

The New Local Advantage

How AI Search Is Reshaping Student Discovery and Enrollment



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amsive education

The performance marketing agency
that amplifies your growth.

SEO & AEO • Digital Media • Paid Social • Influencer •
Direct Mail Customer Intelligence • Creative • Development

1B+

direct mail pieces per year

\$400M+

digital media dollars under
management

Backed by



2025 SEO AGENCY OF THE YEAR

Search Engine Land Awards

Critical Questions for Leadership

Paid Dependency

How dependent are we on paid advertising for lead volume? What happens if costs continue to rise?

AI Visibility

Are we visible in AI-driven search environments like ChatGPT and Google Gemini?

Local Dominance

Do we own the local search intent in our primary markets, or are competitors outranking us organically?

Why This Matters **Now**

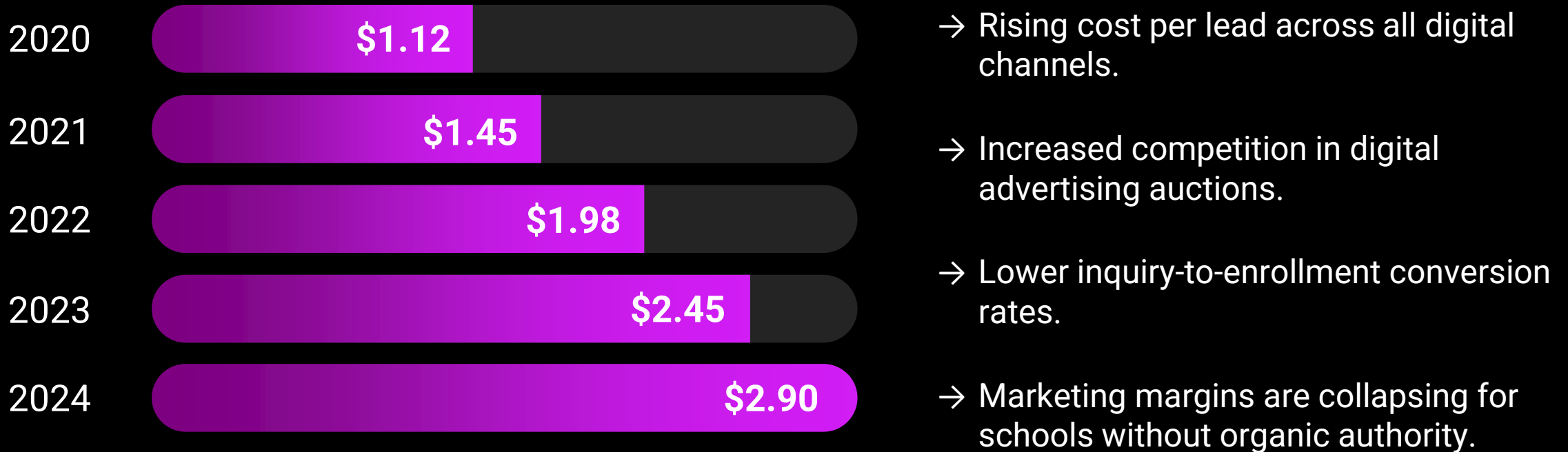
AI is filling your consideration gap

- Students shortlist before visiting sites
- AI decides who gets considered first
- Most schools aren't in that conversation



Rising Costs & Ad Pressure (Paid Search)

CPC INFLATION (2020-2024)



Source: Market trends indicating ~40%+ CPC increase in Education sector



3x

MORE TRUST

The **Risks** of Paid Over-Dependency

- Visibility disappears the exact second the daily budget is exhausted.
- Organic results carry more consumer trust than "Sponsored" tags.
- Ad costs are outpacing the growth of enrollment revenue in most sectors.
- High reliance on paid ads makes your growth fragile and expensive.

Building **Sustainable** Visibility

Reduce Dependency

Moving away from the "rented" attention of paid media.

Career-Driven Focus

Understanding the specific search journey of prospective students.

24/7 Infrastructure

Capturing leads around the clock without incremental ad spend.

Long-Term Equity

Organic visibility compounds over time, unlike paid ads.

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SEO vs AEO

Pillars of Visibility

SEO

(Search Engine)

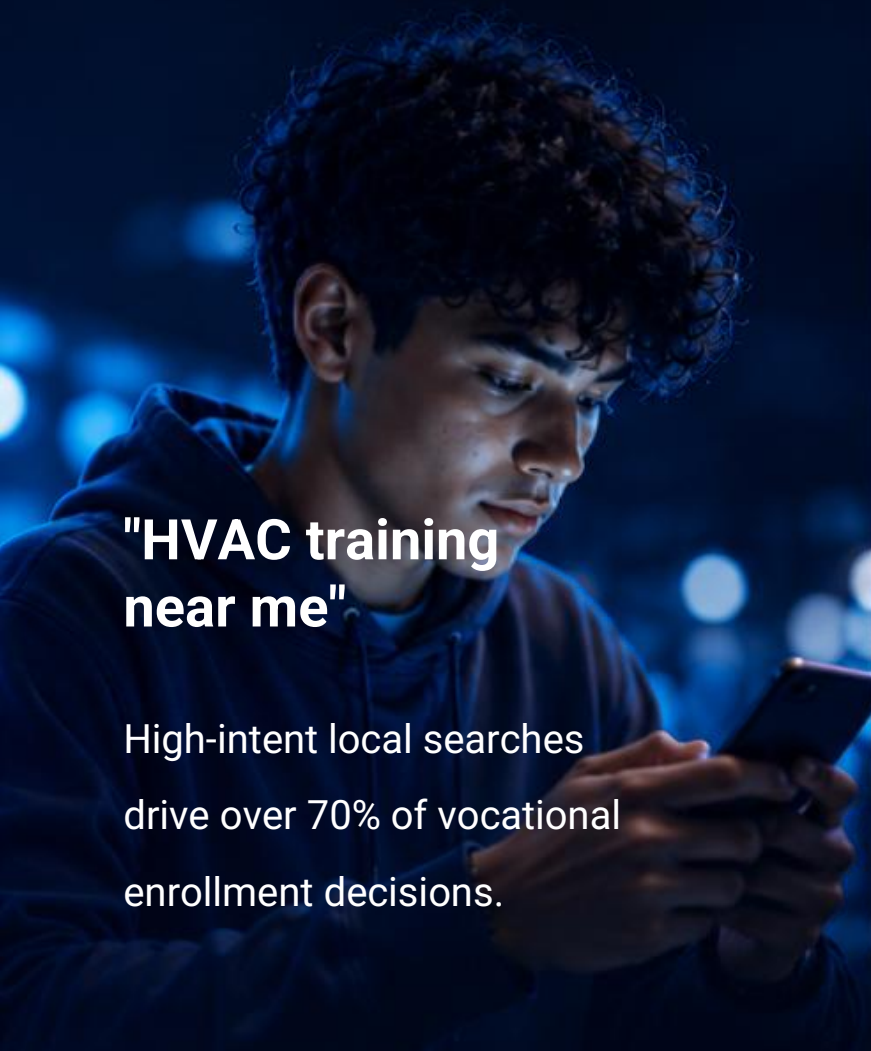
Ranks your campus in the Google "Blue Links" and the Local Map Pack. Focuses on authority, links, and technical site health.

AEO

(Answer Engine)

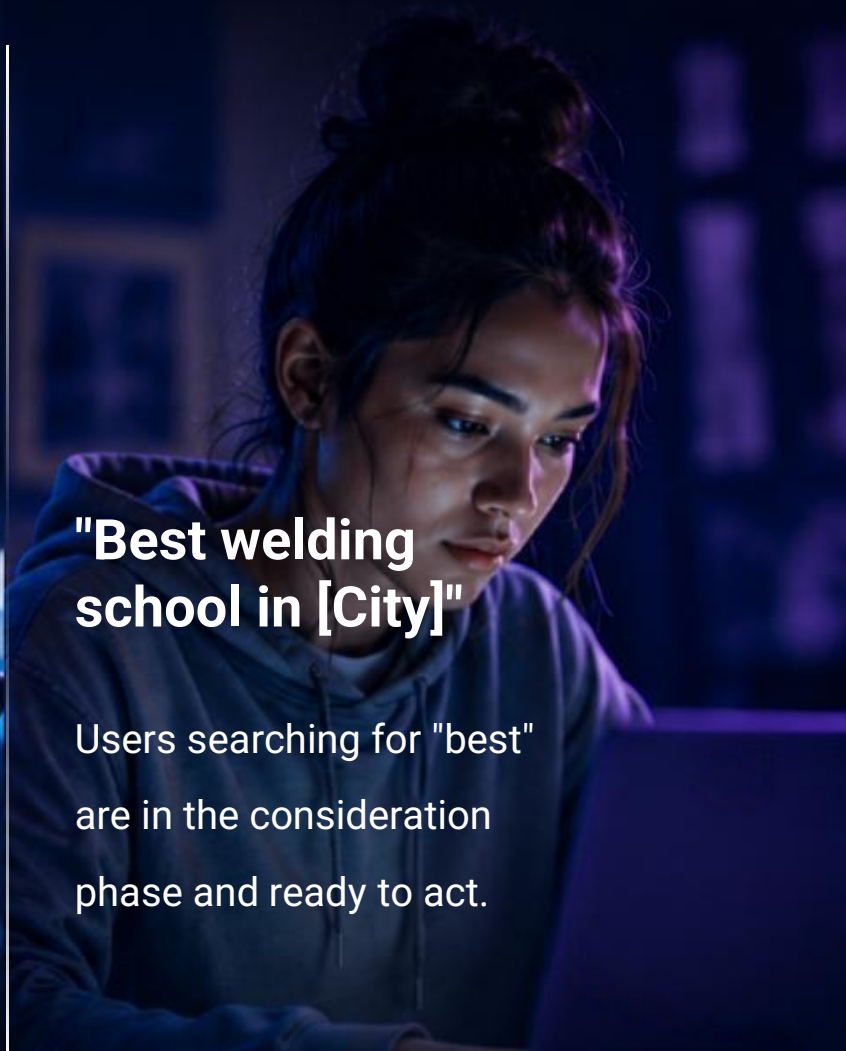
Ensures you appear in AI-generated answers (Gemini/SGE/ChatGPT). Focuses on structured data and conversational formatting.

What Students Actually Search



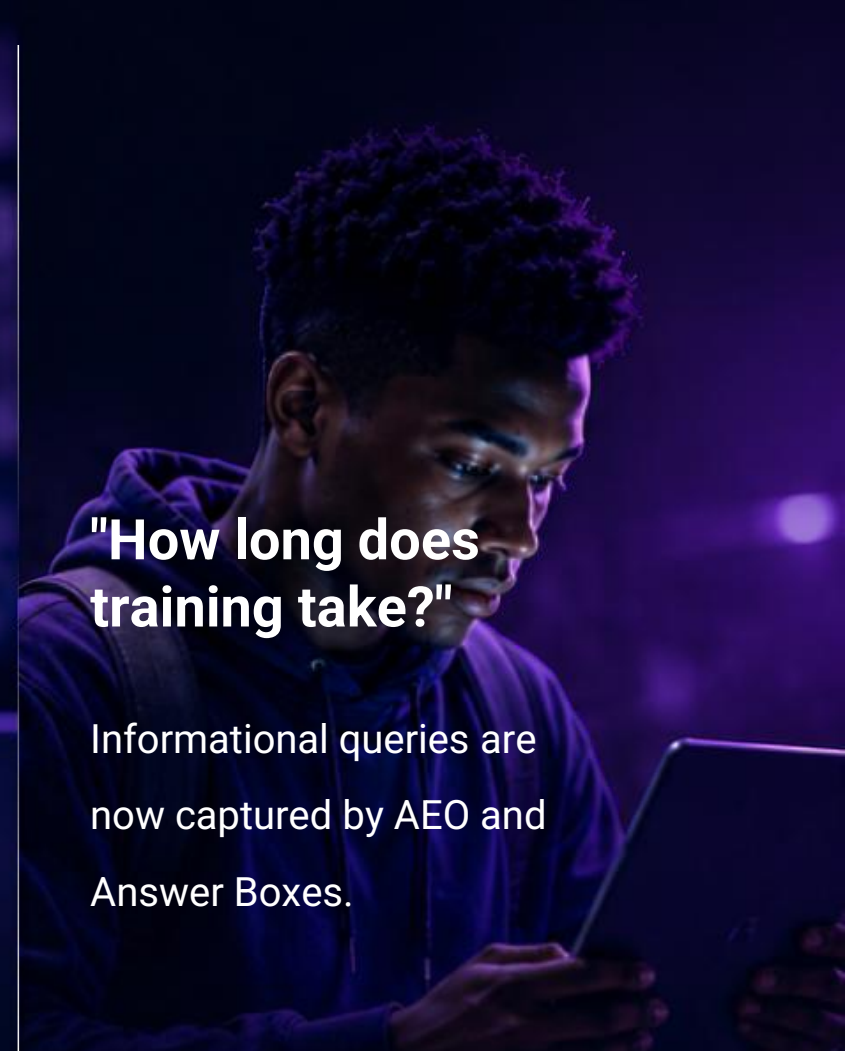
"HVAC training near me"

High-intent local searches drive over 70% of vocational enrollment decisions.



"Best welding school in [City]"

Users searching for "best" are in the consideration phase and ready to act.



"How long does training take?"

Informational queries are now captured by AEO and Answer Boxes.

Multi-Channel Student Journey

AI & Search

AI Overviews, ChatGPT, and Google Gemini are now the first stop for complex queries.

Communities

Reddit and local community forums provide unbiased peer-to-peer validation.

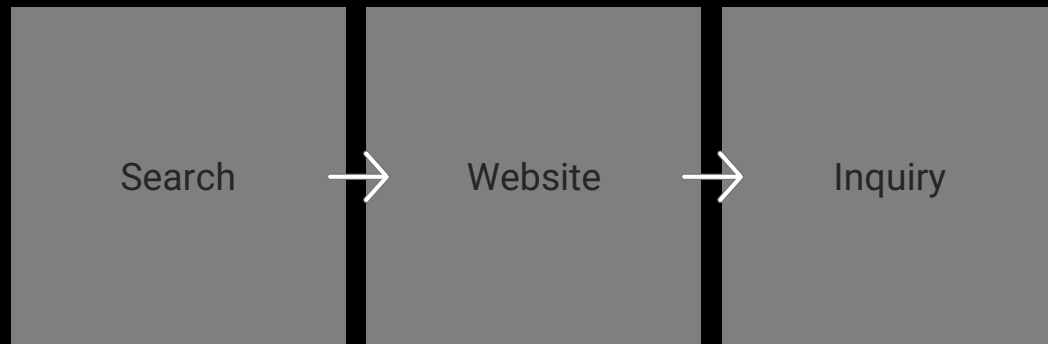
Social & Local

YouTube, TikTok, and Google Maps reviews influence the final 10% of the decision.

The Enrollment Journey Has Changed

Students have already moved on

THEN



NOW



31%

Of Gen Z starts queries in
AI or chat tools



AI Overviews

AI Overviews changed the game

01

Appear before
organic results

02

Assembled from
multiple sources

03

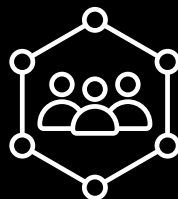
Your listing may not
make the cut

Why Local Schools Have an Advantage

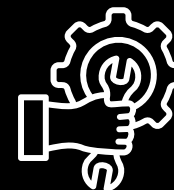
Small School. Big Opening.



AI favors
relevance over scale



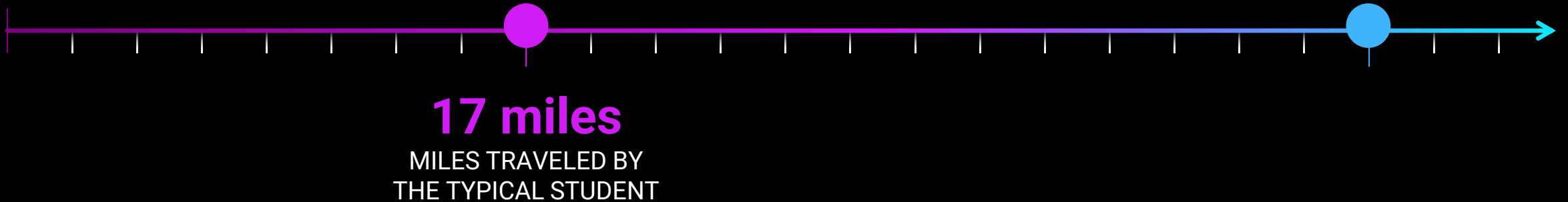
Community ties
beat national brand



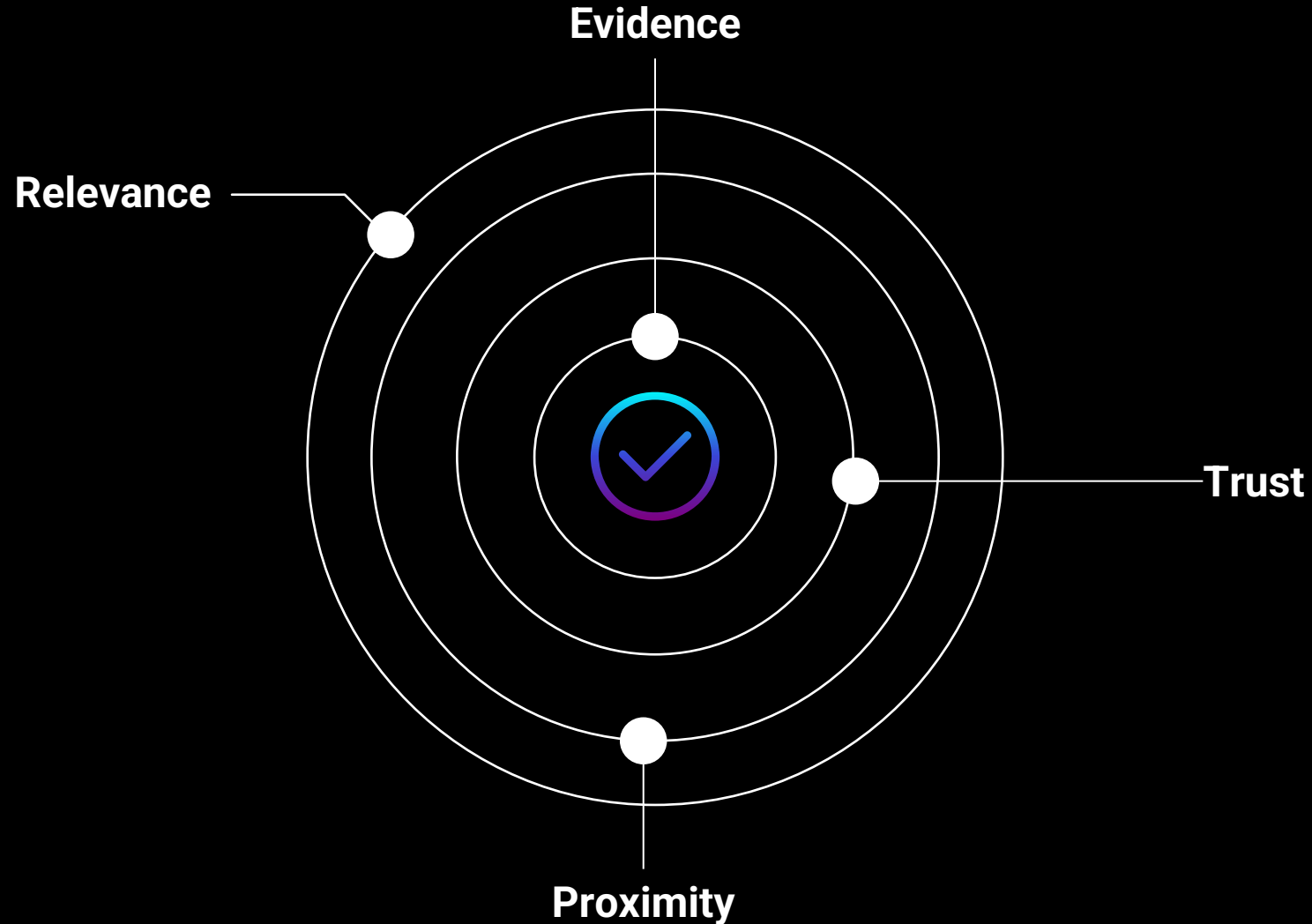
But only if you do
the work

70%

of students attend
school within **50 miles**.



4 Signals For AI Recommendation



Signal 1: **Relevance**

You can't answer what you never said

- Complete Google Business Profiles
- Robust program descriptions
- Detailed student-facing FAQ content



Your School's SEO Competitive Edge

→ High Urgency

Career-focused searches have faster intent than traditional 4-year degree searches.

→ Geographic Relevance

Students rarely travel more than 50 miles to attend classes.

→ Underinvested Competition

Many local competitors rely solely on simple ads, leaving organic gaps.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "trade schools in los angeles". The AI Overview section provides a summary: "Trade schools in Los Angeles offer accelerated, hands-on training for high-demand careers in fields like healthcare, technology, and trades. Programs typically take less than two years to complete, with options ranging from public community colleges to specialized private vocational academies." It then lists "Top Trade Schools by Industry":

- Healthcare & Nursing**
 - American Career College (Los Angeles, CA):** Located on Rosewood Ave, this specialized institution offers programs in vocational nursing, medical assisting, dental assisting, and pharmacy technician.
 - West Coast University (Los Angeles, CA):** Offers vocational-focused nursing degrees and healthcare administration programs.
- Construction, Trades & Manufacturing**
 - Los Angeles Trade-Technical College (LATTC):** Located at 400 West Washington Blvd, this is the largest public trade school in the area. It provides career pathways in culinary arts, automotive technology, carpentry, cosmetology, and fashion design.
- Technology & Specialized Trades**
 - UEI College (Various SoCal locations):** Offers vocational certificates in business office administration, criminal justice, HVAC training, and electric vehicle maintenance.

At the bottom, it mentions "Public vs. Private Costs & Considerations":

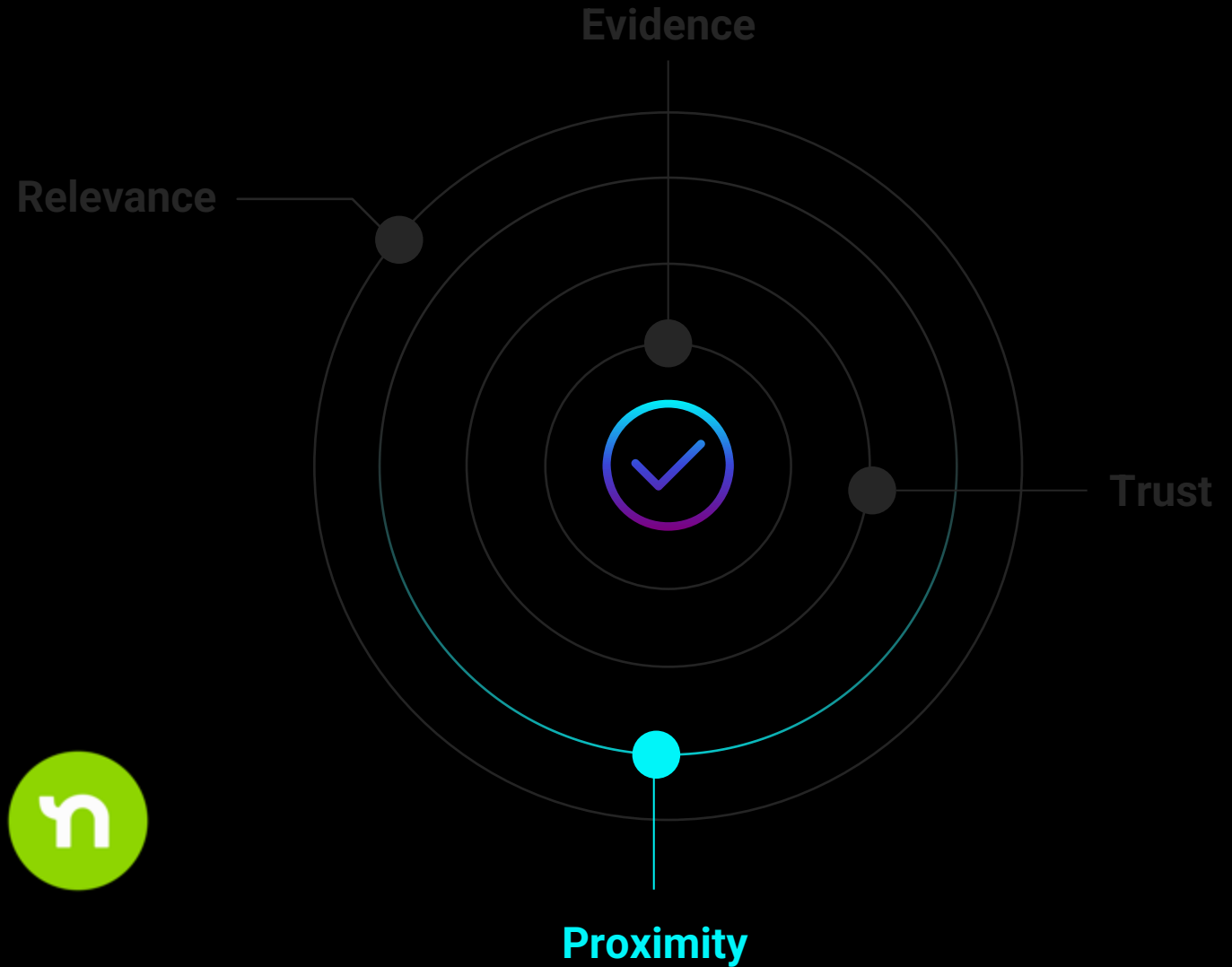
- Public Institutions (e.g., LATTC):** Generally range from \$5,000 to \$10,000 depending on the certification.
- Private Vocational Schools:** Tuition generally ranges from \$15,000 to \$35,000, but they often offer fast-tracked schedules, job placement assistance, and flexible financial aid options.

The sidebar on the right shows "LATTC: Homepage" and "Los Angeles Trade-Technical College - LACCD".

Signal 2: Proximity

AI sees more than your website

- Google Business Profile
- Departmental and location listings
- Local citations and content



GBP

Your Digital Front Door

The Google Business Profile + Google Knowledge Panel is often the very first thing a prospective student sees. It is your most valuable "unowned" property.

→ NAP consistency

Exact Name, Address, and Phone accuracy.

→ Service Detail

Granular descriptions for every program you.

→ Separate Profiles

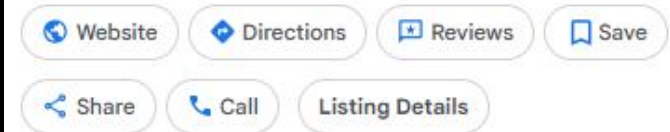
Every department can have ITS OWN Google Business Profile, increasing online visibility for every major and department your school offers.



William Woods University

4.2 ★★★★★ 84 Google reviews

Private university in Fulton, Missouri



William Woods University is a private university in Fulton, Missouri, United States. Founded in 1870, the university is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Expanding its mission to address the need for graduate and adult-oriented programs, the institution became known as William Woods University in 1993. [Wikipedia](#)

Address: 1 University Ave, Fulton, MO 65251

Undergraduate tuition and fees: 28,860 USD (2023 – 24) [IPEDS](#)

Acceptance rate: 71% (2024) [IPEDS](#)

Mascot: Screech the Owl

Colors: Green, Maroon, Burgundy, Forest Green

Campus: Rural

Students: 1,681

President: Romaine Seguin (acting)

Religious affiliation: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Endowment: \$25 million (2021)

Motto: Amor Vincit Omnia

Phone: (800) 995-3159

Hours: Open 24 hours

Signal 3: Trust

Reviews surface your school in AI.

- Students trust students
- AI reads and quotes your reviews
- Recency and volume signal credibility



Driving Authority through Reviews

01

Volume & Score

Total number of reviews and your average star rating are baseline trust signals.



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02

Recency

Google prioritizes fresh feedback. Older reviews lose influence over time.



03

Content Quality

Keywords in reviews (e.g., "best welding teacher") help you rank for those terms.



Scaling Your Campus Reputation

SMS Campaigns

Immediate text follow-ups after campus tours to capture peak sentiment.

On-Campus QR

Strategically placed signage for students and visitors to scan and rate.

The "Verbal Ask"

Training admissions staff to invite reviews at the point of high student excitement.

Signal 4: Evidence

Document reality for accurate AI answers

- Outcomes and partnerships must be visible
- Third-party validation strengthens recommendations
- Silence gets filled whether accurate or not



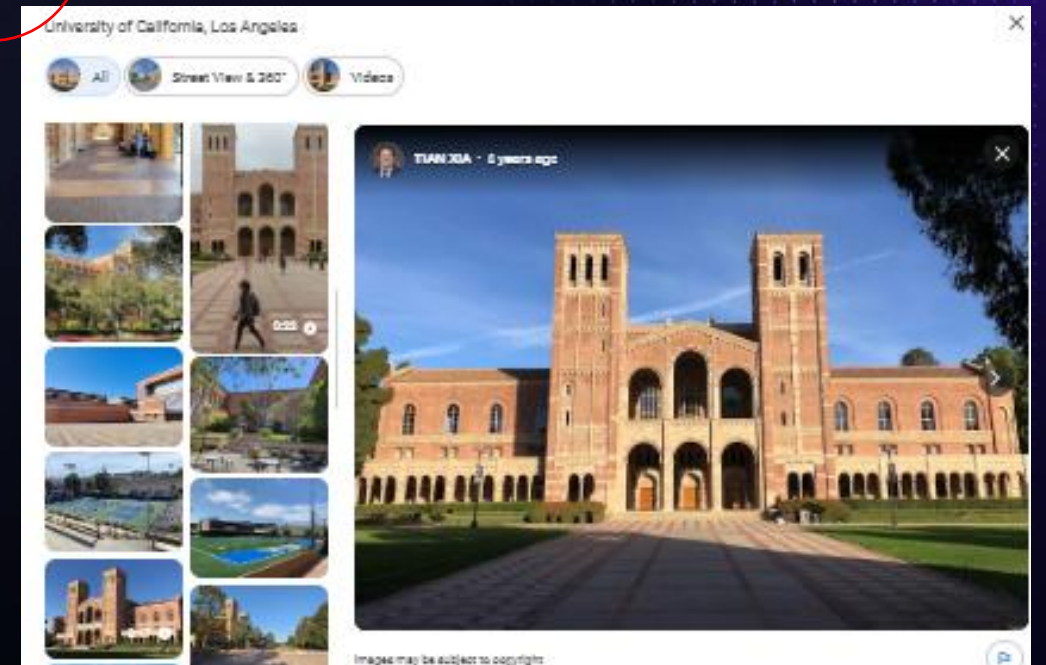
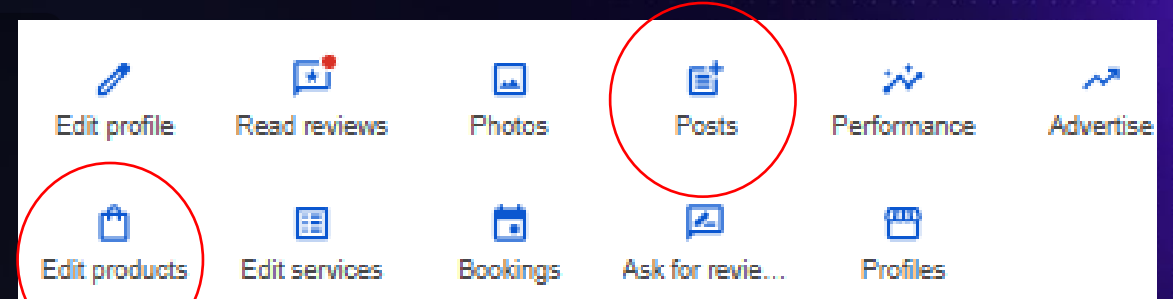
Hidden Drivers: GBP Post, Products and Visuals

GBP Posts & Products (Programs)

Most educational institutions don't utilize these sections in their Google Business Profiles that are like FREE advertising.

High-Impact Imagery

Profiles with professional interior/exterior shots see a 35% increase in clicks and higher engagement.



Hyper-Local Campus Content

Google uses Location Pages and your Google Business Profile simultaneously to verify local authority.

→ Unique Content

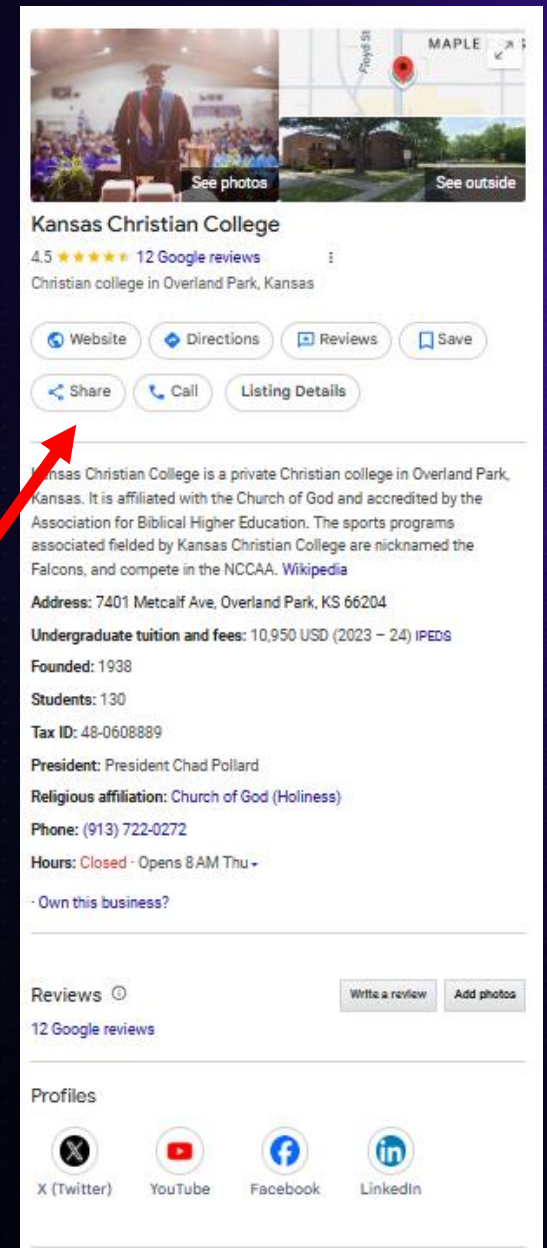
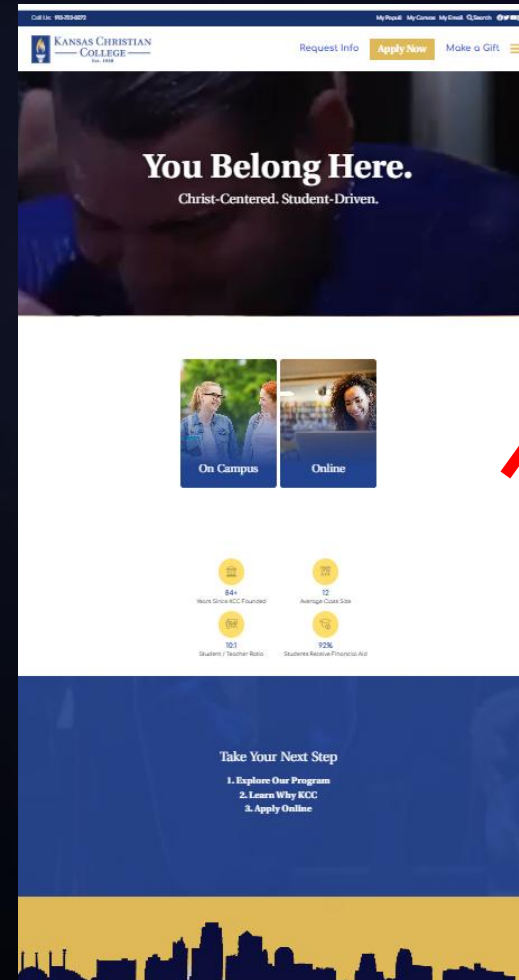
No "copy/paste" descriptions across different campuses.

→ Localized Landing Pages

Direct traffic from GBP should land on campus-specific pages.

→ Local Context

Including neighborhood-specific details and transit information.



The Playbook is Being Rewritten



AI visibility
is the new KPI



Local authority
is more than SEO



Consideration
happens before traffic

Five questions. Be honest.

- 01 Does ChatGPT surface your school?
- 02 Are programs in your local profiles?
- 03 Do reviews reflect real outcomes?
- 04 Are local partners talking about you?
- 05 Can AI find proof of student success?

Start here.

- ✓ Audit your Google Business Profile
- ✓ Rewrite program pages for specificity
- ✓ Build a review generation strategy
- ✓ Document outcomes and partnerships



Joel Espinoza
Senior Digital Strategist



Let's amplify
your education marketing

Full-service marketing centered on **your best audience.**

