



epicosity

Hero-Hub-Hygiene

THE FRAMEWORK THAT BRINGS ORDER TO HIGHER
EDUCATION CONTENT MARKETING CHAOS

We Champion Growth

INTRODUCTION:

FRAMING THE PROBLEM

When everything feels urgent, strategy matters most.

In higher ed marketing, the content calendar never stops.

New requests come in from every direction—**admissions, athletics, alumni relations, academics**—and each one feels urgent. Campaigns are built on the fly, resources are stretched thin and, while the output is constant, the outcomes aren't always clear.

The problem isn't a lack of creativity or effort.

It's a lack of structure.

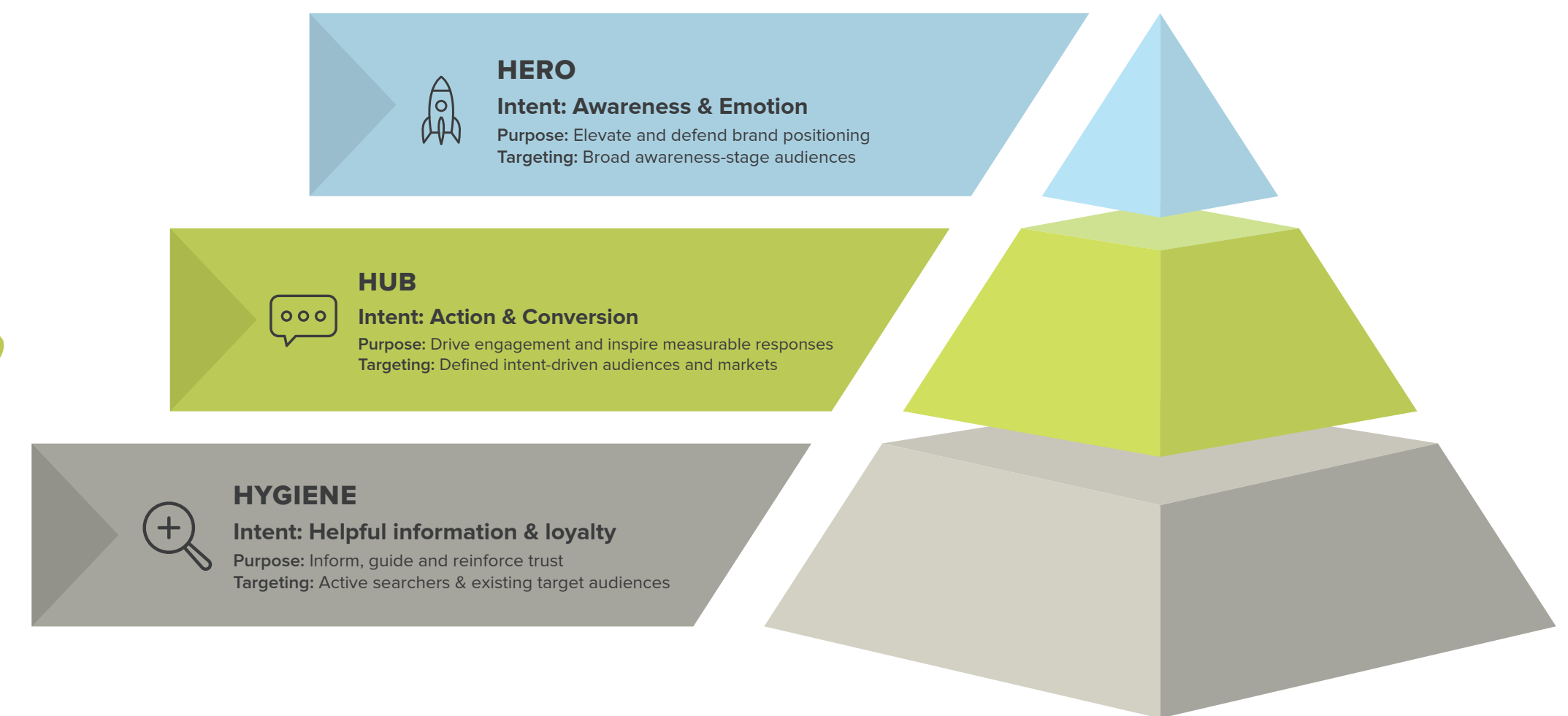
At Epicosity, we've worked with institutions of all sizes and seen this story repeat: great content ideas get lost in the shuffle, major campaigns compete with routine updates and teams struggle to connect their content back to strategic goals.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

That's where **Hero-Hub-Hygiene (HHH)** comes in.

This guide will show you:

- + What the HHH model is and how it works
- + Why it's especially powerful for higher ed marketing
- + Real examples from the field
- + How to start building your own tiered plan
- + The metrics that matter most for each tier



Your Move

PAGE 32

FOLLOW ALONG WITH THE CONTENT CLARITY WORKSHEET
Make this ebook work harder for you. Don't just read—**apply!**

Use the built-in **Content Clarity Worksheet** to see where your content shines and where it could use a boost. Keep an eye out for the next step as you move through each section.

CHAPTER I:

WHAT IS

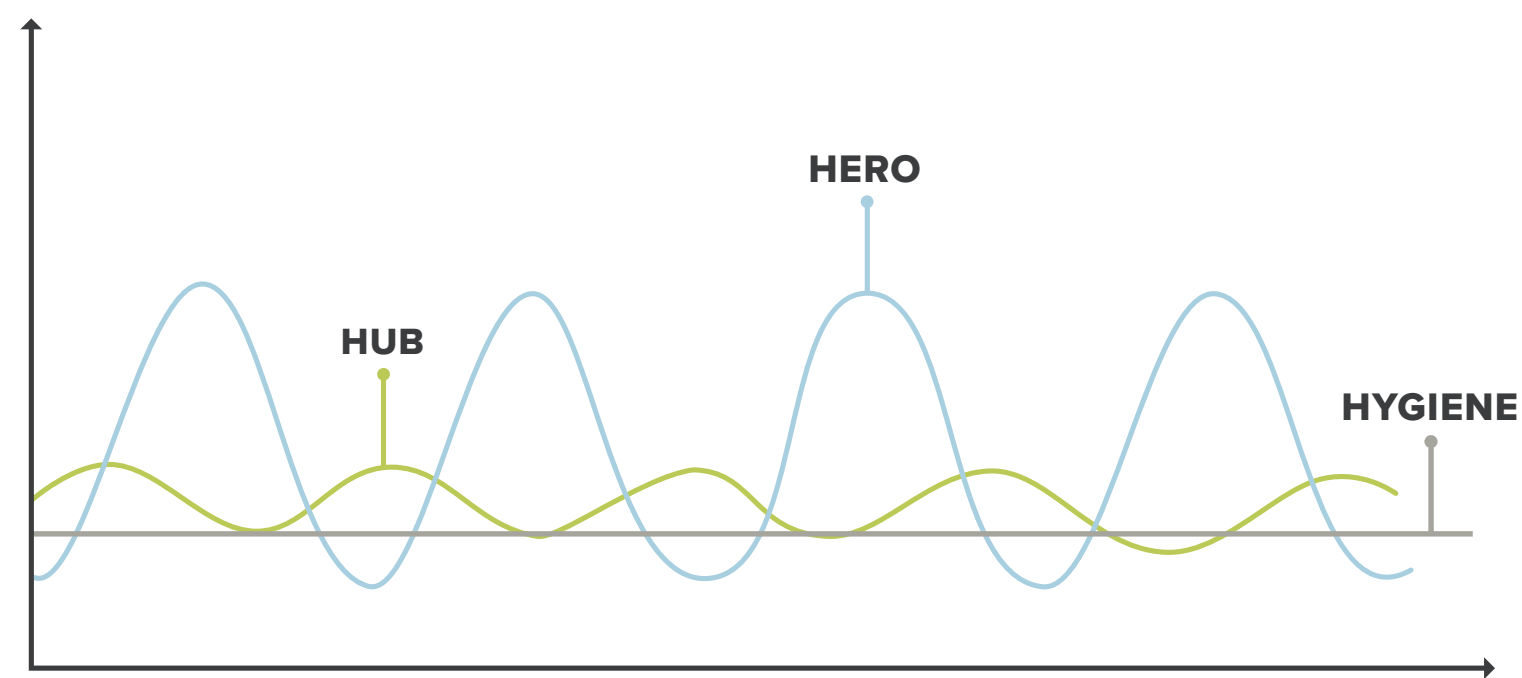
HERO-HUB-HYGIENE?

The Hero-Hub-Hygiene model brings clarity by organizing content into big moments, steady engagement, and always-on support.

What is Hero-Hub-Hygiene?

Originally created by Google for YouTube to understand how creators think strategically about their content, the HHH model has since been adopted across industries as a way to organize and prioritize all types of content.

In higher ed, it helps solve a common problem: **too much, or too little content, with no clear purpose or takeaway.**



Curious about real-world examples?

Find them on page 13.



1.

HERO CONTENT

Big Moments that Define Your Brand

Purpose: Awareness & Emotion

Examples:

- + A cinematic brand anthem video before the fall semester
- + A new brand-awareness campaign that reframes the narrative
- + National media coverage of a groundbreaking initiative

Frequency: Rare—1–3 times per year

Value: Generates top-level awareness, creates emotional connection and positions the institution in a powerful light

2.

HUB CONTENT

Consistent Stories that Nurture Engagement

Purpose: Consideration & Conversion

Examples:

- + Monthly “Student Spotlight” videos
- + Segmented recruitment ads asking students to fill out their application
- + Seasonal Instagram Reels highlighting campus life

Frequency: Regular—monthly or biweekly

Value: Builds familiarity and trust, reinforces brand personality and allows conversion-based CTAs

3.

HYGIENE CONTENT

Always-On Help for Your Audience

Purpose: Information & Loyalty

Examples:

- + Blog posts like “How to Apply for Scholarships at [Your School]”
- + Short explainer videos on the admissions process
- + FAQ pages optimized for search

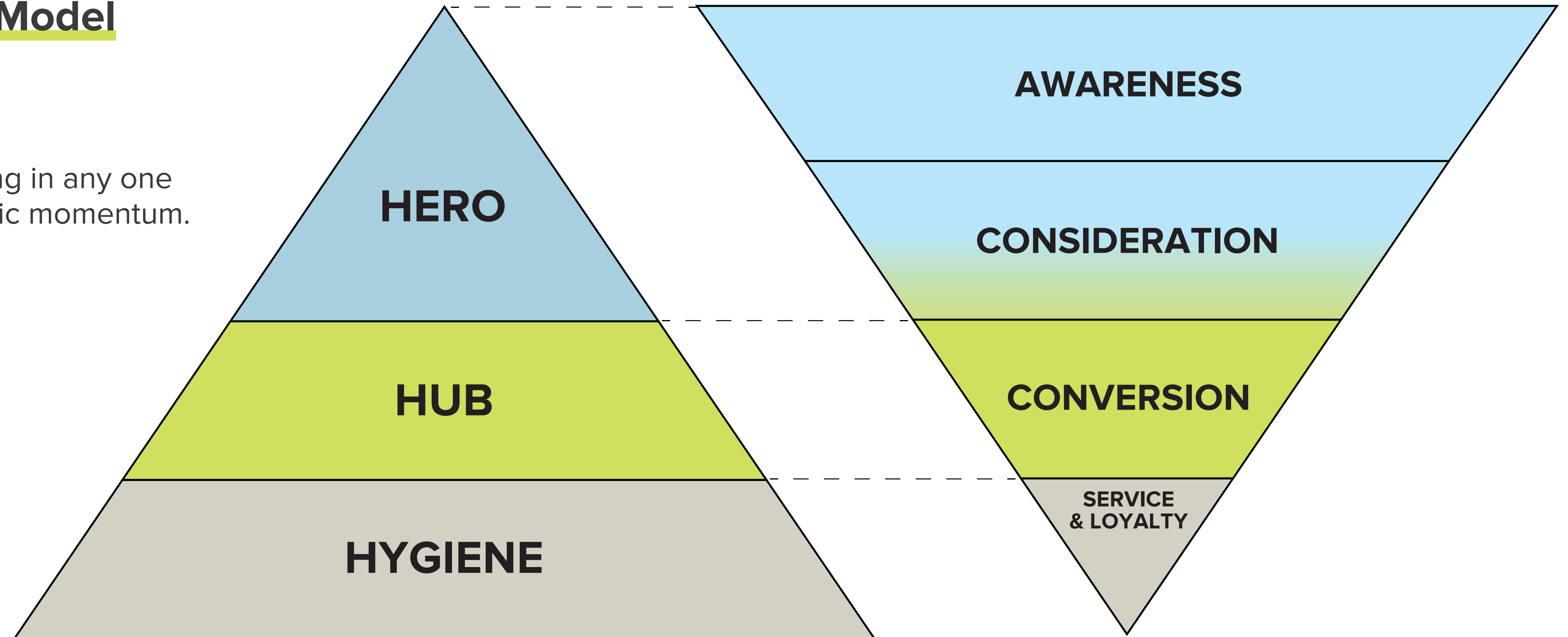
Frequency: Regular—monthly or biweekly

Value: Drives steady organic traffic, supports SEO and reduces friction in the decision-making process.

Visualizing the Model

The key is **balance**.

Under- or over-investing in any one tier risks losing strategic momentum.



Think of Hero-Hub-Hygiene as a content counterpart to the marketing funnel.

Hero builds awareness, Hub deepens consideration, and Hygiene supports decisions—connecting your message to every stage of the student journey.

REFLECT ON YOUR CONTENT

Take a step back and use the Hero-Hub-Hygiene model in the **Content Clarity Worksheet** to map your current content—what's strong, what's missing, and where new opportunities lie.

Spot the gaps, spark ideas, and uncover ways to optimize your next campaign.

CHAPTER II:

WHY HIGHER ED NEEDS HHH

The Hero-Hub-Hygiene model helps higher ed teams move from reactive, fragmented marketing to a clear, connected strategy that aligns every message to the student journey.

Why Higher Ed Needs HHH

Higher education marketing isn't like marketing a retail product or tech platform. It's an entirely different beast. You're not just selling a product—you're **guiding someone through one of the most important, emotional and financially significant decisions of their life.**

And, as your team knows all too well, that decision isn't made lightly.

The journey to **enrollment is long and complex.**

A prospective student might first hear about your school as a high school sophomore, visit your website two years later, attend a campus tour six months after that and finally apply in the fall of their senior year. Along the way, parents, counselors, alumni, coaches and peers influence the decision.

In this environment, most institutions face **three recurring challenges:**

- + **Reactive Content**
- + **Departmental Silos**
- + **Misprioritized Efforts**



The Three Core Challenges

1.

REACTIVE CONTENT

Instead of following a strategic plan, content is often created in response to immediate requests.

For example:

- + Admissions wants a video for an upcoming open house.
- + The college of arts and sciences needs a humorous reel by next week.
- + The alumni office asks for a last-minute newsletter spotlight.

When every piece of content is treated as equally urgent, the overarching strategy suffers.

Effort is scattered, and teams rarely have time to create connected content that is both high-impact and high-visibility to actually move the needle.

2.

DEPARTMENTAL SILOS

Marketing, admissions, academics, student life—each group often works independently, with minimal cross-communication.

For example:

- + Marketing may be crafting an ad campaign targeting high school students.
- + Admissions might be running a separate series of videos aimed at transfer students.
- + Academic departments could be promoting their own events on social channels.

What's wrong with that? Without a shared framework, these efforts rarely connect into a cohesive brand experience. Prospects receive a fragmented story instead of a consistent and engaging brand narrative.

3.

MISPRIORITIZED EFFORTS

Resources—both time and budget—get consumed by projects that may be low-impact.

For example:

- + Spending weeks mired in revisions on a low-priority display ad.
- + Posting daily to a channel that your primary audience barely uses.
- + Pouring design time into annual brochures while your website's admissions pages are outdated.

Meanwhile, opportunities to amplify a major campaign, build a thought leadership platform or optimize search-friendly content go untapped.

How HHH Changes the Equation

The Hero-Hub-Hygiene model offers more than a planning and diagnostic tool—it's a shared language and a strategic filter for every content decision.

It helps higher ed teams:

- + Give content a clear purpose before it's created. Every piece is evaluated through the lens of where it fits in the model and what it's meant to achieve.
- + Cover the entire student journey. Hero moments inspire at the awareness stage, Hub keeps prospects engaged over time, and Hygiene answers the practical questions that remove barriers to enrollment.
- + Build leadership alignment. When leaders understand why a high-production Hero video is worth the investment for institutional awareness, or why Hygiene content deserves ongoing attention to engage current students, it's easier to secure buy-in and resources.

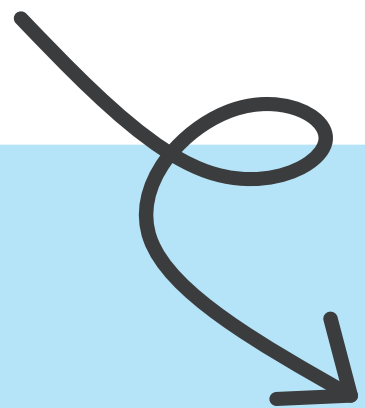
It's Not About More Content—It's About the Right Content

Adopting the HHH framework doesn't mean adding to your workload.

It Means:

- + Knowing when to invest big in high-impact brand storytelling.
- + Maintaining a rhythm of engagement that nurtures your audience.
- + Keeping a reliable foundation of search-friendly, helpful resources.

When you have this balance, every tier supports the others—and your marketing becomes a cohesive system instead of a collection of one-off projects.



Hero moments inspire, Hub keeps prospects engaged, and Hygiene removes barriers to enrollment.

CHAPTER III:

HHH IN ACTION: REAL EXAMPLES

See how the Hero-Hub-Hygiene model comes to life through real higher ed examples that connect big brand moments, steady engagement, and always-on support.

HHH in Action: Real Examples

It's one thing to talk about the Hero-Hub-Hygiene model in theory—it's another to see it in motion. The real magic happens when these tiers work together, creating a connected ecosystem of brand moments, consistent engagement and always-on support.

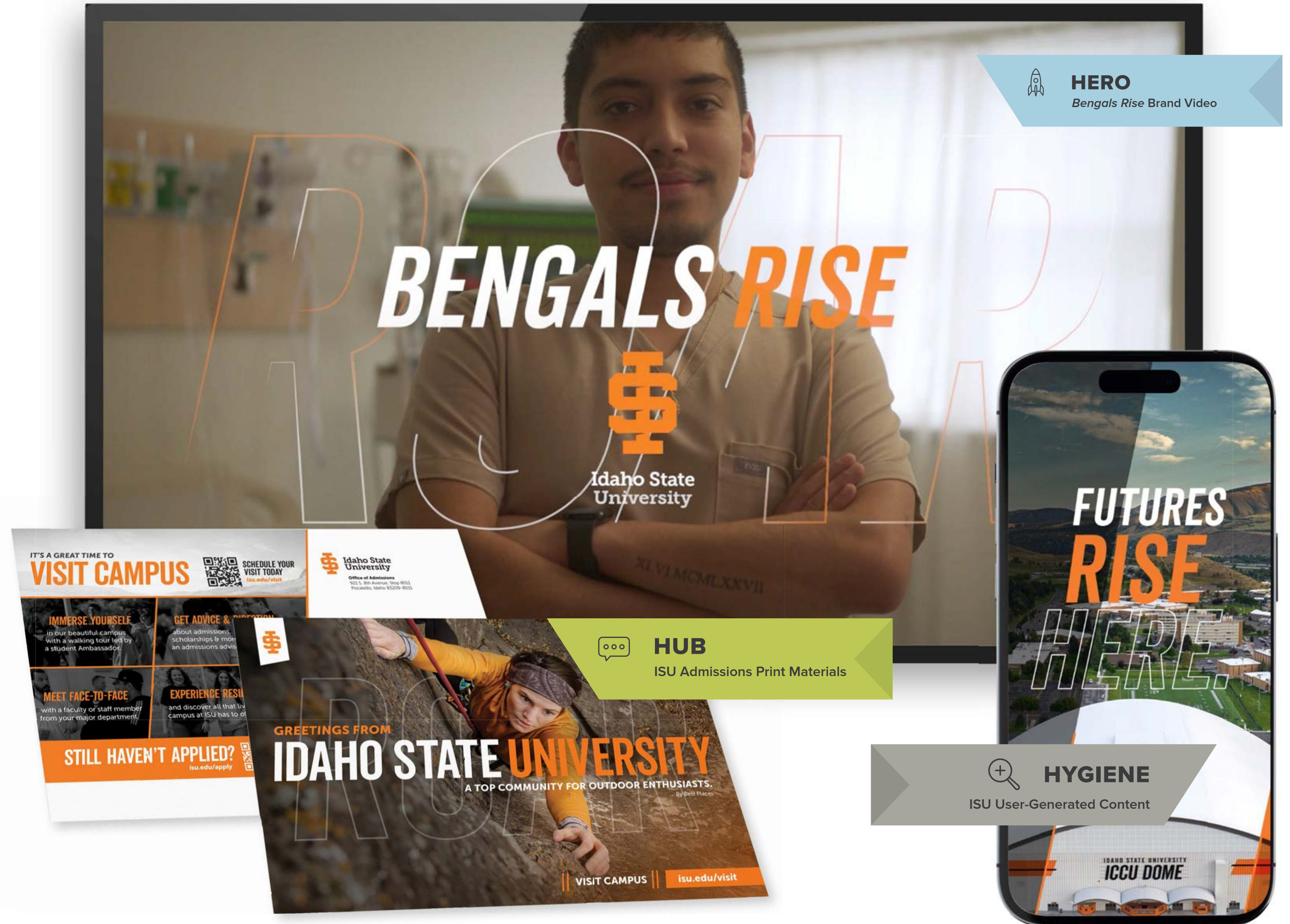
Here's how one institution brings the Hero-Hub-Hygiene model to life through three distinct examples that show the tiers working together in practice.

When executed together, the three tiers form a strategic content ecosystem:

- + **Hero** captures attention and positions the brand.
- + **Hub** nurtures interest with consistent and engaging stories.
- + **Hygiene** supports decision-making and answers questions.

The result? A cohesive journey facilitated by a consistent brand voice and narrative.

The value? An engaging student-first breadcrumb trail all the way to enrollment and retention.



HERO IN ACTION

ISU – Bengals Rise Brand Video

Summary:

ISU's Bengals Rise brand film became a defining statement of identity—capturing the pride and momentum of the ISU community through a cinematic, full-scale on-campus production. Cutdowns, photography, and audio extended its reach across broadcast, OTT, and print.

Why it's HERO:

A campaign built to inspire, not inform. It reached wide audiences, unified ISU's visual identity, and boldly positioned the university in a competitive higher ed landscape.

Context & Sentiment:

The project brought together every medium—film, photography, audio—to deliver a single, emotional idea: ISU isn't just where Bengals learn—it's where they rise.



HUB IN ACTION

ISU – Admissions Print Collateral

Summary:

Developed for regional audiences, ISU’s Admissions collateral connected curiosity to action—driving students to schedule tours, meet advisors, and explore programs online through coordinated print and digital touchpoints.

Why it’s HUB:

HUB content turns awareness into momentum. This series tied consistent creative and messaging across mail and digital, linking each piece to a dedicated landing page for measurable engagement.

Context & Sentiment:

A great example of how rhythm and repetition nurture intent—meeting students in multiple places, over time, with a unified brand voice.



HYGIENE IN ACTION

ISU – Student-Generated Content

Summary:

Partnering with ISU ambassadors, we built a student-led UGC series that gave future Bengals a real look at campus life—authentic, relatable, and rooted in everyday experience.

Why it's HYGIENE:

Always-on storytelling that answers real questions and builds trust. These social stories made the brand human and approachable through the voices of real students.

Context & Sentiment:

This effort turned students into advocates, creating a continuous flow of peer-driven content that lives where audiences already are.



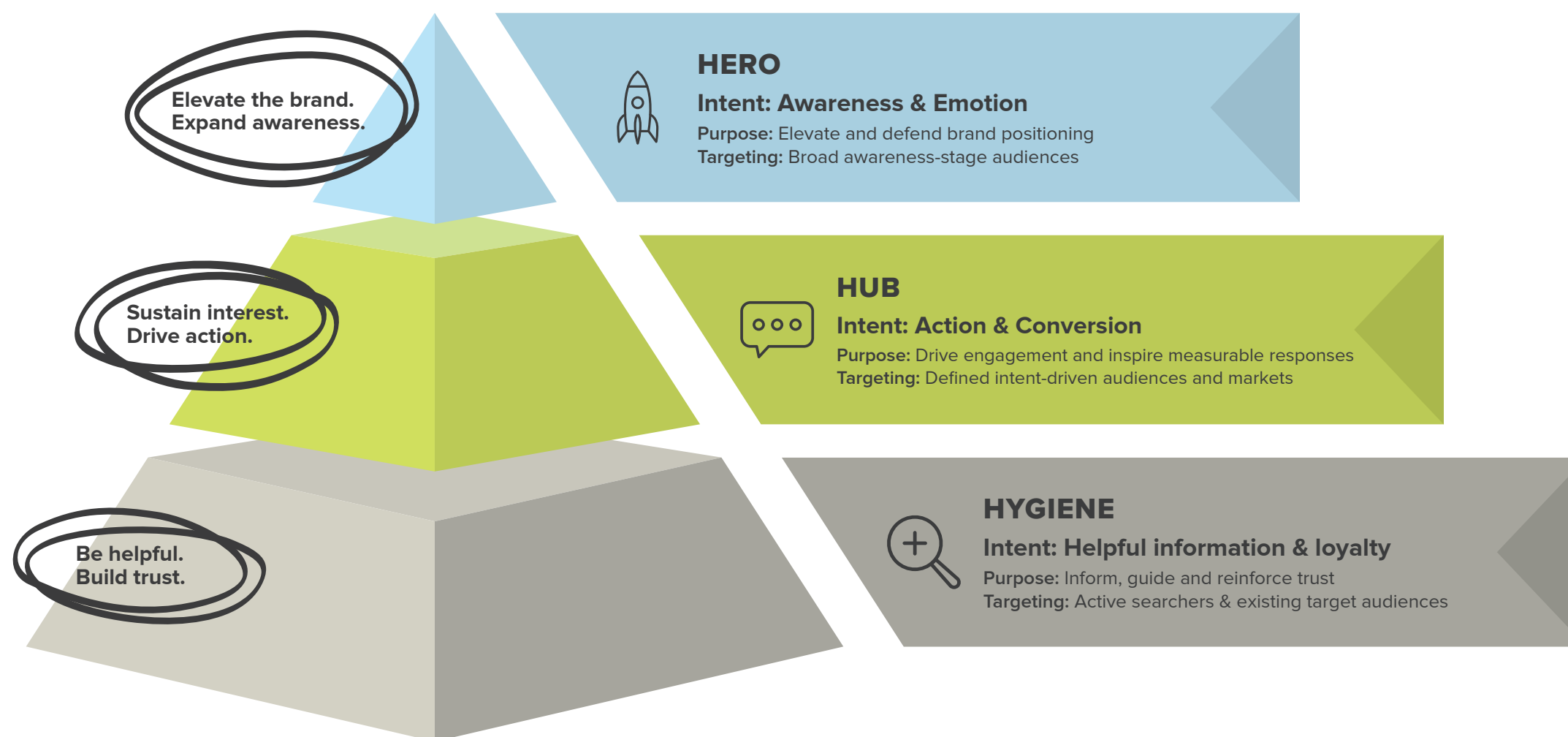
CHAPTER IV:

HOW TO BUILD YOUR TIERED PLAN

Turn your content chaos into clarity with a step-by-step plan for building, balancing, and managing your Hero-Hub-Hygiene strategy.

How to Build Your Tiered Plan

Adopting the Hero-Hub-Hygiene model doesn't happen by accident—it's an intentional shift from content chaos to content clarity. The good news? You don't have to overhaul everything overnight. With a structured approach, you can start building a tiered plan in as little as a few weeks.



TRY FOR YOURSELF

Put this new knowledge to work using the **Content Clarity Worksheet** included in this ebook.

Break down your content and see where it stands across Hero, Hub, and Hygiene.

Step 1: Audit What You Already Have

Before you plan ahead, take a moment to see where you stand. Use the Content Clarity Worksheet on page 32 to assess your current content mix.

Now's your time to get more detailed. Gather the last 6–12 months of content across your key channels—website, social, email, video and print.

- + Sort each piece into Hero, Hub or Hygiene (our attached matrix should help with this)
 - + **Hero:** Big launches, campaigns, high-visibility creative, etc.
 - + **Hub:** Recurring series, thematic social/video content, etc.
 - + **Hygiene:** Informational, evergreen, FAQ content, etc.

HERO	Do we have at least one major, brand-defining campaign or video planned for this year?	1 2 3 4 5
HERO	Are we allocating enough budget/resources to make our Hero moments stand out?	1 2 3 4 5
HERO	Do we have a distribution strategy (paid, organic, PR) for Hero campaigns?	1 2 3 4 5
HERO	Are we measuring brand lift or awareness after Hero campaigns?	1 2 3 4 5
HUB	Do we have at least one ongoing series or recurring content stream (monthly or quarterly)?	1 2 3 4 5
HUB	Is our Hub content mapped to key enrollment cycles or brand themes?	1 2 3 4 5
HUB	Are we repurposing Hub content across multiple channels?	1 2 3 4 5
HUB	Are we tracking engagement and optimizing future Hub pieces based on performance?	1 2 3 4 5

Step 2: Map Content to the Student Journey

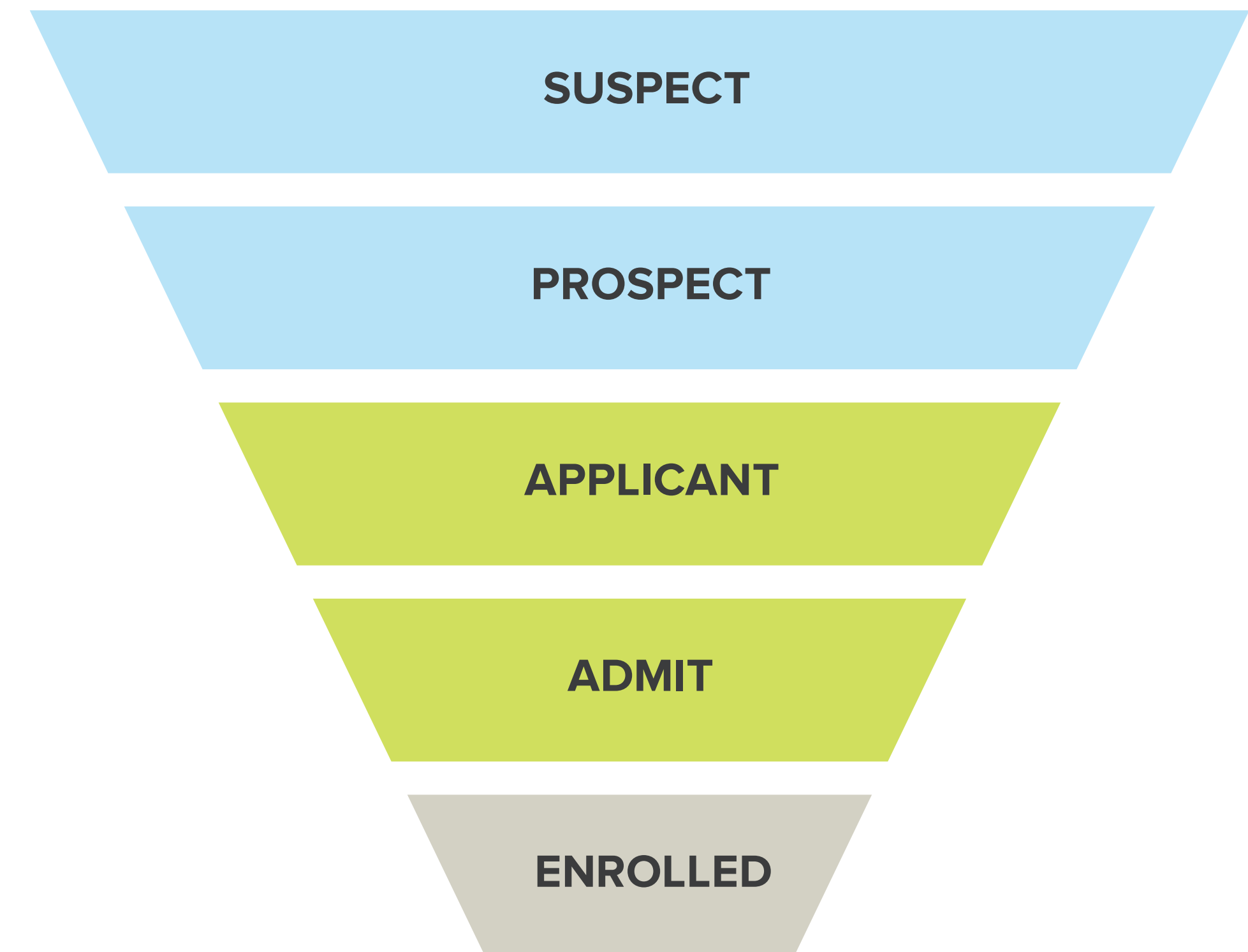
Your audience moves through three core stages:

- + **Awareness** — “I’ve heard of this school.” (Hero plays here.)
- + **Consideration** — “I’m interested in learning more about this school.” (Hub dominates here.)
- + **Decision** — “I have some questions about this school.” (Hygiene shines here.)

Use your audit results to see where you have strong coverage and where you’re missing touchpoints.

Example:

If your audit shows lots of FAQ blog posts (Hygiene) and event recaps (Hub) but no big brand-defining work, you may be losing prospective students early in the funnel before they feel inspired or connected with your school.



Step 3: Set Your Content Cadence

Consistency is critical—especially for Hub and Hygiene content.

- Our Recommended Cadence:
- + **Hero:** 1–3 per year (major campaigns or launches)
 - + **Hub:** 1–2 per month (series, thematic content)
 - + **Hygiene:** Weekly or more (search-optimized and evergreen)

This cadence ensures you’re nurturing prospects regularly without overtaxing your team. This also allows you to forecast production—planning video shoots or requests from around campus can help your strategy move faster and more efficiently in the planning stages. Most importantly, this puts more intention into the content your audience wants and should be seeing from your school.

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 12
HERO									
HUB									
HYGIENE									

Making It Happen

Step 4: Fill Gaps with Purpose

Look at your content map and decide where the biggest opportunities are.

Missing Hero content? Maybe a major video or brand storytelling piece tied to enrollment season is a good use of time/resources.

Weak Hub presence? Launch a monthly Instagram Reel series spotlighting student experiences.

Outdated Hygiene? Refresh and optimize your admissions FAQs, campus maps or how-to guides.

Pro Tip:
Filling gaps doesn't always mean doing more—it means doing better in the areas that matter most.

Step 5: Create an Integrated Content Calendar

Combine all tiers into one shared plan that the whole marketing/admissions team can see.

Your calendar should clearly label each piece as Hero, Hub or Hygiene and note its:

- + Objective (awareness, engagement, conversion)
- + Target audience
- + Owner and deadlines
- + Distribution channels

BEFORE HHH:

A marketing coordinator spends the morning rushing to post about a campus blood drive, edits a last-minute event flyer in the afternoon and uploads an unplanned faculty Q&A video before heading home—none of it tied to an overarching strategy.

REACTIVE. RUSHED.
DISCONNECTED.

Step 6: Assign Ownership & Measure

Assign clear owners for each tier:

- + **Hero:** Creative + leadership collaboration
- + **Hub:** Content/social team
- + **Hygiene:** Web, SEO and admissions staff

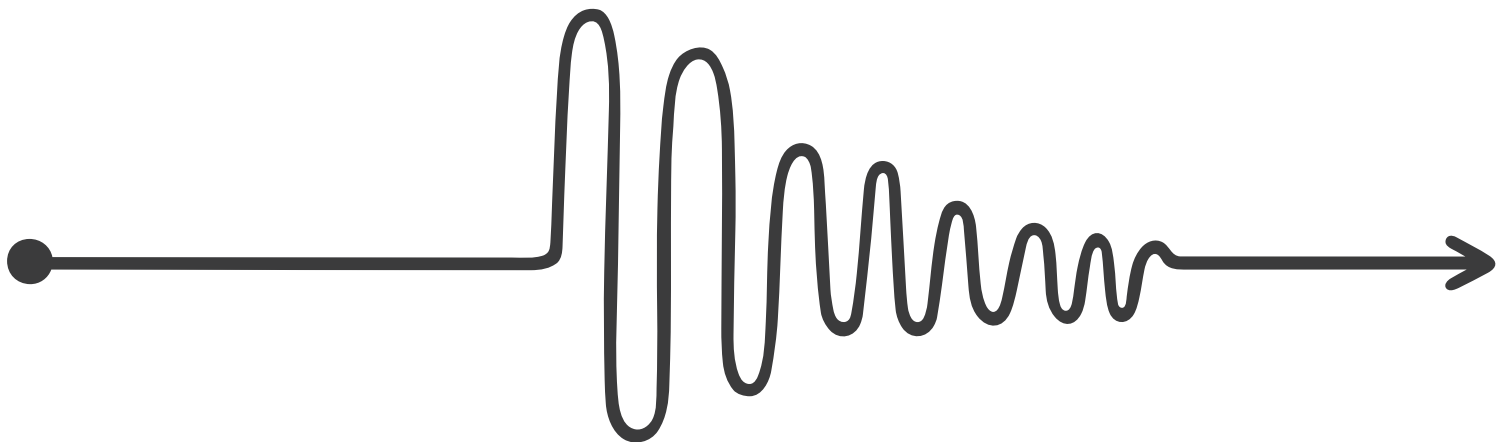
Tie each tier to its metrics from the start. We'll dive into that in the next chapter!

Keep going.

AFTER HHH:

The coordinator spends the morning drafting copy for next month's Hub video series, reviews final cuts of a Hero campaign launching for the year and schedules a set of evergreen Hygiene posts that will answer admissions questions year-round. Each task is strategic. Each piece fits into the plan.

STRUCTURED.
STRATEGIC. CLEAR.



CHAPTER V:

METRICS THAT MATTER

Turn data into direction. By defining success for each Hero, Hub, and Hygiene tier, you can measure what truly matters—clarity, impact, and growth that drives buy-in and smarter strategy.

When Measurement Misses the Mark

The Problem

One of the most common reasons marketing strategies stall—especially in higher ed—is that results are either measured inconsistently or measured in ways that don’t reflect the goal of the content.

It’s not that the data isn’t there—it’s that we often use the wrong yardstick for the job.

The Solution Shift

In our experience, HHH can help this by defining what success looks like for each tier, you can measure impact with clarity, report results with confidence and secure the buy-in and budget you need to keep building.



The Scenario

Imagine walking into your next leadership meeting and being asked:

“
How’s our content performing?
”

A lot of us would answer it something like:

“
We had 50,000 impressions
last month...
”

....it’s a good number, but it tells them nothing about impact.

But if you can say:

“
Our Hero campaign drove a
35% lift in brand search traffic.
”

“
Our Hub series increased
engagement from admitted
students by 22%.
”

“
Our Hygiene content generated
120 organic leads this quarter.
”

—now you’re not just reporting numbers; you’re telling a story of growth and impact.

Hero: Measuring Reach & Brand Lift

Hero content's job is to be seen, remembered and talked about. It's about scale and impact, not day-to-day clicks.

Core Metrics:

- + **Impressions & Reach:** How many people saw it
- + **Video Views/Completion Rate:** Especially for brand videos
- + **Brand Search Volume:** Are more people searching your institution's name after launch?
- + **Media Pickups:** Any earned press coverage or mentions



Example:

A university runs a Hero campaign video that garners 1.2M impressions, drives a 19% increase in branded Google searches and earns local news coverage. Even if that video didn't produce immediate form fills, its job, creating awareness, was a success.

Hub: Measuring Engagement & Relationship Building

Hub content's role is to keep your audience engaged and interested. It's about nurturing a connection.

Core Metrics:

- + **Engagement Rate:** Likes, comments, shares, saves, etc.
- + **Repeat Visitors:** How many people are coming back for more?
- + **Watch Time:** For video series—are people sticking with it?
- + **Email Engagement:** Click-through rates on recurring emails



Example:

A monthly student spotlight series on Meta shows a 42% higher average watch time compared to other organic social posts, and returning visitor sessions to the admissions site increase by 15% during the campaign period.

Hygiene: Measuring Conversion & Utility

Hygiene content's job is to help people take the next step, often in the decision-making phase.

Core Metrics:

- + **Organic Search Traffic:** Are people finding your content?
- + **Click-Through Rate:** Are they acting on what they read/watch?
- + **Form Fills:** Leads generated directly from the content
- + **Bounce Rate:** Lower rates mean content is relevant and useful



Example:

A blog post on “How to Apply for Scholarships” becomes one of the site’s top organic traffic drivers, with 65% of readers clicking through to the financial aid application page.

CHAPTER VI:

FROM THEORY TO ACTION

Turn the Hero-Hub-Hygiene model into action—start small, build momentum, and create purposeful content that drives real results.



From Insight to Implementation

By now, you've seen how the Hero-Hub-Hygiene model can turn scattered, reactive content into a focused, strategic engine for enrollment growth and brand building.

You've learned:

- + What each tier is and how it works
- + Why higher ed needs this model more than most industries
- + How the tiers connect to the student journey
- + How to measure the right outcomes for each type of content

But the truth is, the real transformation only begins when you put it into practice.



Start Small. Think Big.

You don't have to rebuild your entire marketing plan overnight.

The most successful HHH adoptions start with a few key shifts:



Define one Hero moment for the year ahead—something worth building campaigns around.



Commit to a Hub rhythm that your team can realistically maintain.



Refresh your top three to five Hygiene pieces to align with what prospective students are searching for right now.

These first steps create quick wins, build momentum, and demonstrate value internally—making it easier to scale the model over time.



Create Connection and Consistency

Build Your Cross-Department Language

When everyone on campus understands what HHH means, conversations change.

How it sounds in action:

- + Instead of “Can you post about our event?” it becomes “Should this live as Hub or Hygiene?”
- + Instead of scrambling for content, your team looks ahead to the next planned Hero moment.
- + Leadership starts asking, “What tier does this fall under, and how will we measure success?”

Think Like a Publisher

The most effective higher ed marketers don’t just react—they curate a steady flow of content that speaks to different audience needs at different times. The HHH model is your publishing calendar at the strategic level.

Here’s how it works:

- + Hero content builds anticipation.
- + Hub content keeps the conversation going.
- + Hygiene content quietly converts in the background.


Your Next Steps

- + Share this guide with your marketing, admissions and leadership teams.
- + Audit your current content to see your tier distribution with the Content Clarity Worksheet.
- + Identify gaps and choose one quick win per tier to implement in the next 90 days.
- + Set your metrics now so you can prove ROI later.

Partner With Experts Who’ve Done It Before

Implementing HHH in higher ed isn’t just about theory—it’s about experience. At Epicosity, we’ve helped colleges and universities nationwide structure their content strategies to drive both brand growth and enrollment.

From award-winning Hero campaigns to SEO-driven Hygiene strategies, we know how to make each tier deliver results—and how to integrate them so they work together.



Your Move

LET’S TAKE YOUR CONTENT FROM SCATTERED TO STRATEGIC.

◀ Book your **free** content strategy consult today.

YOUR MOVE:

CONTENT CLARITY WORKSHEET

The Content Clarity Worksheet helps higher ed marketers use the Hero-Hub-Hygiene framework to audit, align, and organize content into a clear, strategic plan.



CONTENT CLARITY WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to evaluate your institution’s content marketing maturity across strategy, execution, and measurement. Reflect honestly, identify strengths, and pinpoint areas for improvement. **Rate your organization on each question from 1 to 5.**



1

Not Started

2

Planning Stage

3

In Progress

4

Well Established

5

Optimized & Refined

HERO

Do we have at least one major, brand-defining campaign or video planned for this year?

12345

HERO

Are we allocating enough budget/resources to make our Hero moments stand out?

12345

HERO

Do we have a distribution strategy (paid, organic, PR) for Hero campaigns?

12345

HERO

Are we measuring brand lift or awareness after Hero campaigns?

12345

HUB

Do we have at least one ongoing series or recurring content stream (monthly or quarterly)?

12345

HUB

Is our Hub content mapped to key enrollment cycles or brand themes?

12345

HUB

Are we repurposing Hub content across multiple channels?

12345

HUB

Are we tracking engagement and optimizing future Hub pieces based on performance?

12345

HYGIENE

Are our top 10 admissions and financial aid questions answered with SEO-friendly content?

12345

HYGIENE

Do we refresh Hygiene content at least quarterly?

12345

HYGIENE

Are we monitoring performance and conversion rates for Hygiene content?

12345

HYGIENE

Do we identify and fill content gaps for each stage of the student journey?

12345

CROSS-TIER

Do we maintain a single shared content calendar across departments?

12345

CROSS-TIER

Are marketing, admissions, and academics aligned on messaging?

12345

CROSS-TIER

Do we balance investment across Hero, Hub, and Hygiene?

12345

CROSS-TIER

Do we review performance data quarterly and adjust strategy?

12345



Content Maturity Levels

LEVEL	TOTAL POINTS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Novice	16–30	Start with a content audit. Plan one Hero campaign and refresh top FAQ pages for search.
Beginner	31–50	Build a shared content calendar. Launch a recurring Hub series tied to enrollment.
Mature	51–65	Add paid promotion to Hero content. Expand Hub reach and review KPIs quarterly.
Advanced	66–80	Use automation and personalization. Test interactive content and refine distribution.



At Epicosity, we believe higher education marketing should be braver, more strategic and more human.

We partner with colleges and universities across the country to uncover their most compelling stories and bring them to life in ways that inspire action.

We don't just create content—we create clarity. Every campaign, every video, every piece of copy is rooted in a strategic framework that's designed to connect with your audience at the right moment in their journey.

From cinematic Hero campaigns that redefine how your brand is perceived, to steady Hub storytelling that builds long-term affinity, to always-on Hygiene content that answers the questions prospective students are actually asking—we build systems that work together to drive measurable results.

Our expertise includes:

- + Brand development and positioning
- + Integrated campaign strategy and execution.
- + Paid media planning and optimization
- + Video production and storytelling
- + SEO and content marketing
- + Paid media planning and optimization
- + Enrollment marketing strategies tailored to higher ed

The higher ed landscape is competitive. Student expectations are evolving. And the marketing channels available to reach them are more complex than ever. That's why we focus on delivering clear, strategic solutions that not only look great—but work hard for your institution.

If you're ready to take your content strategy from scattered to strategic, let's talk. We'll bring the vision, the plan and the execution to make it happen.



Let's build something brave together.
epicosity.com

We Champion Growth