



case study

Rebranding “Older Adults” to Spark Record-Breaking Enrollment

The challenge

Saddleback College’s Emeritus Program, dedicated to lifelong learning for older adults, faced a harsh reality: enrollment was steadily declining, threatening both the program’s impact and the college’s apportionment funding. Traditionally reliant on word-of-mouth, non-strategic mailings, and basic outreach to returning students, the program wasn’t reaching the next generation of active adult learners, especially those aged 55–70.

The solutions

GradComm crafted and executed a comprehensive marketing campaign that rebranded the Emeritus Program for modern relevance, grounded in strategy, powered by data, and emotionally resonant with its evolving audience. Key strategies included:

- **Updated Language & Visual Identity**

We eliminated the phrase “older adults,” replacing it with empowering terms like “retirees” and “active adults,” supported by a fresh tagline: “Where Learning Never Retires.” Custom photography showcased vibrant, engaged learners in real-life settings.

- **Redesigned Class Schedule**

A complete creative overhaul gave the Emeritus class schedule a modern, polished look. Strategic mailing lists ensured that it reached over 10,000 former students and community centers across 12 cities in South Orange County.

- **Targeted Direct Mail**

Postcards were sent to 17,000 individuals aged 60–80 using a newly purchased consumer mailing list, with a strategic focus on those residing within one mile of six key community centers.

- **Digital & Email Campaigns**

We deployed a 150,000-contact email campaign targeting local residents aged 55+, along with a layered digital strategy that included Facebook and Instagram ads, geofencing, website retargeting, and video content. Ads targeted learners based on interests in education, lifelong learning, and vocational development.

- **Testimonial Integration**

Using real quotes from students, we reinforced credibility and relatability in both the printed and digital schedules. Testimonials framed the program as empowering, accessible, and joyful.



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Client *wins*

- **Largest Enrollment Increase in Program History**
The campaign successfully reversed enrollment declines, generating the program's biggest boost ever.
- **Class Schedule Praised by Community**
The revamped schedule design received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, staff, and community partners.
- **Digital Media Performance (Nov 2024 – Feb 2025):**
 - 1.9M+ Impressions
 - 32,817 Website Visits
 - 2,648 View-Through Visits
 - 5,175 Video Views
- **Stronger Audience Connection**
Language updates, inclusive messaging, and modern visuals repositioned the program as a forward-thinking, inclusive option for active older learners.