have loans in order to make college a reality. And we'd love to be able to tell those families, we're going to partner with you. We want to offer some ease of some peace of mind. In fact, you might think, well, what going to tell a pre-med kid? They're going to make six figures in 10 years down the road. And what I say is, what if life happens on the way to med school?

Speaker 3 ([09:20](#)):

What if you get deferred that year? What if you get denied that year and you got to apply a second year or a third year? And so instead of going to pharmacy school, you're a pharmacy tech. This is a program that can help you get your life back in the meantime. So we love this program for so many reasons. One of them is the professional development that we get from our rep is Darian. So Darian comes to campus if we need her to come to campus for our kickoffs with our enrollment team. She's also always available online as well. So whether it's in person or virtually, we know we have a great partner.

Speaker 2 ([09:52](#)):

Awesome. Yeah, and also this year was the first year you guys signed up on the client data exchange program, which I definitely think is worth mentioning if you're anyone who loves the idea of set it and forget it. So just to give everyone out there an idea, we do need you to send your student names to us so that we know who we're calling and who we're contacting and helping to recruit on your behalf. But this year with Lyon signing up for an automated name share and data share, we're able to feed their names to us, but also feed data back to them. So it kind of helps tighten up your funnel as you're moving

through things. We hear something from a student, we feed it back to you guys as well. So it was really fun to see last year's numbers when you were manually updating list this year, since it was an automatic exchange, I think triple the amount of awards went out to your students, which is really cool and awesome to watch. So when I said bragging rights, I really, really want to give you bragging rights here. Can you tell us a little bit about this cohort, 23-24, you just blew it out of the water and you've always had strong classes, but this is a huge benchmark over the past 14 years. You guys just really just kicked some serious butt today or this year. So can you talk a little bit about what your strategy was, what you learned?

Speaker 3 ([11:04](#)):

Absolutely. We had a multifaceted approach, and of course, LRAP was a huge part of that 19% enrollment growth overall at the institution, 65% and first time full-time students, which is actually the second largest increase ever. The largest increase I think in 14 years. And really what we did, we employed a multiple parts strategy. One thing that we did that was significant is we adopted a test blind admission process. Most of the colleges in Arkansas are test blind, and we were very much the most selective college or university in the state for many, many, many, many years. Foam finger we're number one, but we also have some room to grow. So it doesn't make sense if you're not oversubscribed to be so selective. We went with a test blind admission process, which allowed us to increase our admission rate from roughly mid thirties to mid sixties, which is really closer to where it should be.

Speaker 3 ([11:54](#)):

So that was one difference. Two, we were more aggressive in our financial aid than in previous years. And it should be noted, we were NAIA for many, many years, and last year was our first year as we transitioned to NCAA D3, which does not allow athletic scholarships of any kind. Now, maybe an individual student athlete might've gotten a better deal in the NAIA days, maybe a full tuition scholarship in some cases, maybe a full ride in some cases. But with NCAA D3 prohibiting any of that, what it really meant was the average award that went out in 23 versus 22 was more generous. So we were just more aggressive in trying to show a little bit more love to families upfront. And that transition helped us to do it. We also employed a backyard access plan, which is really a program to incentivize area students who would like to be commuters, those who are averse to 10 to \$12,000 anywhere for room and board for two to four years. And so the backyard access plan was huge. Again, the Lyon Pledge, which is how we brand it, was certainly a huge thing. Again, it's so much easier again, to close with the family and to explain that. And y'all's call team does fantastic. I mean, they're calling all these families, they're letting us know, Hey, this student has a question, had a question from a coach, or had a question about this academic program or a question about financial aid. And so it just helps us to serve those students so much better.

Speaker 2 ([13:22](#)):

Awesome. Thank you. And to dig into those LRAP impact numbers a little bit further, this is to give a snapshot for everybody for their last cohort. So 23-24, they offered, or 235 of their incoming class accepted the offer of the LA, and of them 200 actually ended up borrowing student loans. So again, that's the only population that line pays for. Now, of that survey population, 13.4% of them indicated that they would not have been able to attend had they not been offered the Lyon Pledge. So that's really an amazing figure to take a look at. So if you look at just the 13.4% that said, this is why I was able to attend, once you even remove the fees that come with that, it's still a net tuition revenue of \$633,000.

So that's just based on that 13.4%. If you throw in the other group that said, yes, I strongly agree and I agree that I wouldn't have been able to attend without it, that's 31%, and that goes to 1.9 million Lyon in net tuition revenue. So again, that's after all fees are paid. So these are the students who we feel would not have been able to come to their first choice school had they not had the Lyon pledge, which is such an amazing thing to see. So Tommy, what advice would you give other colleges or universities who are looking at these numbers and maybe considering implementing LS into their enrollment programming?

Speaker 3 ([14:48](#)):

Hop on in the water's fine. Why? Wait, I mean, this is the program that, again, you could be very strategic and very specific and carve out certain degree programs or career fields that you want to offer it to, or you can do what Lyon College does, which is simply offer it to all incoming freshmen and transfer students. Because I think that's the way to get the most bang for the buck to get the word out to everyone.

Speaker 2 ([15:13](#)):

Awesome. And you touched on this a little bit. So there are definite benefits that come with working with Ardeo. So it's not just you have the program to offer, but as you mentioned, we have the call for you team, which is an in-house on location call team. We've got bilingual speakers reaching out to your students and families and feeding some of that information back. You had mentioned professional development opportunities. How have you felt the partnership has worked alongside of your admissions team and your admissions goals?

Speaker 3 ([15:42](#)):

I think it's worked seamlessly. Again, you guys have been just, you're always there. You're ready, you're responsive. I feel like it's a fine line between annoying the heck out of your partner, your college partner. Y'all do that. I mean, again, again, you're very responsive. You think ahead. There's critical thinking that's involved here in this partnership. Just it works very well. And again, when I ask you, Hey, can you come in? Can you make it to campus and do this thing? Or hey, could you patch in and do a professional development opportunity with our team or, Hey, I think we need a reminder. Or, Hey, I know we did this in August, but it's December, it's middle of the year. I think we've forgotten and now we're about to get into the yield season. So would you mind giving us a refresher? I just feel like the partnership is very strong and beneficial for us.

Speaker 2 ([16:28](#)):

Awesome. Thank you. I'm glad you feel that way. And I definitely, having been a client of Ardeo's previously, one of my favorite things was exactly what you're saying, how you can tailor this to what your needs are. You can also switch it and pull a complete audible at different times of the year because as admissions, strategic thinkers that there's different needs throughout the year. So if you're not an offer to all client, which you are, which definitely is the most bang for your buck, and it's great to be able to use this as a recruitment and enrollment or retention tool throughout the year as things change in the funnel. So thank you for touching on that. So I think we're going to pop Erin back on here and she's going to field some questions for us.

Speaker 1 ([17:10](#)):

Hello. Thanks, Darian. We do have a couple questions, but before we get to them, I'd like to encourage folks at this time if you have a question to use the questions box in your control panel on the right hand side of your screen. Alright, so Darian, I think this first one is for you, how long does it typically take to get an LRAP working on campus?

Speaker 2 ([17:33](#)):

That's an awesome question. The short answer would be how quickly does the college or university want to launch on the backend? We have a phenomenal team that can launch a program within two or three days, sometimes four, depending on if it's a new client or if we're changing strategies, how in depth the strategy is. But then it's just a matter of our client partner being able to send us their students or have identified the population and we can within a week or under. So it's a pretty quick turn on switch.

Speaker 1 ([18:04](#)):

Awesome. Thank you. Tommy. Looks like this one's for you. How did you get and how do you maintain buy-in on campus for LRAPs?

Speaker 3 ([18:15](#)):

Well, keeping the buy-ins is easy, proof is in the pudding. Look at the numbers. It seemed to be one of the factors that helped us, the land, a great and wonderful class that we do hope in all signs right now looks like a good preliminary retention from year to year. I know it's early, but the pre-registration numbers look good for spring. I would also mention that I used the Lyon pledge. I used LRAP, Ardeo at a previous institution. So I was a director of admission at a small private institution in Shreveport, Louisiana. And we used this program and it worked. I mean, I'm a chief enrollment officer. I get calls literally every day with somebody selling something that's going to help set me off and make me look so great or whatever. And this is one of those where I've gotten calls at other schools that may have used something and then went to another school and they're like, no way. Do not use the engage with this company. And I can tell you that when y'all called me over here, I thought, oh, yes, yes, I had success with this before. I understand this program. I like it Again, for me, it goes back to closing. I want my admission staff to feel comfortable and more confident in closing. And by golly, when you can partner with a family like this, that's just something that so many other colleges can't claim to do. So it's a win for us.

Speaker 1 ([19:34](#)):

That's great to hear. Thank you. Darian, one more for you and then I think that's it. What is the college responsible for once the student graduates?

Speaker 2 ([19:46](#)):

That's a great question and the answer is nothing. So once the student has attended, persisted, and graduated, we take care of everything else on the backend. So we'll be reminding the students of their benefits, we'll be congratulating them on their accomplishment and completing their degree. And then we take care of everything as far as what they need to submit, how they need to get their program to kick in. We call them RAPPers. So those are the students who are now graduated and benefiting from the LRAP program. So we take care of everything on the background and making sure that those students get reimbursed if they fall under the threshold that fits the benefit. So it's something that we

like to take off the plate of the college completely, and there's nothing that they need to do after a student graduates.

Speaker 1 ([20:31](#)):

That's great. Thanks, Darian. That's all the questions we have today. Back to you.

Speaker 2 ([20:38](#)):

Great. Well, I want to thank Tommy so much for joining us today. He is a pleasure to work with. He is, I can't say my favorite client, but Wink. He's a really wonderful person to work with and he's really, really gracious to say that he's got his email address right there. He's offered his brain to be picked by anyone who has any questions. But I'm also available to talk with anybody about how we might be able to partner with your institution, help you meet your goals, think strategically and creatively. And my email is listed there as well. So I want to thank you all so much for joining us today. Have a wonderful afternoon and a very, very happy Halloween, and hopefully we'll all speak soon.