

# An Authentic Approach to Driving Admissions Yield



Even before COVID-19 created this upheaval, our partners at the University of San Diego recognized the need to provide virtual support to their incoming class of 2024. Their aim was to extend their reach and bring the feeling of a Visit Day to students. In partnership with PeopleGrove, USD Admissions was able to create a unique experience for their admitted students and continue to drive yield in spite of COVID-19 challenges.



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## The Challenge

Develop a method that allows student ambassadors to evangelize and promote the University of San Diego (USD) campus experience.

USD as a whole had undergone a brand enhancement highlighting their identity as a private, Catholic institution in southern California focused on social justice and “change making.”

To help prospective students understand those brand pillars Austin McKinley, Admissions Communications Supervisor, created an informal ambassador program called *Regional Connections*. He understood how peer to peer interaction would build trust and rapport since prospects see a student or an alumni as a more authentic source of information, having lived the USD experience.

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However, Austin was acting as middleman, connecting students and ambassadors via email. This was manual, inefficient, distracting, and difficult to measure. The ability to match student ambassadors and prospects based on their academic or social interests was inconsistent at best. Austin knew he was on to something, he just needed a way to scale and mature student connections.

## The Solution

Austin turned to PeopleGrove's Enrollment Success Hub. In two weeks, USD launched the Torero Ambassador Network, powered by PeopleGrove. Within the first week, over 70 student ambassadors volunteered to help bring the spirit of the campus visit to 5000+ prospective students.

Enabling prospective students to instantly communicate with ambassadors—recommended for them—based on their academic and career interests along with hometowns and extracurricular activities accelerates access to trusted information. This allows prospects to create meaningful connections and get their questions answered from a source that feels authentic, moving them closer to enrolling.

This solution extended the work of USD's Career Development Center. In partnership with PeopleGrove, USD united their *Torero Employers and Alumni Mentors (T.E.A.M.)* network. The ability to have the Ambassador Program sit within the T.E.A.M. network ensures a seamless introduction of enrolled students to the larger USD community.



Now more than ever, our students need enrollment assistance. Without **PeopleGrove's Enrollment Success platform** we would not be able to **provide assistance** to students at the necessary scale and level of **personalization**.



**Austin McKinley**

University of San Diego  
Admission Communication  
Supervisor

## Outcomes



**88%**

Student to Ambassador  
Response Rate



**65%**

Out-of-State  
Participation



**65%**

Ambassador  
Opt-In Rate



**3.23X**

Increase in  
Deposits



Aside from exciting engagement numbers, Austin is excited by the quality of the connections being made. "It's great to see our ambassadors helping these future Toreros understand life at USD. They are answering questions about everything from student government to majors to clubs and organizations." Given the campus closure in the spring of 2020, PeopleGrove has helped USD bring the visit day to their prospects and continue to drive towards their goals.