

**USC** Chan Division of Occupational  
Science and Occupational Therapy

**A person-centered approach to  
the occupational therapy  
program admissions  
experience**

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# Redesigning the Applicant Journey

In response to declining applicant numbers, we implemented a person-centered approach to admissions informed by strategic enrollment management (SEM).

SEM is a process that takes a comprehensive approach to attracting, enrolling, and retaining students in educational programs by focusing on the experience of the student from recruitment through graduation.



# SEM in Admissions: Nurturing the Garden

- **Prepare the soil:**  
Create a welcoming environment
  - E.g., peer mentorship, faculty training
- **Plant the seeds:**  
Attract students through marketing
  - Utilize social media, partner with schools
- **Nurture the plants:**  
Support students with resources
  - Offer aid packages, scholarships, student support services
- **Prune the garden:**  
Adjust strategies based on feedback
  - Track results, improve strategies



# Measuring SEM Success

- Define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned with institutional goals
  - Applications, enrollment, diversity
- Track application and enrollment trends
  - Volume, demographics, conversion rates
- Gather student feedback
  - Surveys, focus groups
- Monitor retention and graduation rates
- Regularly review and adjust strategies



# The Power of Person-Centered Admissions



- Focus on building relationships with applicants
- Understand and address individual needs
- Provide personalized support throughout the process
- Create a positive and inclusive experience for all applicants
- Key elements: holistic evaluation, inclusive practices, personalized communication, accessibility

# Benefits of a Person-Centered Approach

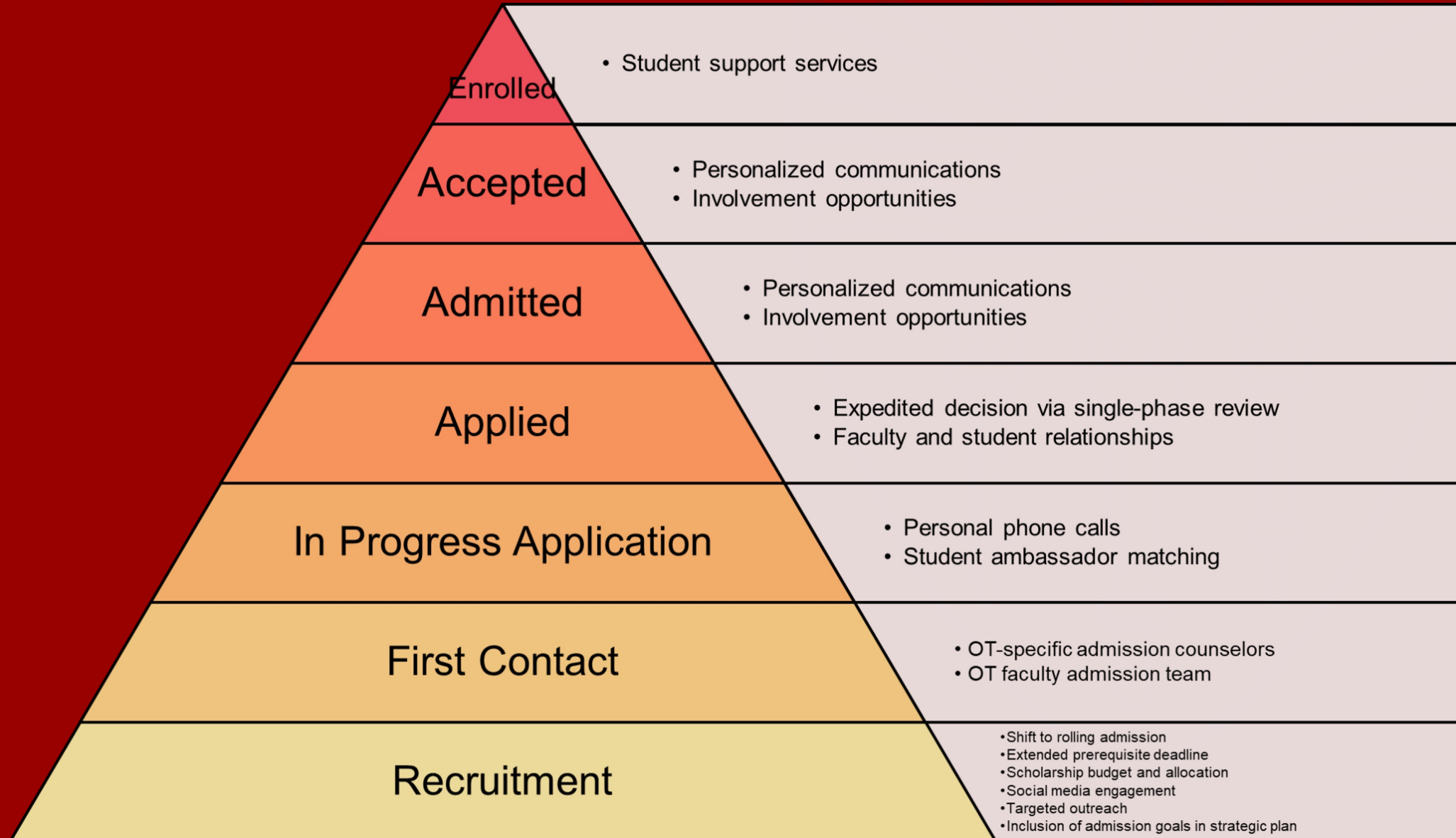
- Increased diversity & equity in admissions
- Improved student outcomes
  - Satisfaction, retention, success
- Enhanced institutional reputation
  - Diversity, inclusivity
- Increased applications & enrollment of qualified applicants
- Stronger, more engaged community



# Aligning SEM with Person-Centered Admissions

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Collect and analyze student data to identify trends.
- **Collaboration and Communication:** Foster collaboration among admissions teams and stakeholders.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Adapt strategies to address evolving student needs.
- **Holistic Evaluation:** Consider a wide range of factors beyond test scores.
- **Inclusive Practices:** Create a welcoming process for all applicants.
- **Personalized Communication:** Provide tailored communication to applicants.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure the admissions process is accessible to all.

# Redesigning the Applicant Journey



# Redesigning the Applicant Journey

## • Prepare the soil:

Create a welcoming environment

- Shift to rolling admission
- Extended prerequisite deadline
- Expedited decision via single-phase review

## • Plant the seeds:

Attract students through marketing

- Social media engagement
- Targeted outreach
- Personal phone calls
- Student ambassador matching

## • Nurture the plants:

Support students with resources

- Scholarship budget and allocation
- OT faculty admission team
- Faculty and student relationships
- Involvement opportunities

## • Prune the garden:

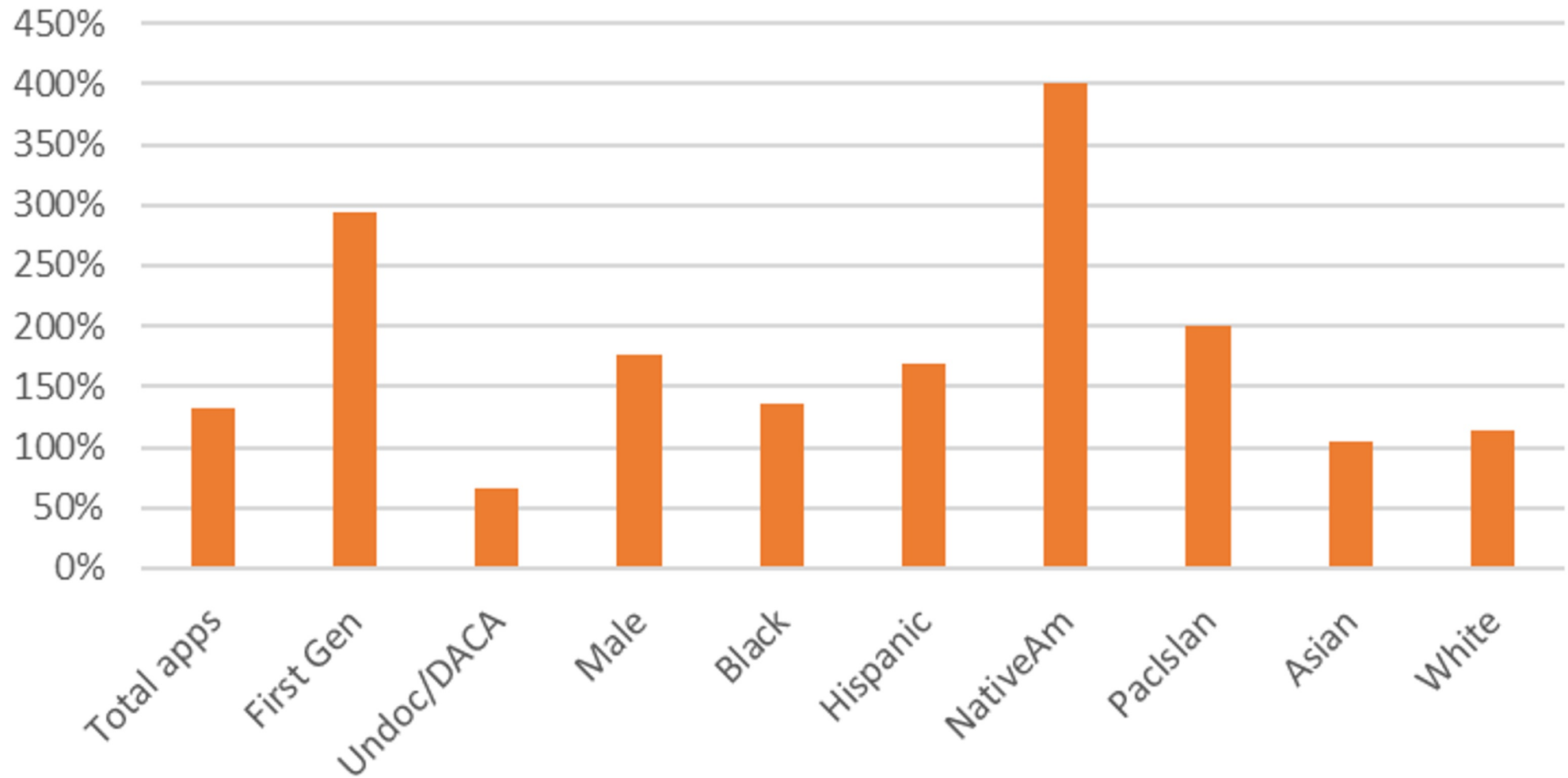
Adjust strategies based on feedback

- Inclusion of admission goals in strategic plan
- Student support services

# Thriving Beyond Adversity



## Outcome Informed by SEM



# Key Takeaways

- SEM provides data for strategic, mission-driven decisions
- SEM aligns with person-centered admissions
- Institutions must be flexible and adaptable
- Data analysis and KPIs are crucial for measuring success
- Technology, especially AI, will play a role in organizational processes including admissions



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**Questions?**

