



Voice Search Q4 2020 US Higher Ed & Jobs Industry Data

Summary for Marketing Professionals

SUMMARY

This report illustrates how each smart speaker device (Google Home with Google Assistant, Amazon Echo with Alexa and Apple HomePod with Siri) measure up when asked specific questions about the **Higher Education & Jobs** industry. **Over 600 questions** were programmatically asked to the devices, covering multiple categories including University, Job Specifications, Online Education, Degree Programs and School Evaluation. Examples include:

- “Alexa, where is Duke university?”
- “Hey Google, what are the best medical schools?”
- “Hey Siri, what is an internship?”

How does your brand “sound” to your audience? Similar to SEO 20 years ago, today’s voice experiences pose a **threat to brand safety** as the devices are frequently delivering many incorrect answers or no answer at all – aka “*Sorry, I don’t know that...*” The short-term opportunity is to **own your brand**. Higher Education & Jobs brands need to provide the “right” answer to the questions their customers are asking. Structuring your content to deliver answers to critical questions posed in voice search could put you ahead of the competitive curve.

The long-term play is in capturing the non-branded voice search queries that are also happening earlier in the buyer journey. Consider a hot topic like **Data Analytics Degree**. The brand that provides the answer to those early-stage queries will gain topical authority and competitive advantage.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Alexa answers general questions and is moving away from “I don’t know that.” responses.

- Alexa provided an answer 82% of the time, usually for best lists (“*Best colleges in the US?*”) and top-of-the-funnel general interest questions (“*Best part time jobs?*”).
- Alexa will occasionally misinterpret the question, resulting in an irrelevant answer. When asked “*Tyson jobs?*”, Alexa responded with “*Mike Tyson is a boxer.*”
- When asked about branded jobs, (especially queries with acronyms) Alexa answers are maturing. For example, when asked “*What’s the best MBA program?*”, Alexa answered “*Here’s something I found on reference.com, the Master of Business Administration...*” when it previously answered “*Sorry, I don’t know that.*”

Google Assistant provides more relevant results and is better at answering questions all the way through the buyer journey.

- Google provides accurate answers for general interest questions and provides quality answers for middle-funnel questions.

- For example, when asked “**What is Harvard tuition?**”, Google answers “*Tuition for Harvard University was \$51,925 for the 2019 to 2020 academic year.*”
- Google is also much better at citing their sources. For example, when asked “**How long is law school?**”, Google answers “*On the website masterportal.com, they say a JD program involves three years of study for full time law students. Four years for part time students.*”

Apple Siri on the HomePod provides less relevant results than other voice devices.

- Siri moved past not having an answer or responding “*I can’t help with that*” to providing a response 99% of the time.
- Of the questions answered, Siri often misinterpreted queries, resulting in incorrect answers.
- One example of this was when asked “**Best computer science schools?**” Siri responded with “*All truly intelligent assistants prefer Macintosh.*”

BRAND PERFORMANCE

Higher Education & Jobs brands that have structured their content to deliver accurate answers to questions in voice search are leading the pack.

- For top of the funnel, **non-branded** questions, three brands (schools) stood out as having better voice performance. Below are the numbers of answers that each brand provided:
 - Southern New Hampshire University – 15 Questions
 - National University – 7 Questions
 - Northeastern – 4 Questions
- For middle to bottom of the funnel, **branded** questions, reference sites stood out as having answers, but those answers may **not always be accurate**.
 - Wikipedia – 25 Questions
 - PrepScholar – 11 Questions
 - CollegeSimply – Questions

THE OPPORTUNITY & ACTION FOR BRANDS

Today, consumers are no longer constrained by screens and keyboards. Access to a world of information is now controlled simply by our voice. Tremendous **white space opportunities** exist today across the industry. Unlike desktop search, **there’s only one answer in voice search**, and this first mover opportunity may not exist again for quite some time.

Don’t miss the boat - WPP’s Voice Practice can help you provide relevant, accurate answers to the questions your customers are asking the voice assistants. All of this is done at Enterprise scale.

Contact us today for a consultation: contact@globalstrategies.com

