What it would mean to win this award:

The higher education industry is largely skeptical of digital marketing, but over the years, KATANA has become a resource to many institutions for guidance on digital marketing strategy. University College at Azusa Pacific University (now Los Angeles Pacific University) is a client we've worked with for over two years. Their goal was to generate quality leads that could become enrollments to their online degree programs, and to smoothly transition into their new name, LAPU. When UC APU introduced themselves to KATANA, they had a number of challenges that led to staggering enrollment and application growth. We immediately revised their campaign, and discarded the non-performing tactics. KATANA also convinced UC APU to shift investments away from affiliate marketing, and funnel them into a detailed paid search architecture, tailored to their goals. The success of this client is critical within the higher education industry, as we were able to effectively showcase that with a **smart approach, the right technological tools and strategic implementation,** paid search can bring **exponential results** to campaigns *within any industry*. Recognition for our success with UC APU would exemplify to thousands of higher education institutions, the transformational results digital marketing can generate for enrollment goals.

Objective(s): 25% year-over-year enrollment growth

Total Budget:

Q1 2017 Paid Search budget: $268,796

compared to

Q1 2018 Paid Search budget: $369,289

Target audience & strategy:

UC APU's target demographic consists of online adult learners who desire a Christian-oriented education. Prior to KATANA, they focused on top-of-funnel initiatives including impressions, clicks and leads. Additionally, they invested almost 80% of their budget into affiliate marketing. This seemed to be effective for a brief period of time, as their CPLs were low and they gained an acceptable amount of leads. However, these leads were of poor quality and did not deliver the applications and enrollments needed to reach the university's goals.

KATANA performed a full digital audit of their account and implemented a paid search plan that would constitute 81% of their marketing efforts. This new plan would instead have a lead-to-application measurement metric which would better gauge quality of leads on a continuous basis using our Lead Value Scorer (explained in next section). Those insights were

then used to apply better optimizations in paid search campaigns. We also shifted their reporting and tracking to more lower funnel metrics, including completed applications and enrollments. Our process was three-tiered:

- Construct a business plan outlining properly aligned KPIs (completed applications and enrollments) that fit within the **higher education framework**
- Analysis of current student demographic data and higher indexing attributes to craft proper **messaging** for effective and engaging ad copy within search advertisements, website and landing page assets
- Continuous optimization and **adjustments of media models** to refresh media plans to reflect search behavior, personas and activity to the target audience

Implementation & creativity:

For this campaign, we used our own in-house developed tools in tandem with Google and Bing tools to scale UC APU's efforts. KATANA's proprietary Lead Value Scorer and CRM integrations were used to generate high quality leads. The Lead Value Scorer is a predictive algorithm that can identify if any given lead in a digital media campaign will convert **at the time of generation.** It then feeds this information back into real-time optimization algorithms within campaign platforms. By utilizing this approach, KATANA was able to make more insightful decisions about which audiences were most profitable for UC APU, this resulted in more qualified leads and higher application volume. We also maintained quality leads by mapping natural search queries by 'hierarchy of intent' levels within the campaign's ad groups. This allowed us to refresh target CPLs based on lead value to generate qualified applications from non-branded keyword targeting. Tedious tasks were automated with Google's suite of Scripts, including search query duplication, position based models and time of day/day of week. This carved out ample time for strategic optimizations and creative messaging.

KATANA exported all of of UC APU's CRM data and imported into our proprietary data management platform, then manually performed optimizations upon import. Our team built microsites with a lead form, integrated them into our Lead Management System (LMS), and sent traffic to them. When building the microsites, we wanted the user experience to align with search behavior. For example, we built areas of study, degree level, and military specific landing pages for users searching those respective keywords. The intention in mind was to give the user basic information, but convert them to a lead so that UC APU enrollment team would connect with them via phone or email to have a substantial conversation. For each instance: an individual filled out the form from our LMS, this was sent to the client's CRM, so they received the leads in real-time.

Results & evaluation:

- 9.41% increase in lead production

- 31.31% decrease in overall investment levels
- 32.64% improvement in Cost-Per-Application
- 34% improvement in lead to application success rates (qualified leads)
- 47% reduction / improvement in cost per student application
- 27% increase in application volume
- 33% reduction in investment levels

Why KATANA should win for this campaign:

KATANA went beyond the basic paid search tools to scale UC APU. We didn't just conduct a search campaign—we reoriented a brand for success. UC APU had a number of challenges: ineffective digital marketing plan, severely underperforming business goals, and a major rebranding initiative within an 18-month period that would result in loss of brand recognition in the marketing place.

With the right technological tools and strategic roadmap, we were able to deliver their enrollment goals and successfully rebrand them to a new name. KATANA acted as the media specialists *and* strategic business partners by assessing how success could be achieved bottom-up, from the campaign level to the large-scale business growth level. This campaign wasn't just about increasing enrollments—it was also about building lifetime student value. KATANA's team of out-of-the-box thinkers and strategic planners used technology to bridge the gaps in performance and data within UC APU's campaign, and it yielded impactful, long-lasting results, which is why they continue their partnership with us today.