



Undergraduate Marketing and Enrollment Trends

2016 E-Recruiting Practices Report for Four-Year Colleges and Two-Year Institutions

Includes “Opportunity Gaps” Between Campus Practices and Prospective Student Expectations

What are the most popular email, website, social media, and cell phone recruiting practices for undergraduate student recruitment and marketing? To rank these and other areas of e-recruiting, Ruffalo Noel Levitz conducted a web-based poll of college enrollment and admissions officers across the United States in July 2016. All findings appear separately in the Appendix for four-year and two-year institutions, public and private.

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OPPORTUNITY GAPS with prospective student expectations

E-Expectations
 Look inside for this symbol for “opportunity gaps” between prospective student expectations and campus practices, based on a parallel April 2016 study of prospective, college-bound high school seniors. The student study will be available in fall 2016 at www.RuffaloNL.com/E-ExpectationsSeries.

10 most popular e-recruiting practices

Highlighted below are the 10 practices that respondents reported using most frequently among 27 e-recruiting practices that were measured, with the percentage of users shown in parentheses. For complete rankings of all 27 practices, please see the Appendix.

Popularity	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
1.	Email communication with prospective students (100.0%)	Email communication with prospective students (100.0%)	Email communication with prospective students (91.7%)
2.	Online net price calculator (92.9%)	Recruiting pages on website (89.8%)	Recruiting pages on website (83.3%)
3.	Recruiting pages on website (91.4%)	Online net price calculator (89.8%)	Analytics resources such as Google Analytics (79.2%)
4.	Student searches via email (82.1%)	Analytics resources such as Google Analytics (83.1%)	Online net price calculator (58.3%)
5.	Analytics resources such as Google Analytics (80.7%)	Content Management System (CMS) to update or edit website content (79.7%)	Content Management System (CMS) to update or edit website content (54.2%)
6.	Website optimized for mobile browsers (80.0%)	Website optimized for mobile browsers (76.3%)	Website optimized for mobile browsers (54.2%)
7.	Content Management System (CMS) to update or edit website content (77.1%)	Student searches via email (64.4%)	Videos embedded on campus website (54.2%)
8.	Videos embedded on campus website (77.1%)	Pay-per-click ads on social media sites (64.4%)	Pay-per-click ads on social media sites (50.0%)
9.	Listings on college planning websites/online directories (70.0%)	Online display advertising (62.7%)	Online display advertising (50.0%)
10.	Special landing pages for email campaigns (68.6%)	Special landing pages for email campaigns (62.7%)	Special landing pages for email campaigns (45.8%)

Blue = At least three-quarters of respondents within the sector reported using the practice.
% = Proportions of users.

Highlights from these rankings: Across the three sectors, email, online recruiting pages, and “analytics resources such as Google Analytics” were the most popular practices. In addition, more than three-quarters of four-year institution respondents—both private and public—reported using online net price calculators, Content Management Systems, and mobile-responsive websites, and the vast majority of four-year private institution respondents also reported using “student searches via email” and “videos embedded on campus website.” For complete findings, please see the Appendix.

OPPORTUNITY GAP: College planning websites

E-Expectations

85% of high school seniors and 90% of high school juniors say they find reliable information on college planning sites.

Who is NOT using college planning websites?

30% of four-year private institutions
37% of four-year public institutions
62% of two-year public institutions

Five most popular social media platforms

Popularity	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
1.	Facebook (98.6%)	Facebook (96.6%)	Facebook (100.0%)
2.	Twitter (90.0%)	Twitter (94.9%)	Twitter (91.7%)
3.	Instagram (86.4%)	Instagram (78.0%)	YouTube (70.8%)
4.	YouTube (77.1%)	YouTube (71.2%)	Instagram (66.7%)
5.	Snapchat (39.3%)	Snapchat (45.8%)	LinkedIn (33.3%)

TM

Blue = At least three-quarters of respondents within the sector reported using this platform.
% = Proportions of users.

Highlights from these rankings: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube led the way across sectors among 16 social media platforms that poll respondents reported using. Snapchat was fifth for four-year institutions and LinkedIn was fifth for two-year public institutions. See complete findings in the Appendix.

OPPORTUNITY GAP: YouTube

E-Expectations

77% of high school seniors and 76% of high school juniors use YouTube every week.

Who is NOT using YouTube?

**23% of four-year private institutions
29% of four-year public institutions
29% of two-year public institutions**

10 most popular types of information on mobile websites

Highlighted below are the top 10 of 25 types of information that respondents reported using most frequently on the **primary recruiting page** of their mobile websites. For similar rankings of information provided on a non-mobile website’s primary recruiting page, and for complete findings, please see the Appendix.

Popularity	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
1.	Campus visit details (95.6%)	List of academic programs/majors (94.1%)	List of academic programs/majors (100.0%)
2.	Enrollment/admissions information (93.8%)	Campus visit details (94.1%)	Enrollment/admissions information (100.0%)
3.	Financial aid/scholarships (92.9%)	Financial aid/scholarships (92.2%)	Financial aid/scholarships (94.7%)
4.	List of academic programs/majors (91.2%)	Links to social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) (92.2%)	Applications/application process (89.5%)
5.	Applications/application process (91.2%)	Applications/application process (90.2%)	Cost (84.2%)
6.	Links to social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) (87.6%)	Enrollment/admissions information (90.2%)	Academic calendar (84.2%)
7.	Admissions event RSVP opportunities (85.0%)	Cost (84.3%)	Links to social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) (78.9%)
8.	Cost (83.2%)	Campus map/Directions to the school location (84.3%)	Campus visit details (73.7%)
9.	Campus map/Directions to the school location (79.6%)	Student life information (82.4%)	Campus map/Directions to the school location (73.7%)
10.	Student life information (75.2%)	Admissions event RSVP opportunities (80.4%)	Descriptions of academic programs/majors (73.7%)

Blue = At least three-quarters of respondents within the sector reported using this type of information.

% = Proportions of users.

TM

Highlights from these rankings: Across sectors, 9 of every 10 institutions provided lists of academic majors/programs and information about enrollment, financial aid, and the application process on their mobile website’s primary recruiting page. Campus visit details and links to social media were also highly rated, especially among respondents from four-year institutions.

OPPORTUNITY GAP: Outcomes messages
Based on the complete rankings in the Appendix (not shown above)

<p><i>E-Expectations</i></p> <p>63% of high school seniors and 61% of high school juniors want to see job placement stats on college websites.</p>	<p><i>Who is NOT providing outcomes messages?</i></p> <p>33% of four-year private institutions 51% of four-year public institutions 84% of two-year public institutions</p>
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Note: Similar proportions of respondents reported NOT providing outcomes messages on both mobile and non-mobile websites’ primary webpages for recruitment. For details, see Appendix page 19.

Mass text messaging used by less than half of campuses

Mass text messaging? i.e., to a large group (Yes/No)	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	40.0%	40.7%	33.3%

TM

Less than half of respondents reported sending mass text messages to large groups of prospective students. Notice the gap with prospective students' expectations, below.

Most campuses ask permission before sending mass texts

Request permission to send mass text messages (Yes/No)	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions*
Yes	85.1%	73.3%	N/A

TM

Among respondents who reported using mass text messaging, most indicated they specifically request permission to send mass text messages before they send them.

OPPORTUNITY GAP: Text messaging	
<p><i>E-Expectations</i></p> <p><i>74% of high school seniors and 71% of high school juniors are willing to allow a college to text them.</i></p>	<p><i>Who is NOT sending mass texts?</i></p> <p><i>60% of four-year private institutions</i></p> <p><i>59% of four-year public institutions</i></p> <p><i>67% of two-year public institutions</i></p>

* There were not enough respondents from two-year public institutions to identify statistically significant benchmarks.

Online ads used occasionally by most respondents

Level of use of paid interactive marketing/online advertising	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Occasional/just beginning	56.1%	66.7%	79.2%
A major part of our recruitment	26.6%	21.1%	16.7%
None (not using it at all)	17.3%	12.3%	4.2%

TM

Across sectors, most respondents were in the early stages of using paid online advertisements.

Social media sites favored for PPC advertising

Types of pay-per-click ads	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Pay-per-click ads on social media sites	60.7%	64.4%	50.0%
Pay-per-click ads on search sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo	48.6%	49.2%	37.5%

TM

Pay-per-click ads were more popular on social media sites vs. search sites.

OPPORTUNITY GAP: Paid ads	
<p><i>E-Expectations</i></p> <p><i>47% of high school juniors and 39% of seniors have clicked on a paid ad for a college or university.</i></p>	<p><i>Who is NOT using paid ads as a “major part” of their recruitment?</i></p> <p><i>73% of four-year private institutions</i></p> <p><i>79% of four-year public institutions</i></p> <p><i>83% of two-year public institutions</i></p>

Cell phones provided to admissions counselors

Provide cell/mobile phones for admissions counselors (Yes/No)	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	48.6%	32.8%	16.7%

TM

Most respondents across sectors do not provide their admissions counselors with cell/mobile phones. However, it is worth noting that almost half of four-year private institutions do so, while less than one-third of four-year public institutions do so.

How counselors with college-provided cell phones use them

Use of college-provided cell/mobile phones	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions*
When traveling, counselors contact prospective students	88.2%	68.4%	N/A
Counselors send and receive text messages from prospective students	79.4%	57.9%	N/A
Counselors promote their cell phone numbers to prospective students, guidance counselors, parents, etc.	64.7%	57.9%	N/A
Counselors use office-provided phones for social media	52.9%	42.1%	N/A

TM

Admissions counselors use college-provided phones to in a variety of ways.

OPPORTUNITY GAP: Text messaging by counselors

<p><i>E-Expectations</i></p> <p><i>38% of high school seniors and 35% of juniors say that receiving text messages from an admissions counselor is valuable.</i></p>	<p><i>Whose admissions counselors are NOT texting prospective students?</i></p> <p><i>21% of four-year private institutions</i></p> <p><i>42% of four-year public institutions</i></p>
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* There were not enough respondents from two-year public institutions to identify statistically significant benchmarks.

Median of 20 to 25 mass emails sent by four-year institutions

Respondents were asked how many mass emails a typical prospective student receives over the course of an entire recruitment cycle—from the point of sending the first mass email until the last email(s) are sent before classes begin. Responses appear below.

Statistics	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
25th Percentile	15.0	10.0	3.8
Median	25.0	20.2	4.5
75th Percentile	35.0	30.0	6.3

TM

At the median, a typical prospective student now receives 25 mass emails from four-year private institutions, 20 mass emails from four-year public institutions, and four or five mass emails from two-year public institutions.

Web budgeting: Half of respondents spend less than \$40K

Budget level	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions*
\$0 - \$5,000	20.4%	21.1%	N/A
\$5,001 - \$40,000	29.6%	31.6%	N/A
\$40,001 - \$80,000	29.6%	15.8%	N/A
> \$80,000	20.4%	31.6%	N/A

TM

Approximately half of respondents from four-year institutions reported spending less than \$40,000 per year to maintain admissions-specific content and services on their institution’s primary website. This figure included the costs of “staffing, vendors, other direct costs, etc.”

OPPORTUNITY GAP: Websites

<p><i>E-Expectations</i></p> <p><i>71% of high school seniors and 69% of high school juniors rate college websites as the top communication channel for learning about a college.</i></p>	<p><i>Who is spending \$5,000 per year or less to maintain their site?</i></p> <p><i>20% of four-year private institutions</i></p> <p><i>20% of four-year public institutions</i></p>
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* There were not enough respondents from two-year public institutions to identify statistically significant benchmarks.

Ruffalo Noel Levitz observations and recommendations: Five ways to use the information in the 2016 E-Recruiting Practices Report

Institutions continue to expand, experiment with, and modify use of technology-based recruitment tools in order to reach, communicate, and do business with prospective students. But as the Ruffalo Noel Levitz annual E-Expectations surveys of prospective students reveal each year, prospective students' use of technology continues to change as well, creating an ongoing challenge for recruitment professionals.

To make best use of the findings from this report to assist in developing an effective set of e-recruitment strategies, the following suggestions are offered:

1. It is helpful first to review the full list of specific e-recruitment practices in the Appendix for your sector (four-year public, four-year private, two-year public) to determine if there are practices widely used by the majority of those institutions that you are NOT using.
 - For example, if your four-year public institution is not using pay-per-click advertising on social media sites, you may be missing an opportunity to reach wider audiences that 64 percent of the respondents from this sector are using.
 - Another example: If your four-year private institution is among the nearly 30 percent where admissions staff are not able to update website content directly using a CRM, you may be offering prospective students less engaging or timely information than your peers.
2. Next, examine your institution's investment in technology-based recruitment tools, compared to peer institutions. For example:
 - If your institution is not one of the nearly half of respondents from four-year private institutions that provide cell phones to their admissions counselors, adopting this practice may offer an edge in communicating with prospective students in a personalized way.
 - Similarly, if your institution's investment in maintaining the website is among the 20 percent spending \$5,000 per year or less, it is likely that your website is not competitive in attracting and engaging students compared to your peers.
3. Where possible, it is worth comparing the usage (or popularity) of these practices with their effectiveness as reported in our *2016 Marketing and Student Recruitment Practices Benchmark Report* available at www.RuffaloNL.com/BenchmarkReports to determine if they should be a priority for your institution.
 - For example, text messaging was rated among the most effective modes of communication with prospective students. Yet, only 40 percent of four-year institutions and only 33 percent of two-year public institutions report using text messages.

Continue next page

4. It is also important to compare these practices to the expectations of prospective students. Throughout this report, “opportunity gaps” have been identified between what institutions are doing and what students have told us in our E-Expectations reports, available at www.RuffaloNL.com/E-ExpectationsSeries. Among the popular sources of information for students that still reflect relatively *low* adoption by institutions are:
 - Pay-per-click ads
 - College planning websites
 - Text messaging

5. At the same time, comparing the E-Expectations findings to this report reveals alignments between students’ technology preferences and institutional uses of that technology that reinforce decisions to invest in these tools, such as:
 - Email—widely used by institutions and widely identified by prospective students as an important source of information.
 - Mobile-enhanced website—offered by the majority of institutions and well-aligned with student use of mobile devices to interact with colleges.
 - A presence on social media sites such as Facebook Twitter, and YouTube—three platforms which students rate among their top social media sites for college information.



Enrollment Strategy Analysis

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This fully customized review provides you with the opportunity to:

- See how to leverage fiscal, human, and technological resources to increase recruitment and retention.
- Uncover hidden enrollment opportunities to grow and/or shape your student body.
- Create a roadmap of possible improvements to existing services, practices, and plans.

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Appendix: Complete findings

Complete findings of this study are provided in this appendix on a wide variety of e-recruiting topics that go far beyond the information highlighted thus far on pages 2-10. **All of the findings are judged to be statistically significant.** For an explanation of the statistical processes used to produce these data, see page 27.

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SECTION III

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Rankings in each section are ordered by the findings for four-year private institutions.

Note that “N/A” indicates fields for which there were not enough respondents in the sample to identify a statistically significant benchmark. See more information on statistical significance on page 27.

SECTION I: Rankings of e-recruiting practices in general, social media, and more

Table 1: Which of the following does your institution use? (Check all that apply.)

Rankings of e-recruiting practices (popularity)	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Email communication with prospective students	100.0%	100.0%	91.7%
Online net price calculator	92.9%	89.8%	58.3%
Recruiting pages on website	91.4%	89.8%	83.3%
Student searches via email	82.1%	64.4%	4.2%
Analytics resources such as Google Analytics	80.7%	83.1%	79.2%
Website optimized for mobile browsers	80.0%	76.3%	54.2%
Content Management System (CMS) to update or edit website content	77.1%	79.7%	54.2%
Videos embedded on campus website	77.1%	61.0%	54.2%
Listings on college planning websites/online directories	70.0%	62.7%	37.5%
Special landing pages for email campaigns	68.6%	62.7%	45.8%
Search engine optimization process to improve organic search results	68.6%	37.3%	45.8%
Pay-per-click ads on social media sites	60.7%	64.4%	50.0%
Online display advertising	59.3%	62.7%	50.0%
Virtual tours	49.3%	59.3%	16.7%
Cookie driven “retargeting” ads that target users who’ve previously visited your website	48.6%	42.4%	41.7%
Pay-per-click ads on search sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo	48.6%	49.2%	37.5%
Mass text messaging (i.e., to a large group)	40.0%	40.7%	33.3%
Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangouts or other video chat services	36.4%	25.4%	16.7%
Interactive campus map	35.7%	32.2%	20.8%
Personalized homepage URL/portal for prospective students	30.7%	23.7%	8.3%
Instant messaging/Live chats	25.7%	37.3%	8.3%
Mobile apps	23.6%	45.8%	25.0%
QR codes	18.6%	23.7%	25.0%
Online college fairs	18.6%	23.7%	8.3%
Tailored information for students based on their public profile (on Facebook, Google+, etc.)	15.7%	11.9%	20.8%
Webcasts	12.1%	13.6%	4.2%
Webcam	8.6%	11.9%	4.2%
Other (please specify*)	2.1%	3.4%	0.0%

*None of the “Other” responses were the same for two or more respondents.

Table 2: If you indicated that you use “Personalized homepage URL/portal for prospective students,” which students do you provide this for? (Check all that apply.)

Types of students receiving personalized homepage URLs/portals	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Prospects/Search List (i.e., prospective students who have not yet inquired or applied)	44.2%	64.3%	N/A
Inquiries	44.2%	64.3%	N/A
Applicants	60.5%	92.9%	N/A
Accepted Students	51.2%	78.6%	N/A
Deposits/Confirmed Admits	44.2%	50.0%	N/A
Other (please specify*)	0.0%	0.0%	N/A

*None of the “Other” responses were the same for two or more respondents.

TM

Table 3: If you indicated that you use a Content Management System (CMS) to update or edit website content, do staff of the admissions/recruitment office have permission to update website content?

Staff have permission to update website content Yes/No	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	70.8%	84.8%	69.2%
No	29.2%	15.2%	30.8%

TM

Table 4: Which of the following social media tools are you using with a goal of engaging prospective students and their families? (Check all that apply.)

Social media used	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Facebook	98.6%	96.6%	100.0%
Twitter	90.0%	94.9%	91.7%
Instagram	86.4%	78.0%	66.7%
YouTube	77.1%	71.2%	70.8%
Snapchat	39.3%	45.8%	16.7%
LinkedIn	37.1%	20.3%	33.3%
Student blog	30.7%	16.9%	4.2%
Tumblr	15.0%	3.4%	0.0%
Pinterest	14.3%	20.3%	8.3%
Admissions/recruitment staff blog	13.6%	13.6%	4.2%
Vimeo	11.4%	8.5%	4.2%
Google+	8.6%	6.8%	12.5%
Faculty blog	7.9%	5.1%	4.2%
Storify	6.4%	11.9%	4.2%
Vine	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Reddit	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other (please specify*)	4.3%	3.4%	0.0%

* The only additional social media tool identified by two or more respondents in a blank, open-ended field was Periscope. All the rest of the “other” responses were unique responses identified by only one respondent each.

TM

Table 5: How often do you post videos to YouTube, Vimeo, or other social media that are intended to support recruitment? (Check best response only.)

Frequency of posting videos on social media platforms	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Daily	5.1%	1.8%	4.2%
2-3 times a week	9.4%	14.0%	4.2%
Weekly	13.0%	10.5%	20.8%
1-2 times a month	54.3%	36.8%	41.7%
Never	8.0%	15.8%	12.5%
Other (please specify*)	10.1%	21.1%	16.7%

*Many respondents indicated they post videos several times a year, quarterly, or semiannually.

TM

Table 6: Do you have a Facebook page specifically for prospective students or their families? And, if yes, how often do you post new items on this page related to admissions, enrollment, or financial aid?

Have Facebook page specifically for prospective students or their families Yes/No	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	62.9%	71.2%	20.8%
No	37.1%	28.8%	79.2%
Frequency of postings among those who indicated yes			
Daily	8.0%	11.9%	20.0%
2-3 times a week	50.6%	50.0%	40.0%
Weekly	26.4%	19.0%	40.0%
1-2 times a month	13.8%	16.7%	0.0%
Other (please specify*)	1.1%	2.4%	0.0%

*None of the "Other" responses were the same for two or more respondents.

TM

Table 7: Do you have a Twitter account specifically for prospective students or their families? And, if yes, how often do you send tweets on this account related to admissions, enrollment, or financial aid?

Have Twitter account specifically for prospective students or their families Yes/No	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	49.3%	67.2%	13.0%
No	50.7%	32.8%	87.0%
Frequency of sending tweets among those who indicated yes			
Daily	23.5%	25.6%	N/A
2-3 times a week	41.2%	38.5%	N/A
Weekly	22.1%	20.5%	N/A
1-2 times a month	13.2%	7.7%	N/A
Other (please specify*)	0.0%	7.7%	N/A

*None of the "Other" responses were the same for two or more respondents.

TM

Table 8: How much staff time is allocated for updating social media for your institution? (Check best response.)

Social media staff time allocation	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
This is a part-time responsibility for one person.	45.0%	52.5%	47.8%
This is a part-time responsibility for two or more people.	37.1%	27.1%	39.1%
This is a dedicated role that receives one person's full-time attention.	15.7%	16.9%	8.7%
This is a dedicated role that receives two or more people's full-time attention.	2.1%	3.4%	4.3%

TM

Table 9: What is your institution's level of use of paid interactive marketing (online advertising)? (Check best response.)

Use of paid interactive marketing	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Occasional/just beginning	56.1%	66.7%	79.2%
A major part of our recruitment	26.6%	21.1%	16.7%
None	17.3%	12.3%	4.2%

TM

Table 10: Do you sometimes check prospective students' social media sites (for example, Facebook pages) or do any other type of web search to learn more about a student's background or interests?

Check prospective students' media sites Yes/No	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	50.0%	37.3%	20.8%
No	50.0%	62.7%	79.2%

TM

SECTION I:
Rankings of
e-recruiting
practices in
general, social
media, and
more

SECTION II: Findings on cell/mobile phones, email, texting, and more

Table 11: Do you collect cell/mobile numbers from your prospective students? And, if yes, how do you use these cell/mobile numbers? (Check all that apply. If No, please skip to next item.)

Collect cell/mobile numbers from prospective students Yes/No	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	95.0%	91.5%	91.7%
No	5.0%	8.5%	8.3%
How cell numbers are used among those who indicated yes			
Calls simply to build a relationship between the caller and the student	85.7%	72.2%	63.6%
Individual text messages	57.9%	31.5%	18.2%
Notifications of impending deadlines, events, acceptance, etc.	54.9%	46.3%	50.0%
Calls from telecounseling call centers	42.9%	51.9%	13.6%
Mass text messages	35.3%	27.8%	22.7%
Other (please specify*)	3.8%	11.1%	13.6%

*None of the "Other" responses were the same for two or more respondents.

TM

Table 12: If you indicated that you use cell/mobile numbers to send mass text messages, do you specifically request permission to send mass text messages?

Request permission to send mass text messages Yes/No	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	85.1%	73.3%	N/A
No	14.9%	26.7%	N/A

TM

Table 13: Do you provide cell phones for your admissions counselors? And, if yes, which of the following practices apply to how your counselors use their office-provided phones to recruit students? (Check all that apply.)

Provide cell phones for admissions counselors Yes/No	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	48.6%	32.8%	16.7%
No	51.4%	67.2%	83.3%
How cell phones are used among those who indicated yes			
While traveling, counselors contact prospective students.	88.2%	68.4%	N/A
Counselors send and receive text messages from prospective students.	79.4%	57.9%	N/A
Counselors promote their cell phone numbers to prospective students, guidance counselors, parents, etc.	64.7%	57.9%	N/A
Counselors use office-provided phones for social media.	52.9%	42.1%	N/A
There is an office policy that guides use of office-provided cell phones.	26.5%	26.3%	N/A
Other practices (please specify*)	2.9%	21.1%	N/A

*None of the "Other" responses were the same for two or more respondents.

TM

Table 14: How do you deliver mass emails to prospective students? (Check all that apply.)

Methods of delivering mass emails to prospective students	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
We use a campus-based CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system to send mass emails.	60.0%	78.0%	29.2%
We use a third-party vendor to send mass emails (please specify vendor name/s*).	44.3%	39.0%	25.0%
We use a campus-based system such as Outlook to send mass emails.	21.4%	23.7%	54.2%
We use another approach to deliver mass emails to prospective students (please specify**).	5.0%	1.7%	4.2%

* Vendors mentioned most frequently across sectors included Constant Contact, Fire Engine Red, MailChimp, Royall, and Target X.

**None of the “Other” responses were the same for two or more respondents.

Table 15: About how many mass emails does a typical prospective student receive from your institution over the course of a recruitment cycle from the point you send the first mass email message all the way through to any last mass email(s) you send before classes begin? (Enter a specific number—your best estimate—below.)

Statistics—email volume	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
25th Percentile	15.0	10.0	3.8
Median	25.0	20.2	4.5
75th Percentile	35.0	30.0	6.3

Table 16: Which types of prospective students receive mass emails from your institution? (Check all that apply.)

Types of prospective students receiving mass emails	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Prospects/Search List (i.e., prospective students who have not yet inquired or applied)	82.1%	88.1%	33.3%
Inquiries	89.3%	88.1%	66.7%
Applicants	90.7%	86.4%	70.8%
Accepted Students	90.7%	88.1%	62.5%
Deposits/Confirmed Admits	85.0%	72.9%	29.2%
Other (please specify*)	1.4%	8.5%	16.7%

*None of the “Other” responses were the same for two or more respondents.

Table 17: Which markets receive mass emails from your institution? (Check all that apply.)

Markets receiving mass emails	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
First-time-in-college students	92.9%	94.9%	8.3%
Transfer students	89.3%	94.9%	8.3%
International students	69.3%	50.8%	12.5%
Adult learners	34.3%	45.8%	12.5%
Continuing education/non-credit students	12.9%	18.6%	8.3%
Other (please specify*)	4.3%	8.5%	0.0%

*Other markets, identified by two or three respondents each, included online learners, nonmatriculants, parents, and school counselors.

TM

Table 18: Does your admissions office collect email addresses for parents?

Collect email addresses for parents Yes/No	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Yes	83.9%	74.1%	12.5%
No	16.1%	25.9%	87.5%

TM

SECTION III: Website features, budgeting for websites and social media, and more

Table 19: Which of the following types of information are provided—or directly linked from—your non-mobile website’s primary webpage for prospective students AND/OR your mobile website’s primary webpage for prospective students?

Website information types	Four-year private institutions		Four-year public institutions		Two-year public institutions	
	Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students
Financial aid/scholarships	95.6%	92.9%	91.8%	92.2%	95.5%	94.7%
List of academic programs/majors	93.9%	91.2%	91.8%	94.1%	100.0%	100.0%
Applications/application process	92.1%	91.2%	87.8%	90.2%	90.9%	89.5%
Enrollment/admissions information	91.2%	93.8%	91.8%	90.2%	90.9%	100.0%
Campus visit details	91.2%	95.6%	89.8%	94.1%	90.9%	73.7%
Cost	88.6%	83.2%	83.7%	84.3%	90.9%	84.2%
Links to social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.)	86.8%	87.6%	83.7%	92.2%	86.4%	78.9%
Admissions event RSVP opportunities	84.2%	85.0%	87.8%	80.4%	54.5%	36.8%
Campus map/Directions to the school location	84.2%	79.6%	83.7%	84.3%	68.2%	73.7%
Student life information	83.3%	75.2%	83.7%	82.4%	68.2%	63.2%
Descriptions of academic programs/majors	82.5%	69.9%	73.5%	72.5%	81.8%	73.7%
Net price calculator for freshmen	81.6%	67.3%	75.5%	66.7%	54.5%	47.4%
Housing/dining details	78.1%	66.4%	75.5%	76.5%	27.3%	36.8%
Videos	73.7%	70.8%	57.1%	62.7%	54.5%	47.4%
Athletic programs	71.9%	68.1%	75.5%	78.4%	59.1%	52.6%
News feed or recent news articles	71.9%	61.9%	55.1%	62.7%	63.6%	63.2%
Academic calendar	70.2%	57.5%	67.3%	66.7%	86.4%	84.2%
Messages about outcomes/value of earning a degree	67.5%	67.3%	42.9%	49.0%	40.9%	15.8%
Net price calculator for transfers	64.9%	51.3%	55.1%	43.1%	40.9%	36.8%
City/region information	64.0%	57.5%	51.0%	49.0%	40.9%	36.8%
Student testimonials/student blogs	54.4%	49.6%	34.7%	39.2%	31.8%	10.5%

TM

Continue next page

Website information types, continued

Website information types	Four-year private institutions		Four-year public institutions		Two-year public institutions	
	Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students
College/university ranking information	53.5%	54.9%	46.9%	45.1%	27.3%	15.8%
Net price calculator for veterans	24.6%	19.5%	34.7%	25.5%	31.8%	21.1%
Live online chat or ask questions of admissions representatives	20.2%	11.5%	28.6%	21.6%	9.1%	5.3%
Recruitment-oriented webinars	14.0%	13.3%	12.2%	7.8%	9.1%	0.0%
None of the above	1.8%	0.9%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other types of information (please specify*)	3.5%	3.5%	6.1%	3.9%	4.5%	5.3%

*None of the "Other" responses were the same for two or more respondents.

TM

Table 20: Which of the following mobile strategies have you adopted? (Check all that apply. If your institution does not yet have a mobile-optimized website, please skip this item.)

Mobile strategies among respondents who had a mobile site	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Responsive/adaptive web design	77.0%	70.6%	50.0%
Specific mobile site (separate from main website)	10.6%	17.6%	16.7%
Mobile applications to support all users generically	23.9%	45.1%	38.9%
Mobile applications to support current students specifically	8.0%	19.6%	11.1%
Mobile applications to support prospective students specifically	5.3%	17.6%	5.6%

TM

Table 21: If your institution does not yet have a mobile-optimized website, when do you expect to have one? (Choose best response.)

Expected timing to add mobile-optimized website	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Within one year	70.4%	50.0%	N/A
Within two years	25.9%	25.0%	N/A
3 or more years from now	0.0%	0.0%	N/A
We have no current plans for a mobile-optimized website	3.7%	25.0%	N/A

TM

Table 22: Which of the following can prospective students or families submit or view on your institution's primary website AND/OR your mobile-optimized website?

SECTION III: Website features, budgeting for websites and social media, and more	Website features that can be viewed or submitted	Four-year private institutions		Four-year public institutions		Two-year public institutions	
		Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our non-mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students	Our mobile website's primary webpage for prospective students
	Inquiry form	93.0%	96.6%	84.0%	88.0%	90.9%	94.1%
	Campus visit request form	90.4%	88.0%	80.0%	90.0%	63.6%	58.8%
	Application form	88.7%	81.2%	88.0%	72.0%	100.0%	94.1%
	RSVP form for admissions events	88.7%	90.6%	76.0%	76.0%	59.1%	58.8%
	Net price calculator—version for first-year students	84.3%	71.8%	70.0%	56.0%	63.6%	52.9%
	Deposit form	69.6%	59.0%	42.0%	24.0%	4.5%	0.0%
	Housing application	63.5%	47.9%	64.0%	30.0%	13.6%	5.9%
	Net price calculator—version for transfer students	62.6%	52.1%	52.0%	38.0%	40.9%	29.4%
	Financial aid application	47.0%	32.5%	52.0%	26.0%	31.8%	29.4%
	Course registration form	45.2%	19.7%	54.0%	32.0%	54.5%	35.3%
	Confirmation of acceptance form	33.9%	24.8%	40.0%	24.0%	18.2%	5.9%
	Parent contact form	24.3%	19.7%	26.0%	16.0%	9.1%	5.9%
	Net price calculator—version for veterans	23.5%	22.2%	36.0%	30.0%	40.9%	17.6%
	None of the above	1.7%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Other forms or information (please specify*)	1.7%	1.7%	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%

*None of the "Other" responses were the same for two or more respondents.

TM

Table 23: How is your institution using its federally-required net price calculator on the website? (Check all that apply.)

Specific uses of net price calculators	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Provide early estimates of financial aid	72.9%	76.3%	54.2%
Provide early estimates of scholarships	50.7%	32.2%	8.3%
Motivate prospective students who have not yet inquired or applied to complete the calculator in order to capture their name and contact information	26.4%	20.3%	25.0%
Motivate applicants whose applications are incomplete to finish applying	13.6%	13.6%	8.3%
Other (please specify*)	3.6%	6.8%	0.0%

*None of the "Other" responses were the same for two or more respondents.

TM

Table 24: How accurate are the estimates provided by your institution's net price calculator? (Choose best response only.)

Accuracy of net price calculators among those who provided a rating	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Highly accurate for most students	48.9%	36.4%	27.3%
Somewhat accurate for most students	43.6%	56.4%	72.7%
Somewhat inaccurate for most students	5.3%	7.3%	0.0%
Highly inaccurate for most students	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%

TM

Table 25: What percentage of students who begin to complete your institution's online net price calculator actually end up completing it? (Enter a specific whole number—your best estimate—below. For example, enter 20 if your response is 20 percent. If unknown, please skip to next item.)

Statistics—calculator completion	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
25th Percentile	29.5	N/A	N/A
Median	50.0	N/A	N/A
75th Percentile	70.0	N/A	N/A

TM

Table 26: Who built your net price calculator(s)? (Check one.)

Builder of net price calculator(s)	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Outside vendor	72.4%	44.2%	14.3%
The federal government	14.9%	34.6%	42.9%
Our institution	12.7%	21.2%	42.9%

TM

Table 27: In round figures, what is the approximate annual cost for your admissions office to maintain admission-specific content and services on the institution’s primary website (staffing, vendor costs, other direct costs)? (Enter a specific number.)

Budget level	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
\$0 - \$5,000	20.4%	21.1%	N/A
\$5,001 - \$40,000	29.6%	31.6%	N/A
\$40,001 - \$80,000	29.6%	15.8%	N/A
> \$80,000	20.4%	31.6%	N/A

TM

Table 28: How much did your website cost above increase or decrease compared to last year? (Choose best response only.)

Change in budget	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
Decreased 2% or more	3.1%	2.4%	0.0%
Stayed about the same	64.3%	73.8%	73.3%
Increased 2% or more	32.7%	23.8%	26.7%

TM

Table 29: How much staff time is allocated for maintaining admissions-specific content and services on the institution’s primary website and, if applicable, its mobile-optimized website? (Choose best response only.)

Website staff time allocations	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
This is a part-time responsibility for one person.	42.2%	38.6%	52.6%
This is a part-time responsibility for two or more people.	35.6%	43.9%	36.8%
This is a dedicated role that receives one person’s full-time attention.	13.3%	10.5%	5.3%
This is a dedicated role that receives two or more people’s full-time attention.	8.9%	7.0%	5.3%

TM

SECTION III: Website features, budgeting for websites and social media, and more

Table 30: If you had new budget dollars, what area of your e-recruitment practices would you invest in first? (Choose best response only.)

	First priority for improvement	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
SECTION III: Website features, budgeting for websites and social media, and more	Website design	26.3%	25.9%	16.7%
	Website content	23.4%	13.8%	8.3%
	Paid interactive advertising (online advertising)	16.1%	29.3%	16.7%
	Social media	10.2%	12.1%	25.0%
	Email communications	5.1%	5.2%	20.8%
	Search Engine Optimization	8.0%	8.6%	0.0%
	Other (please specify*)	10.9%	5.2%	12.5%

*Other areas, identified by several respondents each, included a CRM, texting, and a mobile-responsive website.

TM

Respondent profile

Data in this report reflect responses from 224 nonprofit four-year and two-year colleges and universities that collectively enroll 1.8 million students. Respondents participated in the Ruffalo Noel Levitz national electronic poll of undergraduate e-recruiting practices between June 21 and July 12, 2016. The poll was emailed to enrollment and admissions officers at accredited, degree-granting institutions across the United States. Respondents included 140 four-year private institutions, 59 four-year public institutions, and 24 two-year public institutions, as listed below.

Thank you to those who participated.

Four-year private institutions

Note: Any participating two-year private colleges are included on this list.

Alderson Broaddus University (WV)
 American Academy of Art (IL)
 Andrew College (GA)
 Anna Maria College (MA)
 Aquinas College (MI)
 Augustana College (IL)
 Austin College (TX)
 Babson College (MA)
 Bentley University (MA)
 Bethel University (MN)
 Boston University (MA)
 Boyce College (KY)
 Bradley University (IL)
 Caldwell University (NJ)
 Cardinal Stritch University (WI)
 Carnegie Mellon University (PA)
 Carson-Newman University (TN)
 Charles R. Drew University of Medicine & Science (CA)
 Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences, The (OH)
 Clark Atlanta University (GA)
 College for Creative Studies (MI)
 College of our Lady of the Elms (MA)
 College of Saint Scholastica, The (MN)
 Columbia College (MO)
 Concordia College (NY)
 Concordia University - Seward (NE)
 Concordia University Texas (TX)
 Connecticut College (CT)
 Corban University (OR)
 Cornell College (IA)
 Cornish College of the Arts (WA)
 Creighton University (NE)
 Crown College (MN)
 Defiance College (OH)
 Dickinson College (PA)
 Dominican University (IL)
 Dunwoody College of Technology (MN)
 Eastern Mennonite University (VA)
 Elmhurst College (IL)
 Emerson College (MA)
 Emmanuel College (GA)
 Evangel University (MO)
 Florida Institute of Technology (FL)
 Florida Southern College (FL)
 Franciscan University of Steubenville (OH)
 Friends University (KS)
 Grand View University (IA)
 Hardin-Simmons University (TX)
 Hartwick College (NY)
 Hastings College (NE)
 High Point University (NC)
 Huntington University (IN)
 Indiana Tech (IN)
 Indiana Wesleyan University (IN)
 John Brown University (AR)
 Johnson & Wales University (RI)
 Juniata College (PA)
 Kentucky Mountain Bible College (KY)
 Kettering College (OH)
 Keystone College (PA)
 Lakeview College of Nursing (IL)
 Liberty University (VA)
 Lindenwood University (MO)
 Loyola Marymount University (CA)
 Lynchburg College (VA)
 Lynn University (FL)
 Marian University (IN)
 Marquette University (WI)
 McNally Smith College of Music (MN)
 Mercy College (NY)
 Miles College (AL)
 Mills College (CA)
 Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (WI)
 Milwaukee School of Engineering (WI)
 Missouri Valley College (MO)
 Montreat College (NC)
 Mount Aloysius College (PA)
 Mount Saint Mary College (NY)
 Mount Vernon Nazarene University (OH)
 Naropa University (CO)
 North Carolina Wesleyan College (NC)
 North Central University (MN)
 Northwest University (WA)
 Notre Dame de Namur University (CA)
 Ohio Northern University (OH)
 Ohio Wesleyan University (OH)
 Oklahoma Baptist University (OK)
 Olivet College (MI)
 Oral Roberts University (OK)
 Our Lady of the Lake College (LA)
 Pace University (NY)
 Patrick Henry College (VA)
 Point Park University (PA)
 Presbyterian College (SC)
 Prescott College (AZ)
 Regis University (CO)
 Rider University (NJ)
 Rivier University (NH)
 Robert Morris University (PA)
 Rollins College (FL)
 Saint Joseph's College (IN)
 Saint Joseph's University (PA)
 Saint Vincent College (PA)
 School of the Art Institute of Chicago (IL)

Seattle Pacific University (WA)
Seattle University (WA)
Shenandoah University (VA)
Simmons College (MA)
Spelman College (GA)
St. Bonaventure University (NY)
St. Louis College of Pharmacy (MO)
St. Olaf College (MN)
Sterling College (KS)
Thomas University (GA)
Tulane University (LA)
Tusculum College (TN)
Tuskegee University (AL)
Union College (NE)
University of Dallas (TX)
University of Dayton (OH)
University of La Verne (CA)
University of Miami (FL)
University of Northwestern - St. Paul (MN)
University of Redlands (CA)
University of St. Thomas (TX)
University of the Ozarks (AR)
University of the Sciences in Philadelphia (PA)
Utica College (NY)
Valparaiso University (IN)
Vanderbilt University (TN)
Vanguard University of Southern California (CA)
Villa Maria College of Buffalo (NY)
Washington & Jefferson College (PA)
Webster University (MO)
Wesley College (DE)
Western New England University (MA)
Westminster College (MO)
Westminster College (UT)
Wittenberg University (OH)
York College of Pennsylvania (PA)

Four-year public institutions

Angelo State University (TX)
Appalachian State University (NC)
Arizona State University (AZ)
Arkansas State University (AR)
Bemidji State University (MN)
Bowling Green State University (OH)
California State University-Dominguez Hills (CA)
Clayton State University (GA)
Delta State University (MS)
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania (PA)
Florida Atlantic University (FL)
Florida International University (FL)
Georgia Southern University (GA)
Georgia Southwestern State University (GA)
Illinois State University (IL)
Kent State University Tuscarawas Campus (OH)
Lyndon State College (VT)
Maine Maritime Academy (ME)
Marshall University (WV)
Minnesota State University, Mankato (MN)
Mississippi State University (MS)
Missouri State University (MO)
New College of Florida (FL)
Oakland University (MI)

Ohio University Main Campus (OH)
Oklahoma State University (OK)
Penn State University Park (PA)
Penn State, World Campus (PA)
Pennsylvania College of Technology (PA)
Purdue University Main Campus (IN)
Ramapo College of New Jersey (NJ)
Salisbury University (MD)
Sam Houston State University (TX)
Shawnee State University (OH)
Shepherd University (WV)
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania (PA)
Southern University at New Orleans (LA)
SUNY Canton-College of Technology (NY)
Tennessee Tech University (TN)
Texas A & M University - Commerce (TX)
Texas Tech University (TX)
United States Military Academy (NY)
University at Buffalo-SUNY (NY)
University of Alabama in Huntsville (AL)
University of Arizona (AZ)
University of Arkansas at Little Rock (AR)
University of Cincinnati Main Campus (OH)
University of Nebraska at Kearney (NE)
University of Oklahoma Norman Campus (OK)
University of Pittsburgh at Bradford (PA)
University of Southern Indiana (IN)
University of Toledo (OH)
University of Utah, The (UT)
University of Vermont (VT)
University of West Alabama, The (AL)
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay (WI)
West Chester University of Pennsylvania (PA)
Western Michigan University (MI)
Winthrop University (SC)

Two-year public institutions

Anoka-Ramsey Community College (MN)
Cowley County Community College (KS)
East Central College (MO)
Elgin Community College (IL)
Front Range Community College (CO)
Gateway Community College (CT)
Harper College (IL)
Helena College University of Montana (MT)
Henry Ford College (MI)
Highland Community College (IL)
Howard Community College (MD)
Madisonville Community College (KY)
Metropolitan Community College (NE)
Miles Community College (MT)
Mitchell Technical Institute (SD)
NHTI-Concord's Community College (NH)
North Arkansas College (AR)
Northeast Iowa Community College (IA)
Northland Pioneer College (AZ)
Pine Technical and Community College (MN)
Pratt Community College (KS)
Southwestern Illinois College (IL)
Vermilion Community College (MN)
Waubensee Community College (IL)

Statistical significance

All of the findings in this report are judged to be statistically significant. This determination was made by calculating a statistical confidence interval for each finding (e.g., means, medians, proportions, and other relevant test statistics) and then judging the confidence interval to be acceptably small relative to the size of the finding.

Note that the proportions reported in the Appendix are based on the poll responses from the institutions shown on pages 25 and 26 that responded to each question on the poll, i.e., in some cases, all of the institutions responded to a question on the poll while in other cases, only a portion of the respondents provided a response. This was purposeful, as not all items were relevant to all respondents, and Ruffalo Noel Levitz instructed respondents to “skip over” items that would have required time-consuming research to investigate.

Despite these variances, all percentages shown met the requirements for statistical significance.

Questions? Call 800.876.1117 to speak with an expert

We hope you found this report to be helpful and informative. If you have questions and would like to schedule a private, complimentary conversation with an expert from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, please call us or email ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com. Our consultants are also available to come to your campus to conduct assessments of marketing and enrollment management operations.

About Ruffalo Noel Levitz and our higher education research

Ruffalo Noel Levitz provides higher education and nonprofit organizations with technology-enabled services, software, and consulting for enrollment and fundraising management. Since 1973, we have partnered with more than 3,000 colleges and universities and numerous nonprofit clients worldwide.

For more than 20 years, we have conducted national surveys to assist higher education with benchmarking its performance. This includes benchmarking student retention and marketing/recruitment practices and outcomes, monitoring student and campus usage of the web and electronic communications, and comparing institutional budgets and policies. There is no charge or obligation for participating, and responses to all survey items are strictly confidential. Participants have the advantage of receiving the findings first, as soon as they become available.

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