Search Engine Optimization Project

Issued by:
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Introduction and Background

For almost 130 years, Agnes Scott College has been “educating women to think deeply, live honorably and engage the intellectual and social challenges of their times.” Situated on a 100-plus acre campus in Decatur, Georgia, Agnes Scott lies just six miles from downtown Atlanta, a cultural and economic epicenter of activity and opportunity for eager minds of all ages. The college is home to more than 1,040 combined undergraduate and graduate students with over 58 percent students of color. Agnes Scott introduced its groundbreaking undergraduate SUMMIT experience in 2015, which resulted in the college enrolling the two largest first-year undergraduate classes in the college’s history in 2018 and 2019, and is largely responsible for why the college has been ranked the No. 1 most innovative liberal arts college in the country by U.S. News & World Report’s edition of Best Colleges for the past three years. SUMMIT is an academically rigorous four-year curriculum grounded in real-world, hands-on experiences that uniquely emphasize global learning, leadership development and career exploration in order to prepare each student for a lifetime of intellectual, social and professional growth and mobility. Agnes Scott is also ranked No. 2 “Best Undergraduate Teaching,” No. 1 among “Colleges that Promote Social Mobility,” and No. 51 among national liberal arts colleges.

Agnes Scott’s cutting-edge graduate programs launched in 2018 with a focus on interdisciplinary and hands-on graduate studies in a close community, under the tagline of “graduate studies for forward thinkers.” Open to men and women, these flexible graduate programs are tailored to the working professional and founded on building strong communication, data analysis, and leadership skills. Current graduate program offerings include master’s degrees in Data Analysis and Communication, Social Innovation, Technology Leadership and Management, and Writing and Digital Communication. The college also offers graduate certificate degrees in Data Visualization, Evaluation and Assessment Methods, Technology Leadership and Management, and Writing and Digital Communication. In 2021, Agnes Scott plans to announce additional graduate programs centered around the health professions.

In addition to undergraduate and graduate degrees, Agnes Scott offers a competitive Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medical program for high-achieving career changers who want to pursue medical, dental, or veterinary school, but who lack the academic background in the sciences. Open to highly motivated individuals, regardless of gender, with successful undergraduate academic careers, this post-bacc pre-med program offers the rigors of medical school in a supportive environment.

The collegiate Gothic and Victorian red brick-and-stone buildings on the campus have won national awards for design and resulted in Agnes Scott’s recognition for the second-most-beautiful campus in the country by The Princeton Review's Best 361 Colleges (2006). Our campus consists of 30 buildings and an apartment complex, and the college was awarded LEED Gold rating in 2018 from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) in recognition of its sustainability achievements.
**Project Description and Objectives**

Agnes Scott College seeks to develop a more robust search engine optimization (SEO) and organic lead generation strategy to promote our innovative identity, position our undergraduate, graduate, and post-bacc programs more competitively with the most relevant and valuable search terms, and increase organic traffic to our undergraduate, graduate and post-bacc program pages.

The SEO strategy needs to reflect the differences in the enrollment marketing strategies for undergraduate and graduate students. Undergraduate recruitment strategies rely on bringing best-fit prospects to the college whereas graduate recruitment strategies promote specific programs and skills. The launch of our graduate programs necessitates a different enrollment marketing strategy and website user experience. Our investment in digital marketing will be greatly enhanced by the search engine optimization to fully realize qualified leads.

**Project Requirements and Tasks**

In addition to these key objectives, a collaborative partner will:

- Improve the overall search engine ranking position of agnesscott.edu
- Analyze the SEO of our top competitors by population [see below for competitor list by population]
- Increase search engine ranking positions for academic program pages.
- Evaluate website copy for top-level marketing pages that appeals to search engines and prospective students. This includes existing pages for the following sections: About, SUMMIT, Academics, Admission & Aid, Campus Life, Graduate & Extended Programs, and will include additional pages for new programs and marketing.
- Offer recommendation on the best way to incorporate posts for various populations, determining between a central blog on the site vs. blog separated by population
- Ensure that we are using the most effective, up-to-date SEO practices.
- Meta-data review for academic program pages and admission pages
- Provide a strong keyword list by population that can be used to align with other communication platforms, such as social media platforms and display ads, and coincide with our enrollment and academic program goals. Include a keyword blueprint per program/population.
- Provide ongoing management of SEO performance with consulting sessions on SEO strategy, writing, and other tactics.
  - Train marketing team members and website administrators in the fundamentals of SEO, conducting keyword research, and developing best-practice content so they can support and extend the SEO methodology internally.
- Audit and assess SEO technical performance.
  - Develop performance dashboards
  - Provide pre-launch and regular performance reviews of implementation.
- Enhance Google My Business to be more inclusive of graduate and post-baccalaureate program offerings.
Natural and Aspirant Competitors by Population

Undergraduate:
- Georgia State University
- University of Georgia
- Oglethorpe University
- Kennesaw State University
- Mercer University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Mount Holyoke College
- Spelman College
- Howard University
- Georgia Southern University
- Wellesley College
- Rhodes College
- Smith College
- Berry College
- Georgia State University- Perimeter College
- Bryn Mawr College
- Emory University
- Emory University-Oxford
- Hollins University
- Wesleyan College
- The University of The South
- Georgia Gwinnett College
- University Of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

Graduate:
- Brenau
- Georgia State University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- University of Georgia
- Kennesaw State University
- Emory University
- Mercer University
- Meredith College
- Northwestern
- Goucher College
- Simmons University
- Rollins College
Post-Bacc Pre-Med:
- Bryn Mawr
- Columbia
- Georgetown
- Goucher
- Johns Hopkins
- Mills
- Scripps
- University of Colorado at Boulder
- University of Florida

**Key Dates and Milestones**

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFP Issued</td>
<td>April 22, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intent to Respond Due</td>
<td>April 27, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposals Due</td>
<td>May 7, 2021</td>
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<td>Finalists Selected for Interviews</td>
<td>May 21, 2021</td>
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<td>Finalist Interviews Completed</td>
<td>May 31 - June 4, 2021</td>
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<td>RFP Award</td>
<td>June 11, 2021</td>
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<td>Contract Execution &amp; Invoice Submission</td>
<td>June 14 - June 25, 2021</td>
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<td>Project Launch</td>
<td>June 30, 2021</td>
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**Budget**
The College has funds allocated for the project described in this RFP in the amount not to exceed $100,000. The award made as a result of this RFP will not exceed the amount stated herein.

**Contract Term**
We recognize that SEO results won’t happen immediately, and optimizing for search is not a one-time project. We’re looking for a partner who will continue to work with us to empower the Agnes Scott team with the knowledge and resources to continue to internally adapt to the ever-changing landscape of student recruitment and organic search.

**Submission Guidelines**
Firms interested in submitting a proposal should notify the representative identified on the cover page no later than April 27 to ensure timely receipt of any notifications or addenda related to this RFP.
Emailed electronic responses to this RFP will be accepted on or before 8 p.m. on May 7. All response documents should be provided in Adobe PDF format within the subject line.

To be considered, proposals must demonstrate:

- Recent experience with projects of similar scope and scale with a minimum of three higher education institutions.
- A commitment to higher education enrollment marketing and student recruitment thought leadership, research, and innovation.
- An understanding of Agnes Scott with an approach customized to articulate the benefits of our academic programs.
- Integration with enterprise SEO platform(s) and the College’s Google Analytics account.

Proposal Format

Please organize your proposal to include the following in the order presented below.

- Transmittal Letter
- Executive Summary
- Company and Staff Profile
- Project Approach and Methodology
- References and Samples of Work (3)
- Cost
  - Identify all costs to be incurred for performing the tasks necessary to accomplish the Project Objectives, Requirements, and Tasks.
- Appendix

Evaluation Factors

The College will evaluate and rate proposals based on the following factors:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Higher education experience and thought leadership</th>
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<td>Higher education references and relevant past performance</td>
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<td>Responsiveness to the Objectives, Requirements, and Tasks to maximize SEO ranking potential, visibility, and appeal to searchers</td>
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<td>Experience and credentials of staff assigned to the College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
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