

SOLVING THE TOP 10 CHALLENGES IN ADMISSIONS

Optimizing your admissions process, from recruitment to enrollment





This guide was crafted by Kira Talent to support schools as they transform their admissions process.

Kira Talent is the world's leading holistic admissions solution designed for higher education. Kira transforms the admissions process by combining on-demand, timed video and timed written assessments, and structured live interview technology with existing admissions requirements.

Trusted by more than 1100 programs worldwide, Kira helps schools identify and select their best-fit students. Over 1.5 million applicants have completed a Kira assessment, with an average satisfaction rating of 4.6/5.





SOLVING THE TOP 10 CHALLENGES IN ADMISSIONS OPTIMIZING YOUR ADMISSIONS PROCESS, FROM RECRUITMENT TO ENROLLMENT



Millions of admissions applications are processed each year around the world.

As students apply to anywhere between one or two top choices to twenty different schools, the task of admissions teams becomes more and more complex.

Your school's admissions assessment needs to effectively identify the strongest students from the pool, in a timely manner and in a way that will yield a solid class size. And, most importantly, it needs to give every applicant a fair chance to be considered for the program.

Today, admissions teams are tasked to do it all, often in less time and with fewer resources than they've had in the past.

In this report, we'll highlight the **top ten challenges in admissions assessment**.

You'll learn how Kira Talent's holistic admissions solution is designed to tackle the biggest challenges in assessing prospective students and is creating engaging applicant experiences to deliver the best results for programs around the world.

10 ASSESSMENT CHALLENGES

Which challenges do you face today?

Learn how Kira Talent's holistic admissions solution helps schools overcome ten major challenges in admissions assessment.



CHALLENGE #1

Time

How to assess applicants more efficiently

Click to learn more



CHALLENGE #2

Engagement

How to create a more engaging applicant experience



CHALLENGE #3

Admissions Bias

How to identify and reduce bias



CHALLENGE #4

Applicant Yield

How to better assess applicants' likelihood to enroll



CHALLENGE #5

Interview Effectiveness

How to achieve consistent, effective, and reliable admissions interviews



CHALLENGE #6

Diversity

How to redesign admissions practices to admit a more diverse cohort



CHALLENGE #7

Applicant Authenticity

How to ensure you're enrolling students based on their own work



CHALLENGE #8

Communication Skills

How to validate language skills and proficiency



CHALLENGE #9

Soft Skills

How to test for hard to measure traits like empathy, critical thinking, and motivation



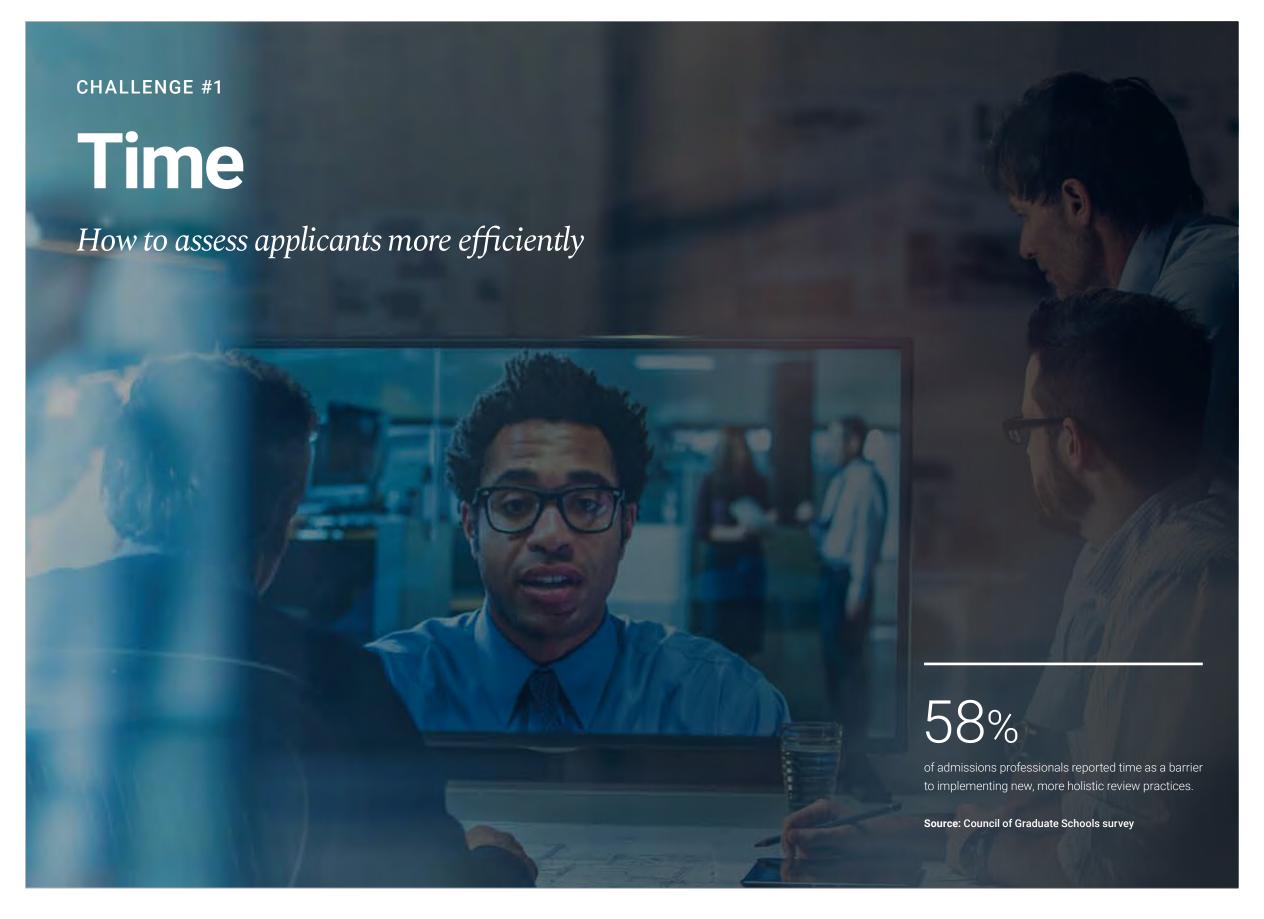
CHALLENGE #10

Authority

How to get the team on board with big change



LEARN MORE >



Admissions teams are receiving more applications than ever.

A combination of factors, including more college-seeking students, more applications due to common applications, and higher grade point and test score cut offs, are **driving students to apply to anywhere from 3 to 20 different programs**.

With so many individuals to examine, it's getting more and more important for schools to identify their best candidates and get offers, scholarships, or touchpoints to those applicants faster than competing programs.

For schools who want to innovate their processes, the fear of adding resources to an already time-consuming and overwhelming process is enough to stall change. A 2016 Council of Graduate Schools survey found that **58%** of admissions professionals reported time as a barrier to implementing new, more holistic review practices.

Start assessing applicants smarter

Fortunately, working with more than 300 universities and over 900 programs at Kira, we've developed solutions to enhance efficiency in the process so admissions teams can focus on getting to know students and selecting the right candidates for their program.

Make interviews more efficient

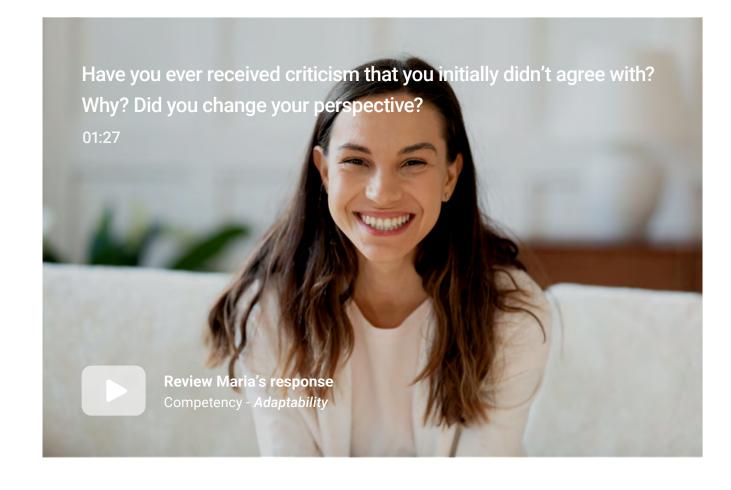
Kira can help your school save more than 800 hours by streamlining the interview process, removing common barriers and bottle necks, and automating labour-intensive tasks.

Review one interview with multiple reviewers

Reduce the need for multiple meetings and multiple in-person interviews. Members of your team can separately review an applicant's Kira assessment and share their review an feedback, at their convenience, giving you multiple perspectives without duplicating efforts.

"With Kira, we were able to go from about 1.5 hrs per application –which includes organization time, scheduling, reading the application, and actually conducting the interview – to around 10 minutes."





Create an all-in-one user experience

Kira can operate as a standalone supplementary application solution or it can integrate with leading CRM and ATS systems to give you a one-stop reviewing experience.

Reduce support time

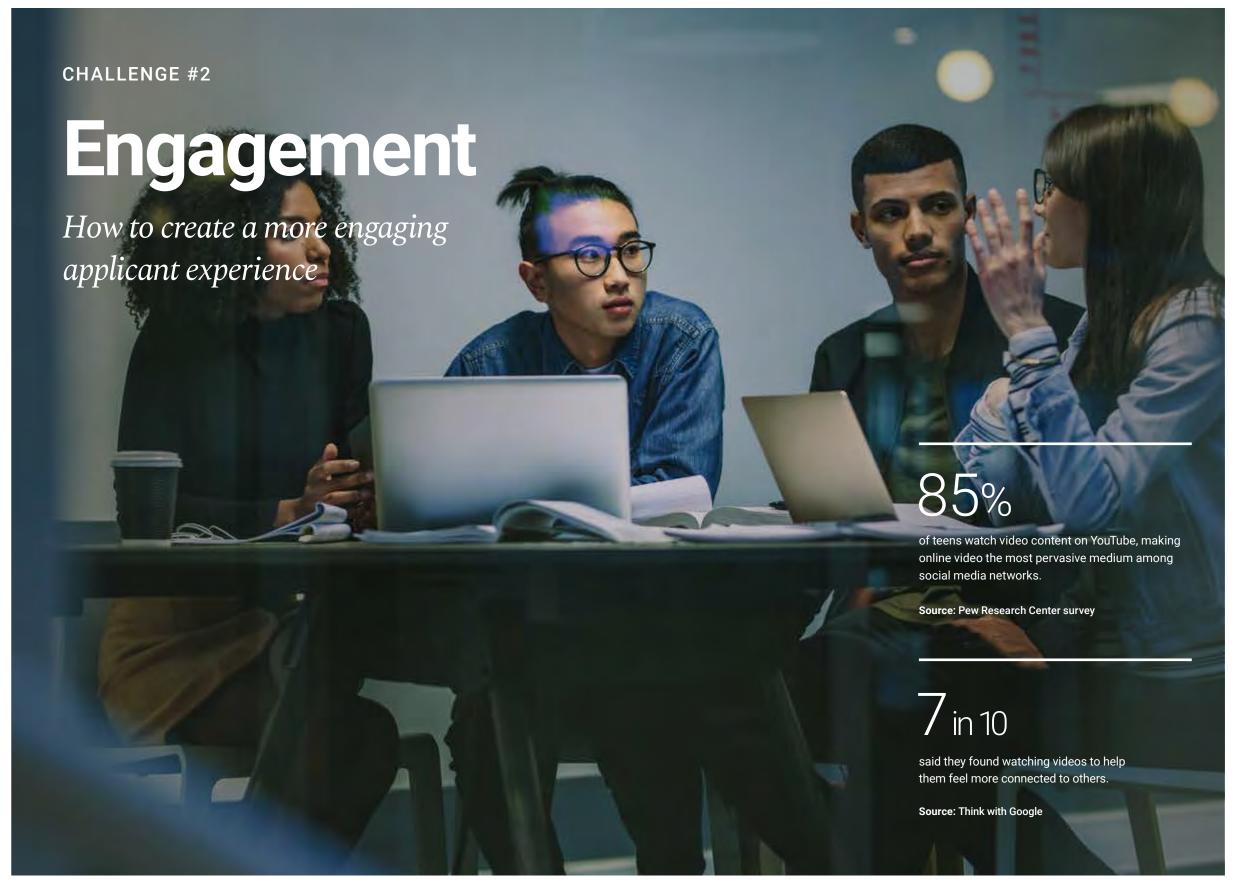
Using Kira, make IT nightmares because of video conferences a thing of the past. Unlike using Zoom, YouTube, or other 'video essay' add-ons through CRMs, all applicant support inquiries are handled through 24/7 support, plus extensive email support for escalated issues.

"With Kira, we have seen a significant increase in the efficiency of our reviewing process but we haven't found any reduction in the quality of our students."



DUANE WINDENAssistant Dean for Academic Affairs

Roseman University, College of Dental Medicine



Changing your admissions process can give you way more insight into your incoming students. It can also be a competitive advantage.

Your application can create a new way to differentiate your school or fuel a further marketing touchpoint causing applicants to yield.

As an admissions team, you can't control your sports team, your geography, or likely even, your overarching brand, but one lever you do manage is the experience students have when they go through the process of considering, applying, and enrolling to your program.

Set your school apart by creating a more engaging applicant experience.

Video connects students to schools

Video is a cornerstone of online communities for the next generation of applicants. 85% of teens watch video content on YouTube, making online video the most pervasive medium among social media networks.

And 7 in 10 said they found watching videos to help them feel more connected to other.

Make your application more interactive

Adding video to your admissions process invites applicants to showcase themselves in a medium they know and love. Kira's platform gives applicants an enjoyable and interactive way to apply to your school instead of more forms to fill and essays to write.

Let applicants tell their story

Not only do video responses provide your team with more insight on applicants than the traditional written essay, they also give applicants a better avenue to tell their story in a way they're most comfortable.

Initiate a recruitment touchpoint

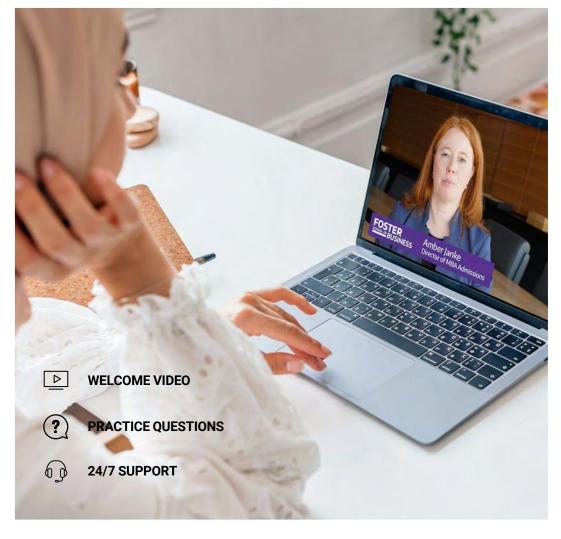
The Kira assessment also provides a new touchpoint to educate students about your programs and to showcase your school's culture. Engage your prospective students with an interactive application component complete with a branded assessment portal, welcome, and closing videos, and your customized video questions. Adding this touchpoint can be key for students who aren't able to visit campus or meet your team at an event, as it's the next best way of learning about your program and its people.

"Kira makes the interview really accessible for applicants which means that we're able to engage so many more candidates."



KRISTIN HEINRICH

Assistant Director of Admissions & Recruiting University of Michigan College of Pharmacy



67%

of applicants preferred completing a Kira assessment over a traditional admissions essay.

Source: Kira Talent

91%

of applicants rated thei Kira Talent experience "Great or Excellent."

Source: Kira Talent

Provide unlimited practice

Any on-the-spot assessment, such as a test or interview, can be stressful. With Kira, you can grant applicants unlimited practice attempts to answer questions and review their responses to get comfortable with the platform.

Reduce admissions anxiety

Kira assessments can be completed in less than 20 minutes and they encourage authenticity and real, human responses. Unlike cramming for a major standardized test or overthinking an essay question, applicants can engage in a medium where they're more at ease. Plus, they'll have access to 24/7 support if they have technical woes.

SOLVING THE TOP 10 CHALLENGES IN ADMISSIONS CHALLENGE #3 Admissions Bias How to identify and reduce bias of schools believe that applicants should be reviewed in a fair, consistent, and objective manner. Source: Kira Bias Report

n admissions, we rely on reviewers to be objective and skilled in their methods of identifying strong prospective students.

All schools want to believe they've gathered a team committed to fair evaluation and diversity in the classroom, but the reality is that we all have our own unique array of biases and most of us aren't aware of how deeply they impact our choices.

How does bias enter the admissions process?

Humans are inherently biased. Your own life experiences, background, and education all shape your view of the world and can influence the decisions you make on a candidate.

But that's not all.

Factors such as who interviews an applicant, unstandardized review criteria, or reviewer exhaustion could have deep consequences on the accuracy and fairness of an applicant's evaluation.

Fortunately, by better structuring, recording, and tracking admissions reviewing, you can ensure processes are being followed to reduce biases.

75% - of respondents believe that bias could be a factor in their school's admissions process.

70% - "Bias **is** a factor in admissions decisions at **other** schools."

Source: Kira Bias Report



For more of Kira's research on bias in the admissions process, download our full report: Breaking Down Bias in Admissions.

DOWNLOAD FULL REPORT

https://blog.kiratalent.com/bias-in-admissions-ebook/

Create a fairer review experience

Whether your review team is one or one hundred, Kira ensures consistency across all assessments to give you the information you need to make an informed and fair decision.

We designed Kira to bring more transparency to the black box of holistic applicant reviewing. Schools will reduce the presence of bias in the review process and make smarter, more consistent admissions decisions in five key ways:

Establish rubrics and competencies

While onboarding with Kira, we'll build a plan with you to select and define the criteria most important to your next cohort. These rubrics and competency definitions appear in the platform to ensure all reviewers are comparing applicants on the same criteria.

Combine feedback from multiple reviewers

Your team can assign a single interview to multiple reviewers to get several, independent opinions for an overall average score on each applicant's Kira responses.

Review your reviewers

See your reviewers' average scores to identify discrepancies and identify areas for improvement to achieve greater consistency.

Poor

Applicant does not possess the necessary English language skills to be admitted to our program.

Fair

Applicant may possess the necessary English language skills, but struggles with either written or verbal communication.

Good

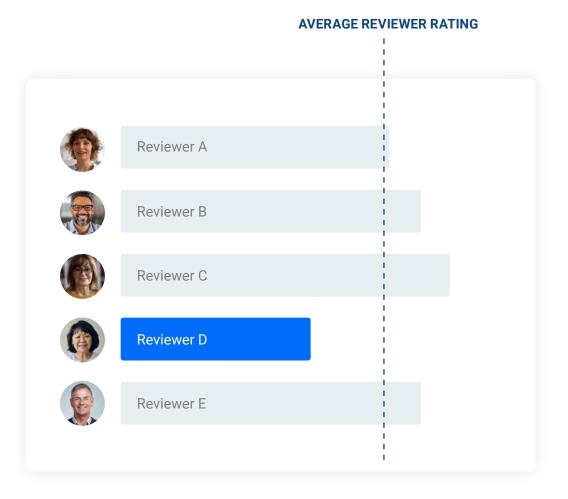
Applicant possess the necessary English language skills, and will be able to participate in class discussions and assignments.

Great

Applicant has strong English language skills, and will be able to actively participate in class discussions and assignments.

Exceptional

Applicant's English language skills surpass expectations, and the applicant will expertly be able to participate in class discussions and assignments.



Reduce admissions fatigue

Stop cramming back-to-back applicant screening calls into your day. Asynchronous Assessments allow your team to review applicants when time permits. Kira's Reviewer Services is also available, giving you access to a team of 30 000 professional raters who are trained to score your custom Kira assessment, and deliver the applicant results on your timeline.

Eliminate groupthink

Don't let other members of your team bias your initial applicant feedback. Give your authentic evaluation in the platform and let Kira give you an objectively calculated average score.

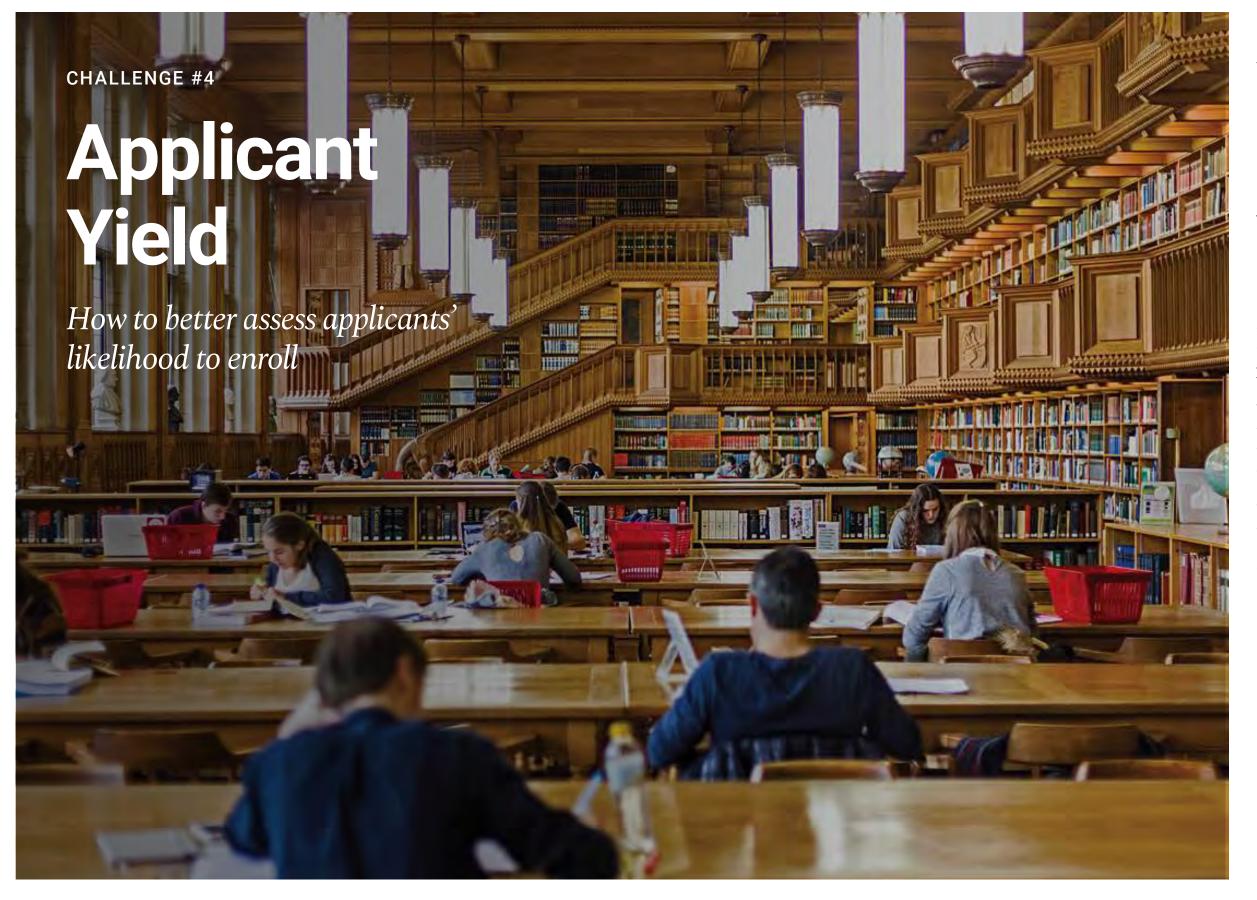
"Being able to review applicants on their own schedule means that reviewers are not only more willing to volunteer, but we're also ensuring that applicants are being fairly evaluated."



KRYSTAL WARD

Assistant Dean, Student Affairs
University of New Mexico (UNM)

College of Pharmacy



Your yield rate is a reflection of the desirability of your program relative to your closest competitors.

It's likely your applicants have applied to multiple programs, but your admissions process can influence their decision to join your school.

With applicants applying to as many as twenty different schools, you're competing for their decision right up until they register for classes.

Your admissions process includes several key touchpoints that can make or break if a student enrolls. We like to say it's the "dating phase" of your (hopefully) life-long relationship with your students.

Predict yield through meaningful touchpoints

Assess your applicants' genuine interest

With Kira, you can see the applicants who are truly passionate about enrolling at your school by evaluating their motives and demonstrated interests in their timed responses. Likewise, you can get an indication of the applicants who aren't actually interested in your program if they do not take the time to complete their assessment.

Finding the students passionate about joining your program, rather than the students who copy and paste their admissions essay for another school they'd rather attend, will help yield a higher rate of applicants.

Build a relationship with applicants and keep them engaged

The Kira platform allows you to share a welcome video where you can showcase your campus and introduce your team or faculty. By adding a video assessment between the application due date and admissions decision date, you gain an additional touchpoint to keep your school top-of-mind over your competitors.

By asking meaningful questions to applicants, you prove that you're interested in getting to know them better. And, the overall admissions experience is more memorable for the applicant, creating a more memorable connection to the school.

Review students sooner to get decisions out faster

Because Kira assessments can be completed at any time, you can review students as their submissions come in rather than waiting until their phone screen time or in-person interview.

"We found that we were losing very good applicants as a result of our in-person interviewing process. With Kira, we've increased the number of diverse applicants who're applying and completing their interviews, and also the number of diverse students who ultimately enroll in our programs."

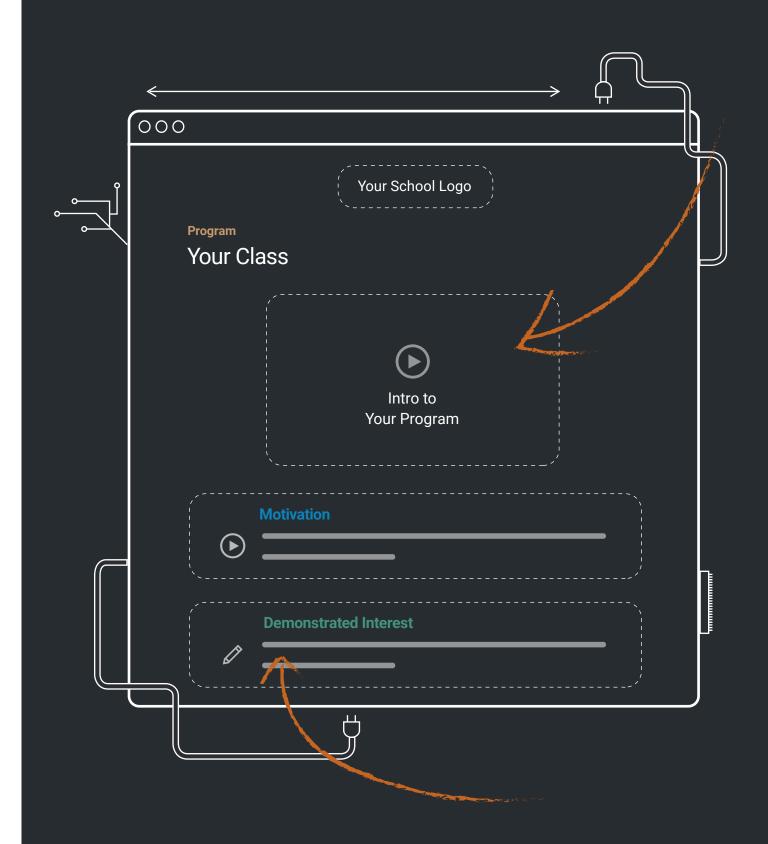


HENRY CANTU

Director, Admissions & Special Progams
University of Texas Health San Antonio School of Nursing

HELPFUL RESOURCES

How Technology Can Level the Playing Field of "Demonstrated Interest"





Structured Interview

In a structured interview, each applicant walks away having had a consistent experience.

A structured interview requires consistency at its core and is likely to include:

- The same number of questions
- The same questions or the same type of questions (using a question template would help diversify questions that would evaluate the same trait)
- The same evaluation method, such as a rubric or rating scale

Unstructured Interview

An unstructured interview is a more casual conversation where:

- Questions flow out of the discussion in an unrehearsed way
- Interviewers have an opportunity to completely customize the interview to an applicant's experiences, background, or career history

VS.

• Interviewees may have the opportunity to ask questions in response

Many interviewers prefer unstructured interviews because they feel comfortable and authentic.

They tend to praise the conversation-like interaction for giving them a better chance to get to know an applicant based on their 'gut reaction' or intuition. In fact, anywhere from 85% to 97% of professionals rely to some degree on intuition when making a decision on a candidate.

Unfortunately, the research shows that these unstructured interviews are half as effective as structured interviews.

Why? Unstructured interviews are far more susceptible to factors like cognitive biases, reviewer fatigue, and burnout, because so much of the interview experience can be dependent on the mood of the interviewer or panel.

This interview type also inherently creates an unfair and unbalanced interview experience for applicants. While it may seem advantageous to have the freedom to dig into a specific topic area with an applicant, by not giving other applicants the chance to speak to the same area, you may be inherently advantaging or disadvantaging some groups.

of schools are introducing bias into their admissions process by not using a standard set of questions across all applicants.

Source: Breaking Down Bias in Admissions

Only

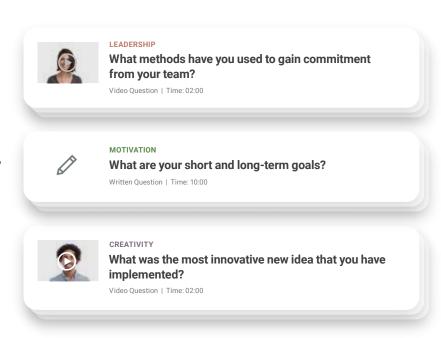
Implement structured interviews

Kira's Asynchronous Assessment and Live Interviewing platforms are built to help you maintain consistency across a large pool of applicants.

Structured questions

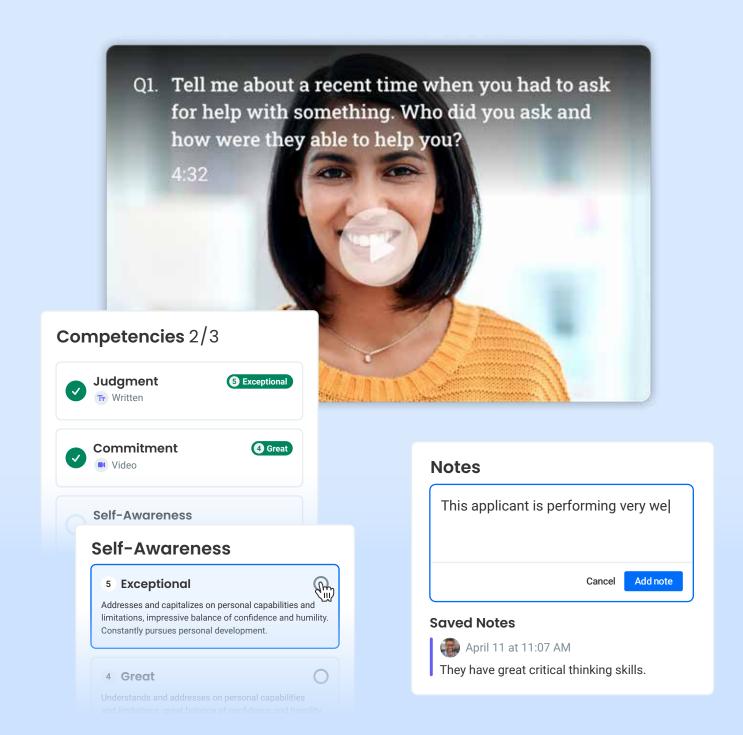
Every applicant is given a similar assessment that shares the same number of questions and the same evaluation rubrics.

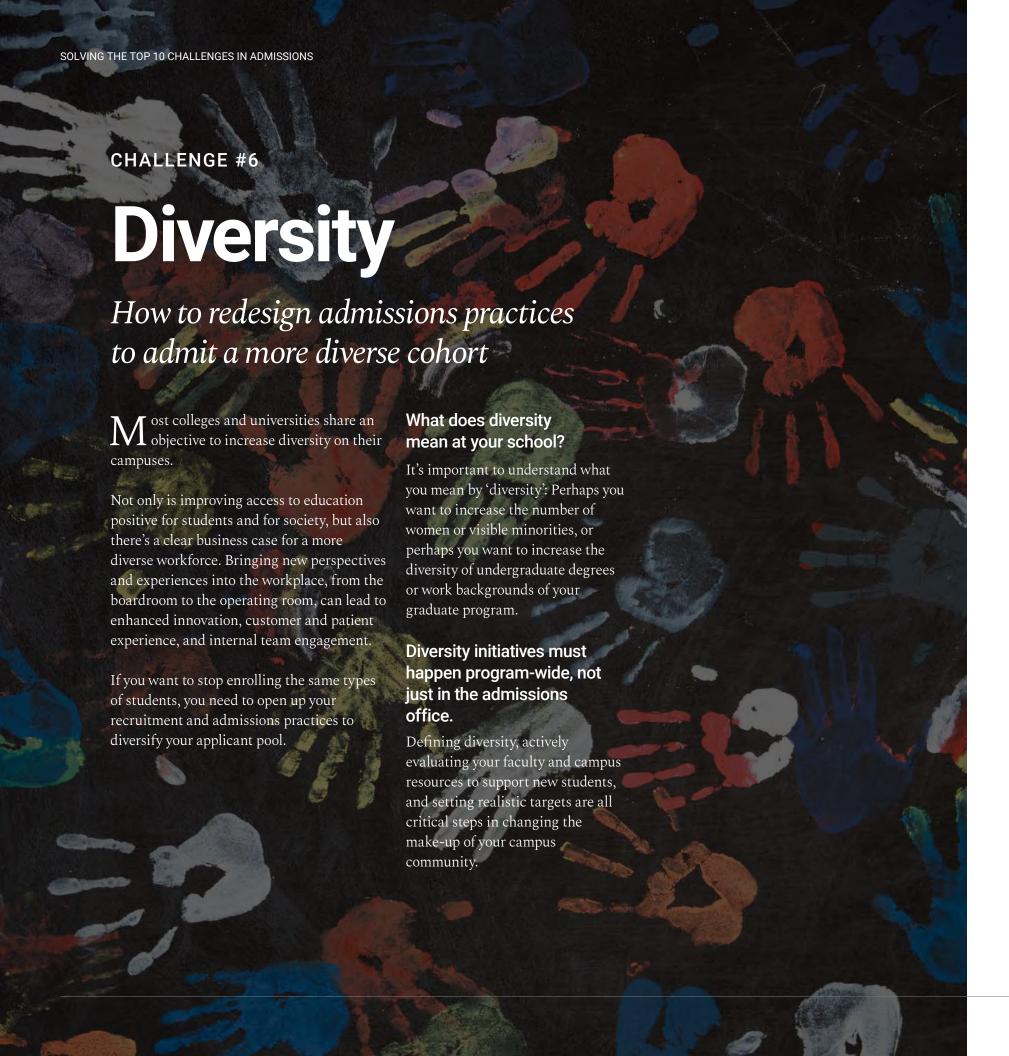
While the questions will be unique enough that they cannot be cheated or over rehearsed, Kira's team works with you to develop question templates and build assessments that are similar enough for applicants to have a consistent experience.



Structured reviewing

Because applicant responses are recorded, all admissions reviewers see the same responses. They also perform their evaluations on the same rubrics, and have their feedback collated to get an overall Results page for each student.





How do holistic admissions practices increase diversity?

Traditional metrics for evaluating students such as grades and test scores often lean in favor of affluent, white, male students.

Not only do studies show a correlation between race, gender, and test scores, test preparation itself is expensive and time-consuming, making it more difficult for students who don't have the luxury of extra money and time.

Likewise, traditional admissions bonuses like legacy preference or demonstrated interest also have the potential to replicate the same student body a school has had for decades.

By changing your "cut off" criteria from the traditional metrics to screen in more students, based on more factors, you can begin to level the playing field in admissions. You will screen students into your class based on a variety of factors and are more likely to draw a more diverse group of applicants into your review pool.

62%

increase in cohort diversity at UT Health San Antonio School of Nursing

Source: A National Survey by the URBAN Universities for Health

Conduct a holistic admissions process

A holistic review with multiple elements that include timed video and timed written assessments gives applicants multiple areas to showcase their strengths.

Use timed video and timed written assessments

Inviting applicants to take a timed assessment from anywhere and at any time gives them an opportunity to tell their story in their words, rather than through the lens of a test or a transcript.

Create a competency-based evaluation of your supplementary materials

Evaluate applicants holistically by combining existing application materials like grades, test scores, and essays with timed assessments and evaluating them all in one place.

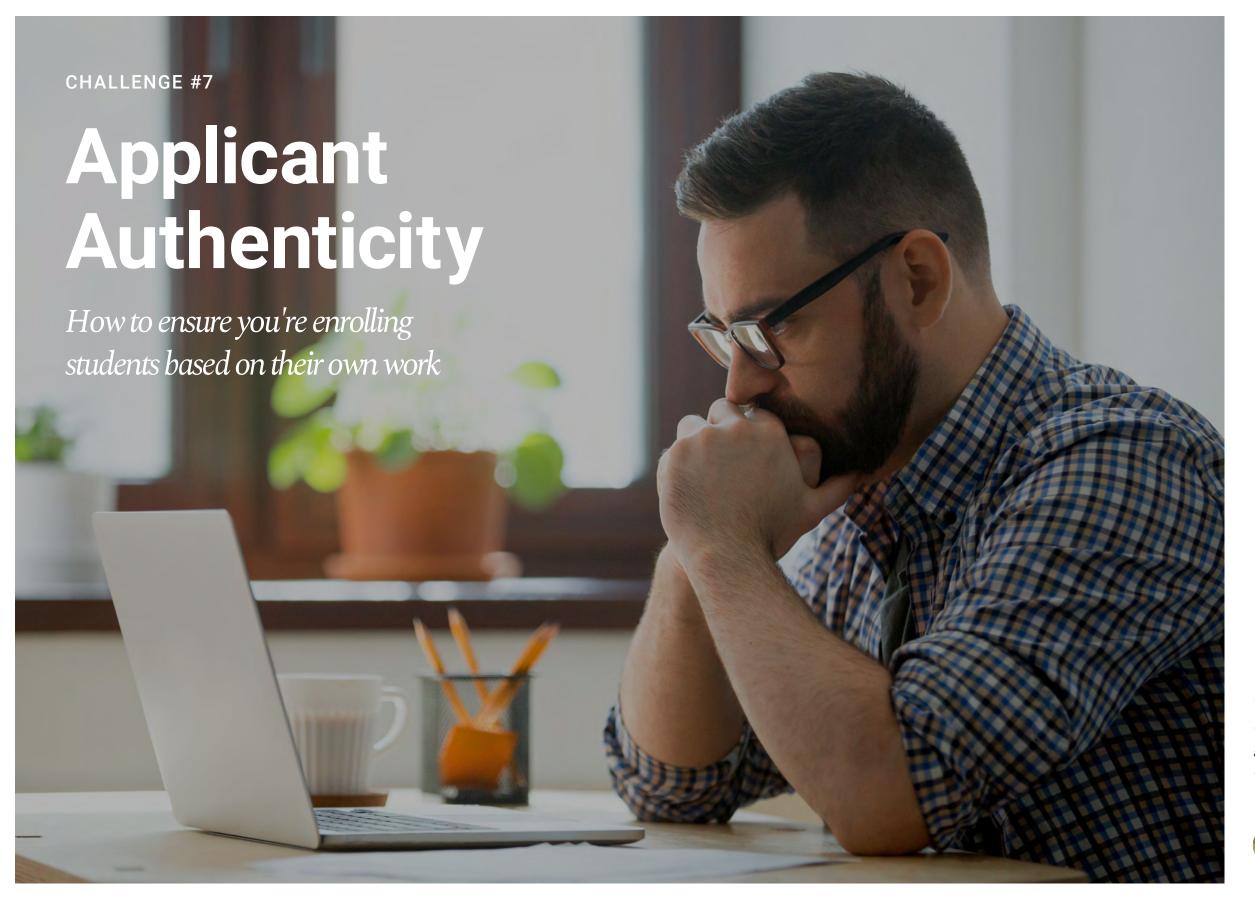
Build your cohort

Stop missing out on great applicants by identifying your top candidates in each relevant competency. By reviewing in Kira, you can sort and stack applicants based on how they did on specific aspects of their admissions file.



Director, Admissions & Special Progams University of Texas Health San Antonio School of Nursing

OPTIMIZING YOUR ADMISSIONS PROCESS, FROM RECRUITMENT TO ENROLLMENT



Admissions teams want to ensure deserving students are accepted in the program.

However, as technology gets smarter and applicants become more adept at using it, cases of plagiarism or prohibited use of generative AI will be harder for admissions teams to recognize.

Whatever your regulations on AI and authenticity may be, identifying the use of outside sources is critical to accurately evaluating application materials.

"Integrity of the process and application is very important to us. We want to ensure that an application is authentic and merit is given to students that have worked on the application themselves and used their own ideas and thoughts."



Assess applicant authenticity with Kira

Using Kira's on-demand assessments you'll get an authentic view of applicants in the form of a 'spontaneous' assessment, where applicants are required to think on their feet.

Get a candid view of applicants' oral and written communication skills

Through timed video and written responses, applicants who have plagiarized or cheated to complete their application now have to represent their true selves in Kira with a video record.

Compare application materials with a new data point

Timed written responses can be compared with the written materials your applicants submitted earlier in the application process. If you notice a large discrepancy in terms of their writing ability, you may have found an applicant who used a consultant for their admissions essay.

Reduce question-sharing online

With a pool of pre-recorded questions on the same template, applicants receive a random selection of questions. Even if one student posts the questions she was asked online, the next student will receive a different question.



Integrity
This applicant showed suspicious activities

Assessment behaviors

Browser refreshes
21
Typing speed
3,947 words per minute

Similarity score
Personal Statement
0%
Short Essay
58%
Timed Written Assessment for Leadership
0%
Al Detection
45%

Leverage Kira's integrity tools

Flag applicants who exhibit unusual behavior, such as high numbers of browser refreshes or excessively fast typing speeds.

Power-up plagiarism with SimCheck by Turnitin

The most robust solution for assessing authenticity in written work, SimCheck in Kira Talent automatically screens timed written responses and uploaded documents for instances of plagiarism or AI-generated material.



"SimCheck in Kira Talent allows us to see when an applicant has submitted work that isn't their own, helping us protect the integrity of our admissions process no matter how large the volume of applications."



MIRIAM IRVINERecruitment and Admissions Officer

Communication Skills

How to validate language skills and proficiency

Competencies that employers seek in graduates. They're also notoriously difficult to assess. From the boardroom to the bedside, listening, understanding, and articulating oneself is critical to nearly every workplace.

While some tests can assess writing ability and others comprehension, there is yet to be a definitive 'score' that shows someone's communication prowess. Furthermore, like any other standardized test, there's a risk of cheating fraudulent scores, or memorized responses.



See and hear from your applicants

There is no better way to efficiently and effectively assess applicants' communication skills than with Kira.

Evaluate real-time oral communication skills

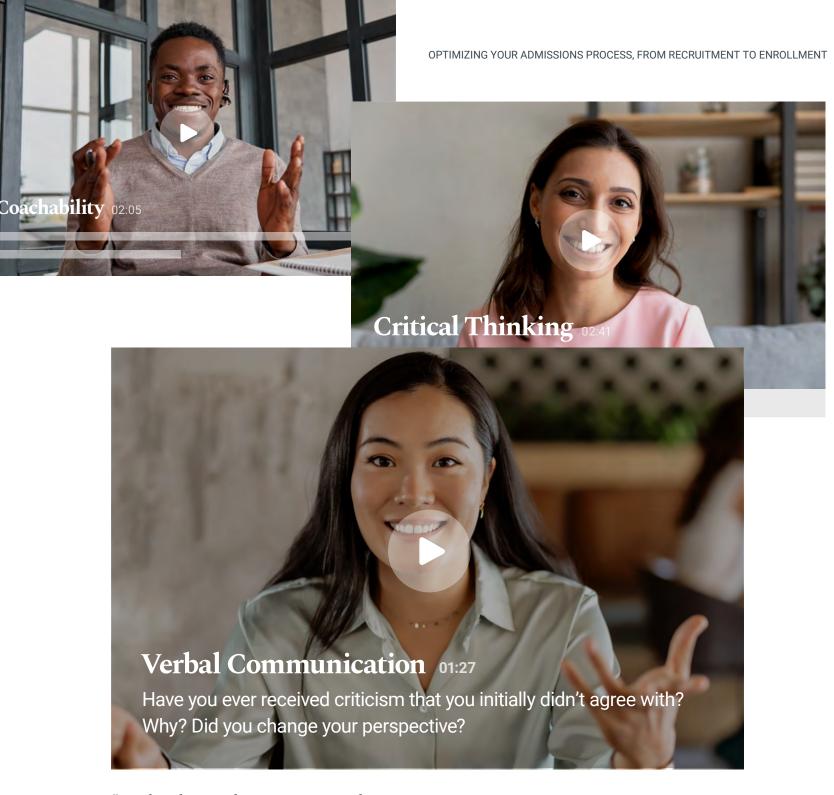
With Kira's interactive timed video assessments, schools can see how applicants think on their feet. Kira gives admissions teams an efficient and authentic glance of how the candidate can perform in a real-life setting, without having to book a time-consuming in-person or phone interview.

Get a genuine written communication sample

Using timed written assessments, applicants display their written communication skills under a time constraint without outside help from proofreaders or coaches.

Get the insight of an interview in a fraction of the time

Reviewing responses in Kira can take five-to-ten minutes, in total. Skip the added time of scheduling and conducting 30-minute phone calls without losing the immense value of hearing directly from applicants.



"Kira has eliminated extra steps in our admissions process because reviewers are able to do an English language proficiency evaluation within the video assessment."



ARRY FILLIAN

Associate Dean of Enrollment Management and Student Success NYU School of Professional Studies



CHALLENGE #9

Soft Skills

How to test for hard to measure traits like empathy, critical thinking, and motivation

Evaluating applicants on their whole selves, the context and experience they bring, and their soft skills, has potential to improve a number of student success outcomes, including diversity on campus, in-class engagement, retention, and job placement.

The most difficult component of a holistic review to 'assess' is typically noncognitive traits.

While grades and test scores may indicate academic potential, there's so much more to being successful as a student and in the career path they've chosen.

Add a competency-based admissions assessment

At Kira, we work with schools to clearly define the specific competencies they're looking for in their ideal students and build evaluation criteria based on those for reviewers to assess applicants on. Each question is designed to demonstrate evidence of the competency you're hoping to evaluate.

We'll take you through five steps to build a powerful assessment for those hard-to-measure variables:

- **Determining the core competencies** of your program's most successful graduates
- **Creating custom competency descriptions** to guide your team of reviewers
- **Establishing a cohort vision** to drive clarity on what success looks like
- 4 Crafting custom assessment questions that reflect the core competencies
- Refining a detailed evaluation rubric designed for consistent reviewing

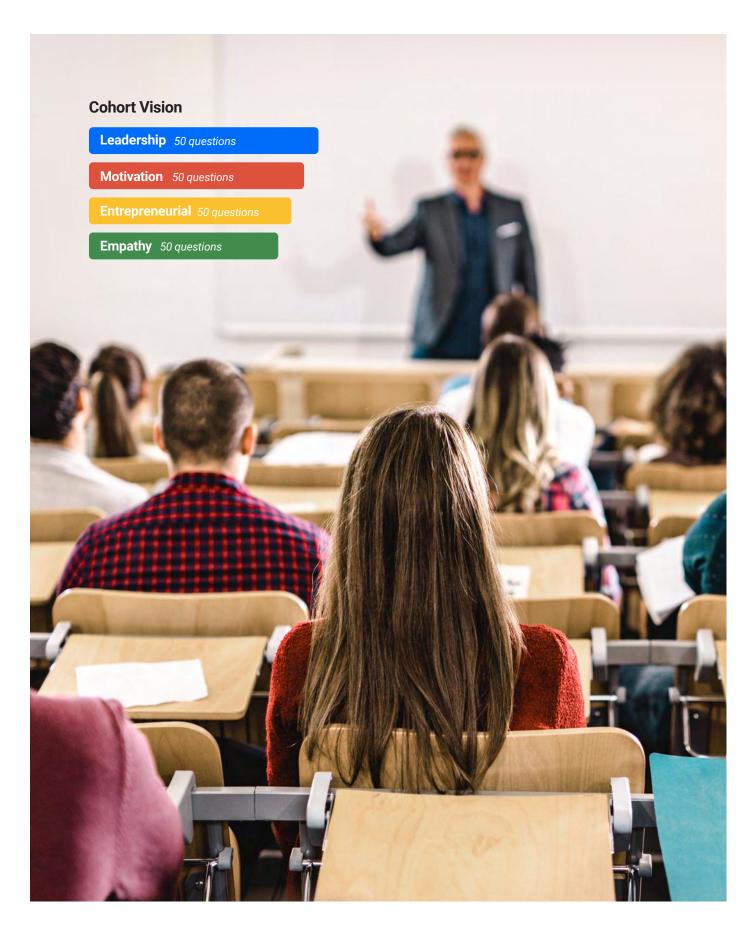
The end result? An effective way to accurately identify applicants with the traits needed to succeed in your program.

"With Kira, we're making stronger and faster admission decisions because we have more data. We're getting a more holistic review of applicants and are gathering stronger data points that help us to better identify program fit."

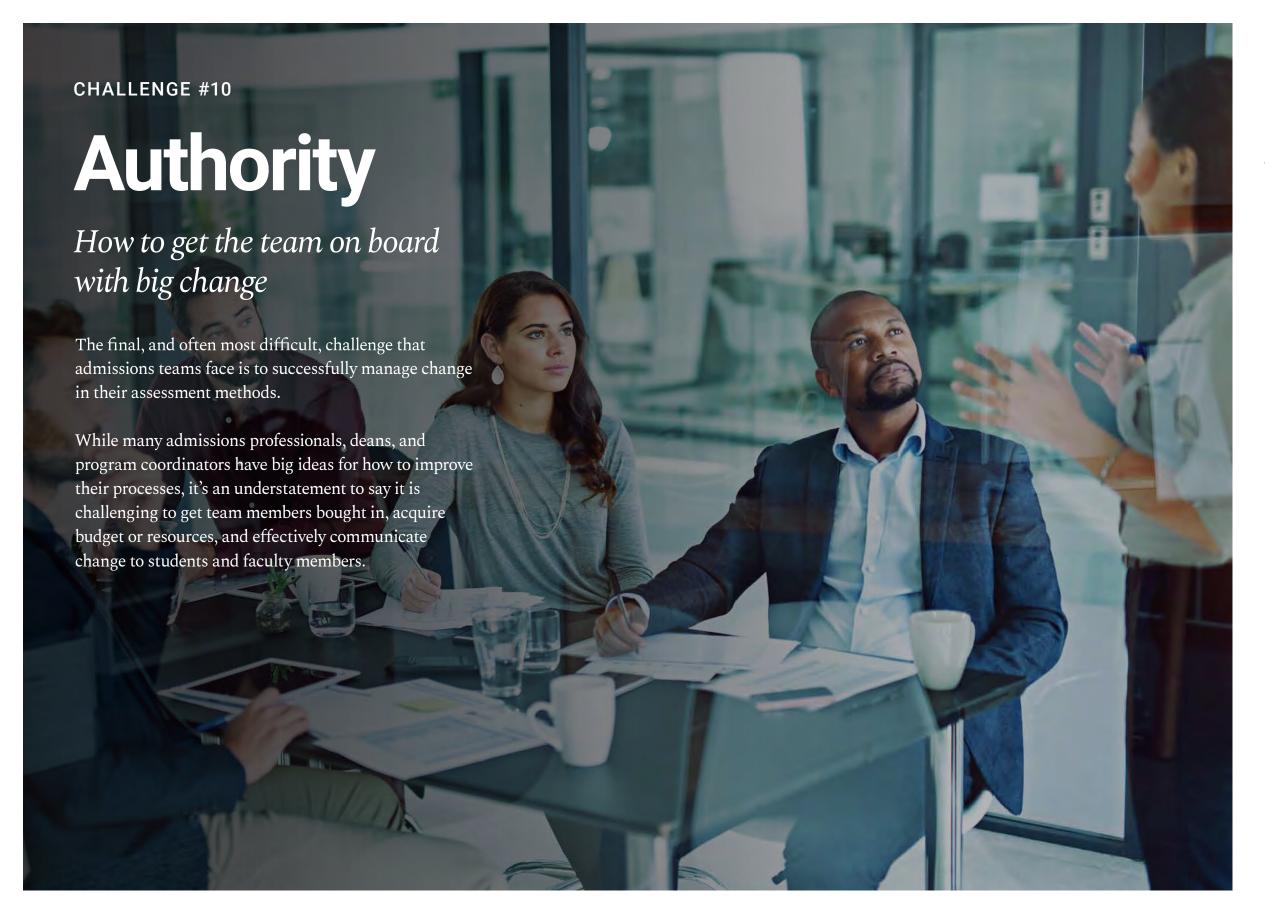


LARRY FILLIAN

Associate Dean of Enrollment Management and Student Success NYU School of Professional Studies



OPTIMIZING YOUR ADMISSIONS PROCESS, FROM RECRUITMENT TO ENROLLMENT



Four Questions to Ask When Initiating Change in Admissions Assessment

- WHY: Establish and define the problem you're trying to solve and how you will measure success?
- **WHO:** Identity the key stakeholders who need to be engaged in changing, adding, or removing an element of your application process.
- **WHEN:** Develop a timeline for when the update needs to occur so that it can be up and running for the desired admissions cycle.
- HOW: Identify the possible solutions, whether they include new technologies, new responsibilities for your team or committee, or new processes, and the budget and human resources that you will require to implement them.



Learn the seven key steps that will help you successfully plan, drive, and enact sustainable change within your program or institution.

DOWNLOAD FULL REPORT

https://blog.kiratalent.com/guide-to-innovation/

Leverage Kira's Admissions Experts to Navigate Change

The good news is: You're not alone.

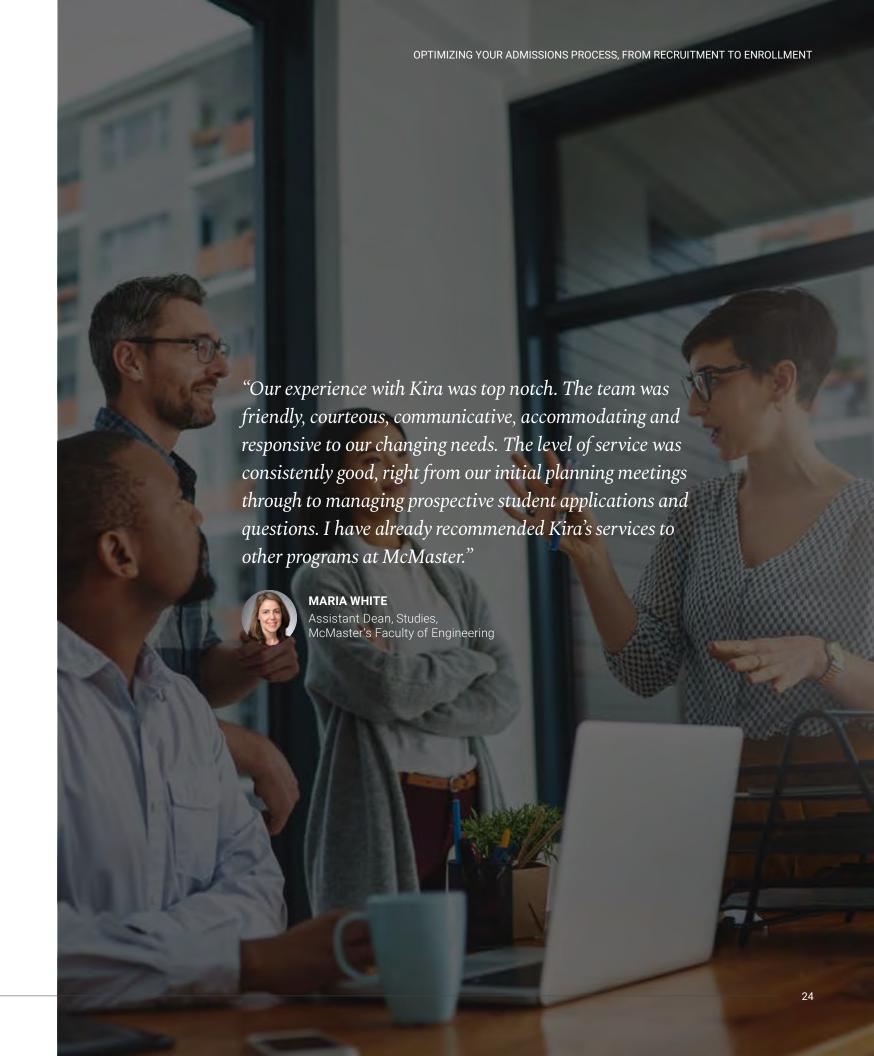
Talk to us today to speak with your school's dedicated Partnerships Manager who can walk you through a customized demonstration of Kira Talent and how it can work for your school.

We'll tackle:

- Your admissions objectives and if Kira is a solution that can help tackle your challenges
- ? Any questions, concerns, and hesitations
- Timing and budget required to get Kira up and running for your next admissions cycle

Working with us, you'll have access to our incredible Client Success Team who will work with you to build your school's assessments, handle technical support, and measure the success of your new admissions initiative.

Book a Demo





KIRA TALENT

Trusted by 1100+ Programs Worldwide

Book a Demo

"Kira has allowed us to streamline the operations, improve our efficiency, and decrease our faculty, interviewer, and staff utilization."



RAFAEL RIVERAAssociate Dean for Admission and Financial Aid
NYU Grossman School of Medicine

"Kira has helped us find a lot of diamonds in the rough. With our old process, I would estimate we were missing up to 10% of applicants who were hidden behind low test scores."



DEBBY HERCZEG

Assistant Director of Admissions
Mendoza School of Business

"With Kira, we're saving more than 800 hours of faculty time in the admissions process."



DR. WILLIAM HARMANAssociate Dean
Roseman University, College of Dental Medicine

"Having the interviews online opens doors to a lot of applicants who may not have seen your school as an option. There are pros and cons to both methods, but the benefits of virtual outweigh the benefits of in-person."



KELLY MOOREAdmissions Manager
Queen's University School of Medicine













































Kira Talent We make admissions