RNLNC

PRESENTATION HANDOUT

E-Expectations: Trends in Student Use of Digital Resources in College Search and Selection

Vaughn A. Shinkus
Vice President and Senior Consultant

About our study

Partners: Mongoose, Modern Campus, Plexuss, & Teen Life

Number of completed surveys: 2,087

High School Class

10th grade	47%
11th grade	33%
12th grade	20%

Residence

Northeast	16%
Midwest	19%
Southeast	24%
Southwest	15%
West	25%

Parent Education

Parent has college experience	63%
Parent has NO college experience	37%

Gender

Female	47%
Male	47%

Academic Ability

High academic ability (3.6>)	60%
Average academic ability (<3.5)	40%

E-survey sent to students by Plexuss & Teen Life between March 15 and April 15, 2021

Ethnicity

Alaska Native	2.2%*
American Indian	3.3%*
Asian	10%
Black / African-American	16%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x (including Puerto Rican)	21%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.09%*
White	54%
Multi-racial	2.73%*
Prefer to self-describe	0.36%*
Middle Eastern or North African	0.75%*

Students and Families
Expect a Seamless,
Multi-Channel
Experience

Student *and* Parent Engagement

Data show the need for consistent omnichannel engagement of both audiences

- **79** —average number of times a student unlocks their phone each day
- **70%** of students bypass direct marketing and search on their own
- **92%** of students and parents express financing a college education will be difficult
- **99%** of parents say they are involved in the search process

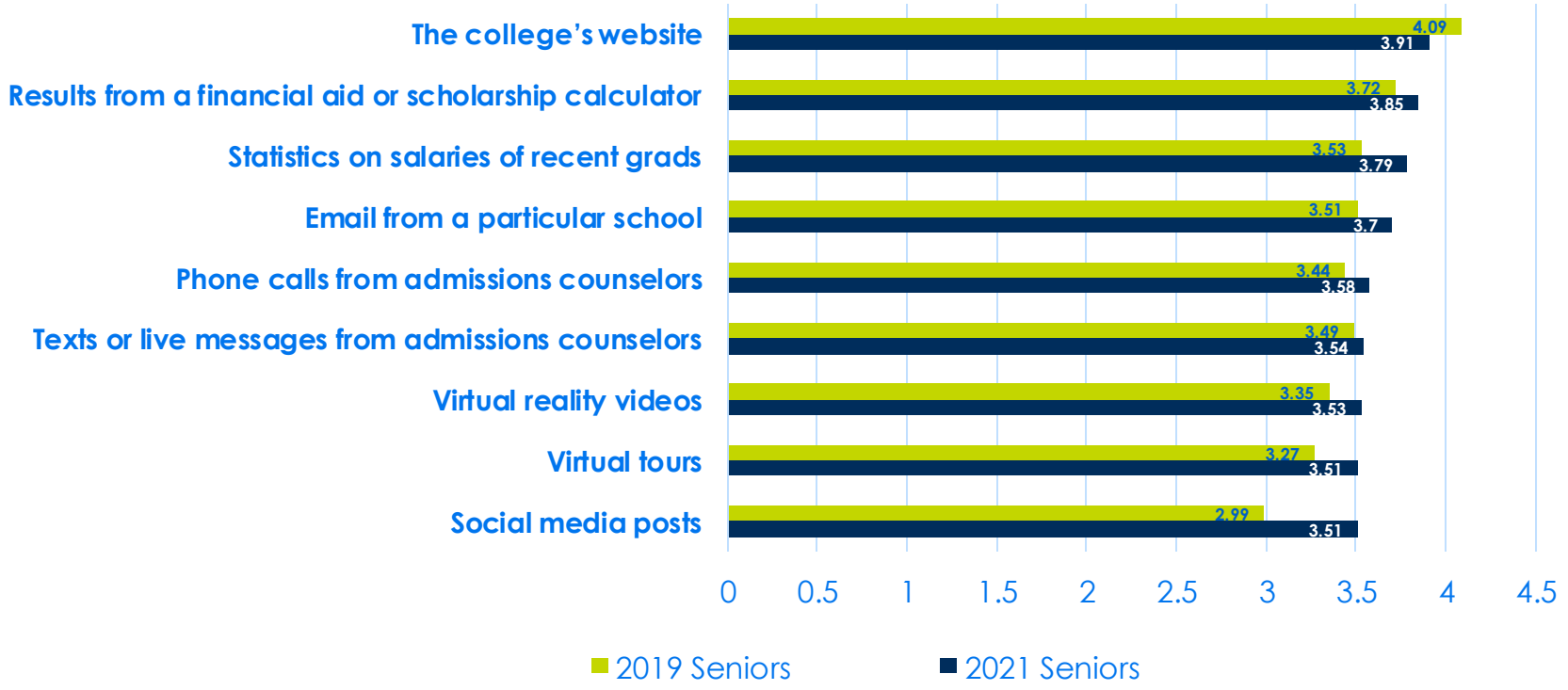
Top channels

- Video
- Website
- Social media
- Text

Top desired content

- Academic programs
- What the community is like
- Costs/Aid

Sources Ranked Most Influential in College Search



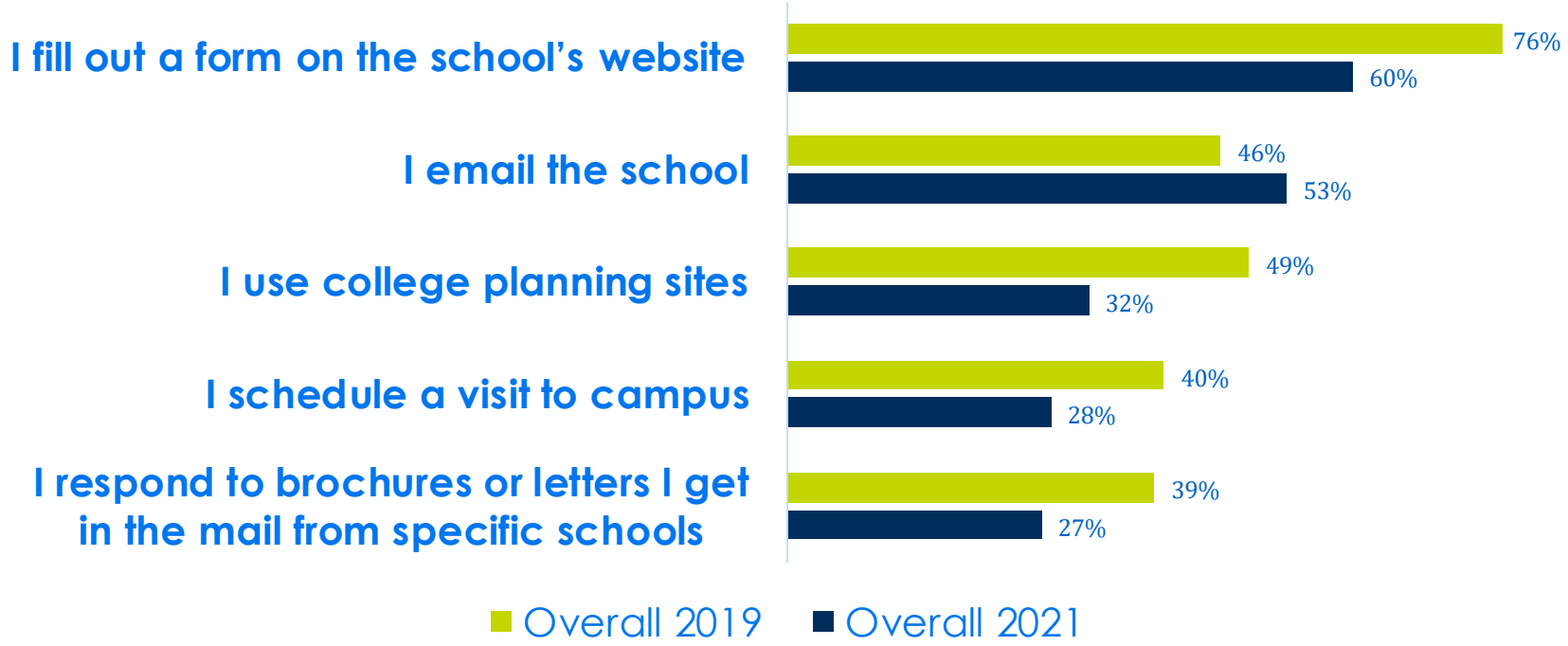
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Seamless Online Engagement is a Requirement

- Make the necessary investments
- Strive for authenticity
- Personalize at scale
- Provide multiple opportunities to connect

Inquiries are
Increasingly Elusive

Inquiries: How Do Students Want to Reach Out?



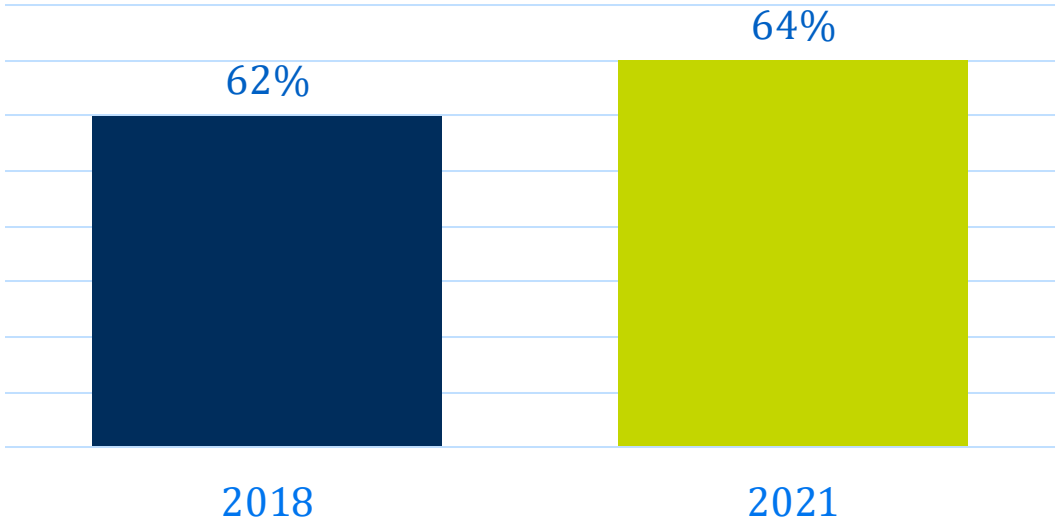
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Chasing the Vanishing Inquiry

- Lean in to omnichannel search
- Add chatbots as inquiry options
- Don’t shy away from email
- Customize the RFI by interest
- Go Digital

College Search is a Family Affair

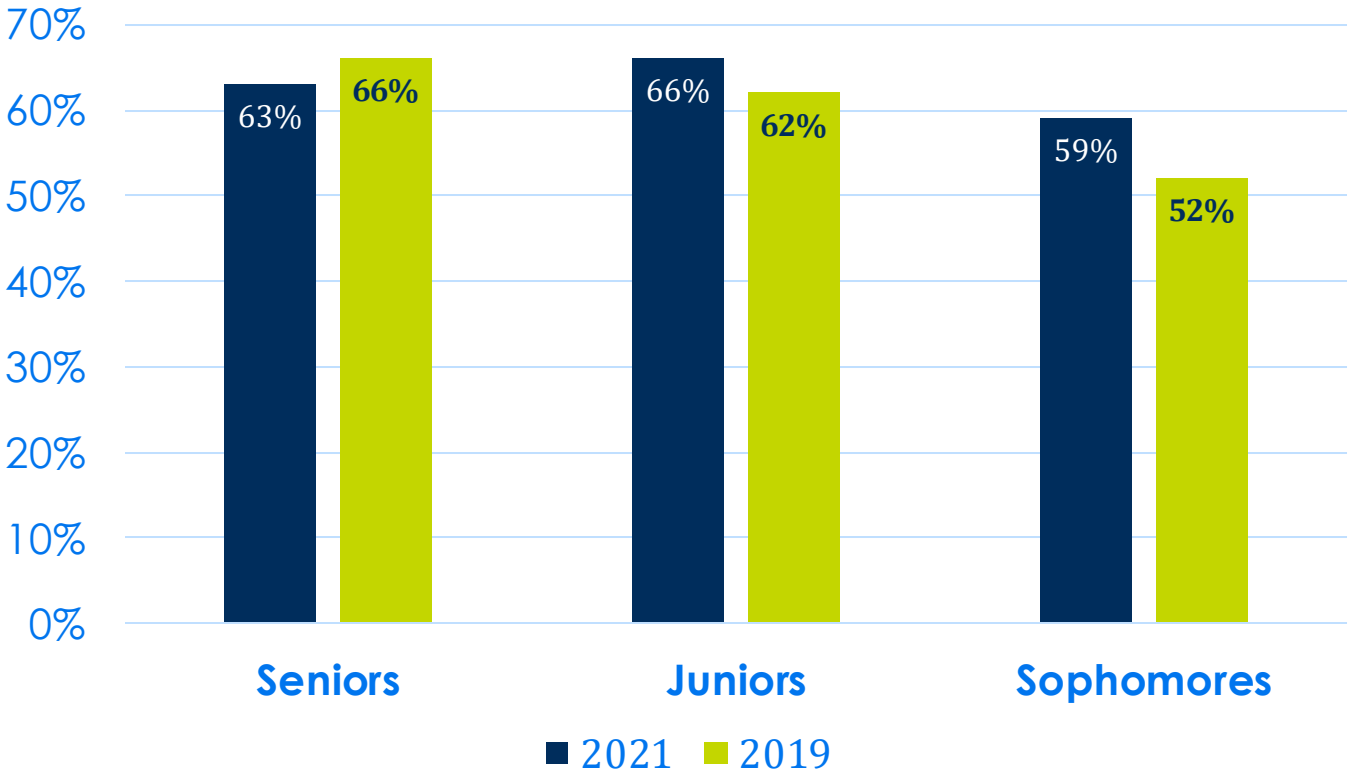
Have Parents Been Involved in Your College Search?



Percentage of students who answered yes

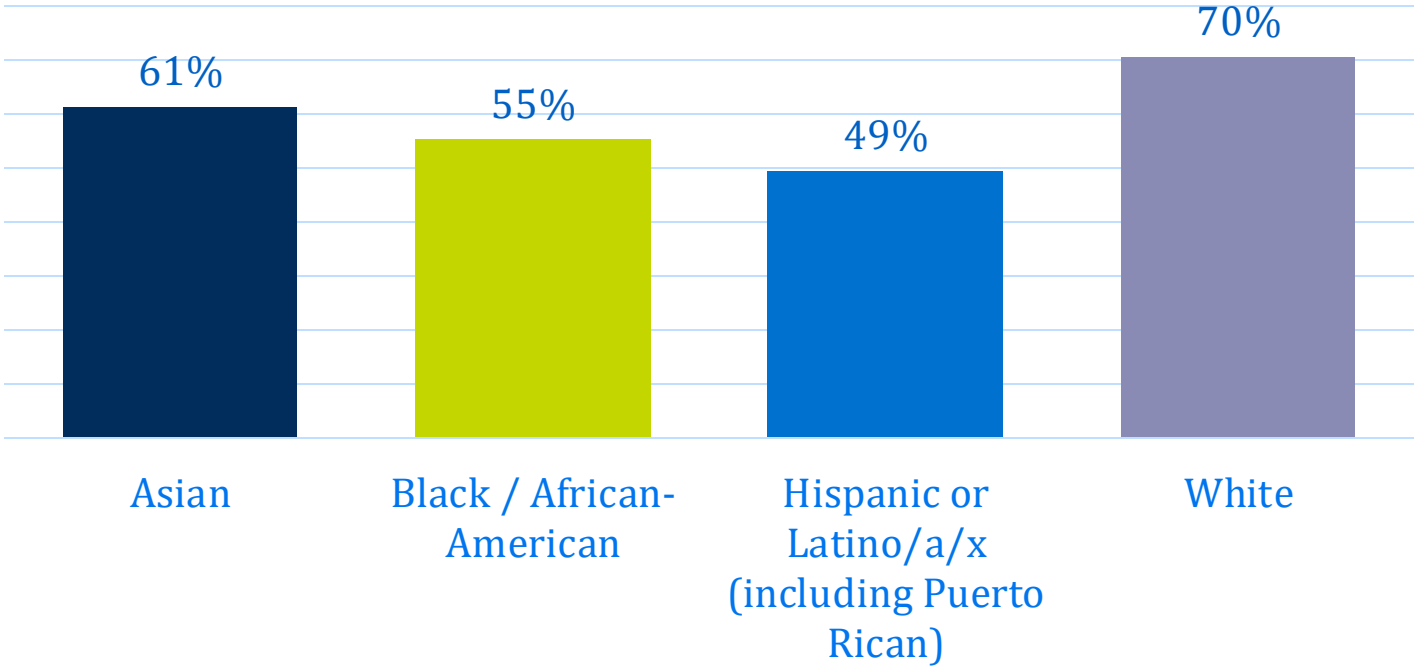
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Have Parents Been Involved in Your College Search?



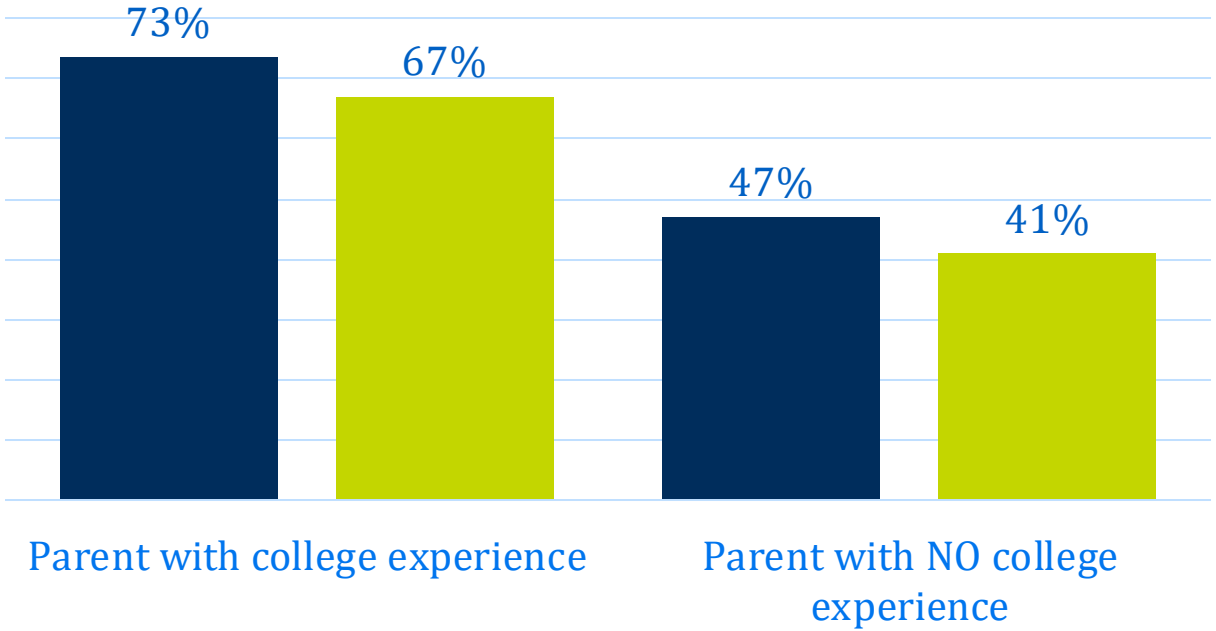
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Have Parents Been Involved in Your College Search?



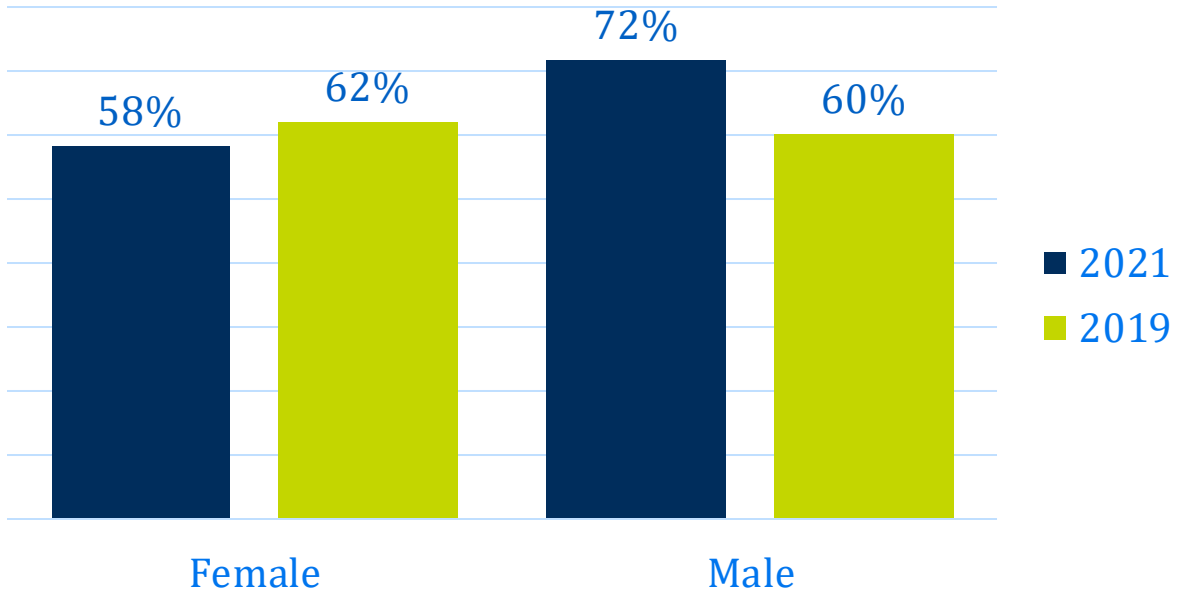
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Have Parents Been Involved in Your College Search? 2019-2021



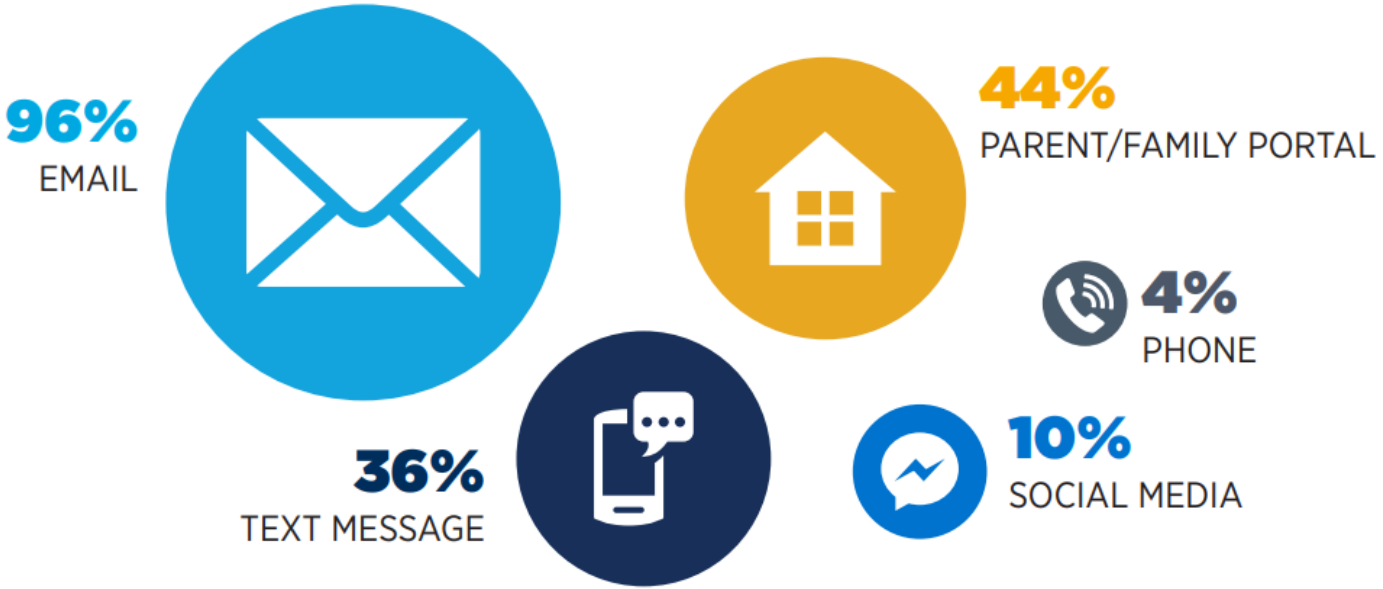
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Have Parents Been Involved in Your College Search?



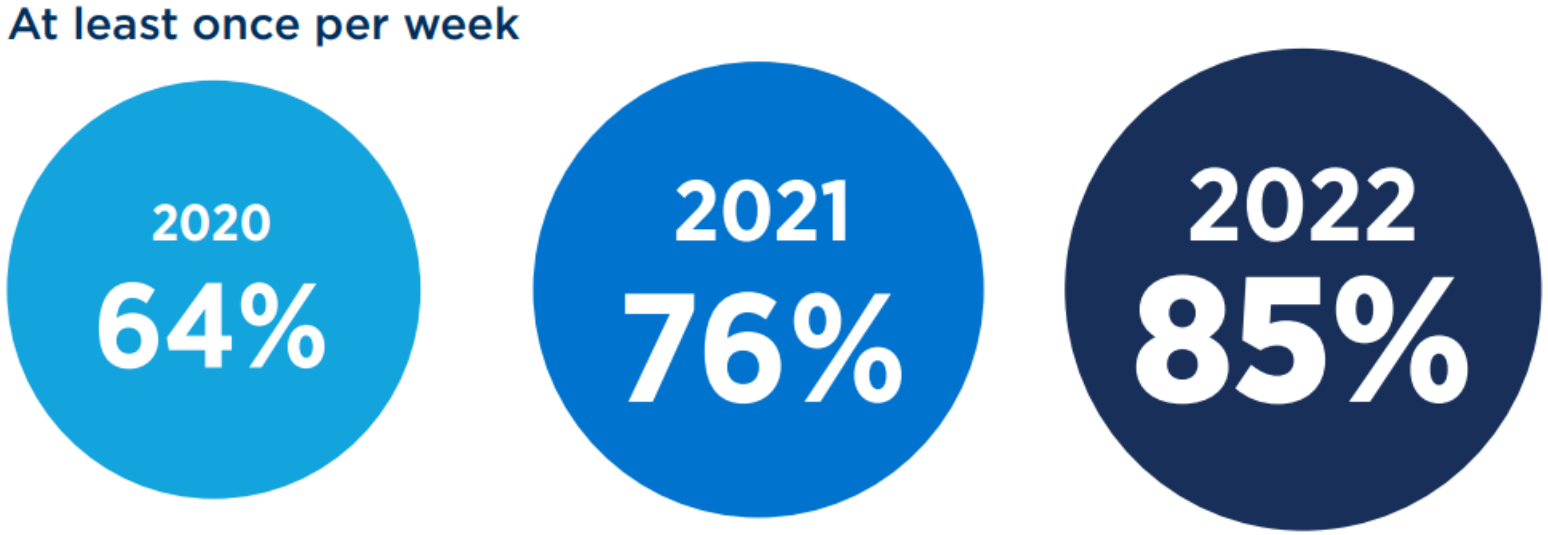
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Preferred Family Communication Channels



© 2022 RNL | 2022 Prospective Family Engagement Report

Preferred Family Communication Frequency

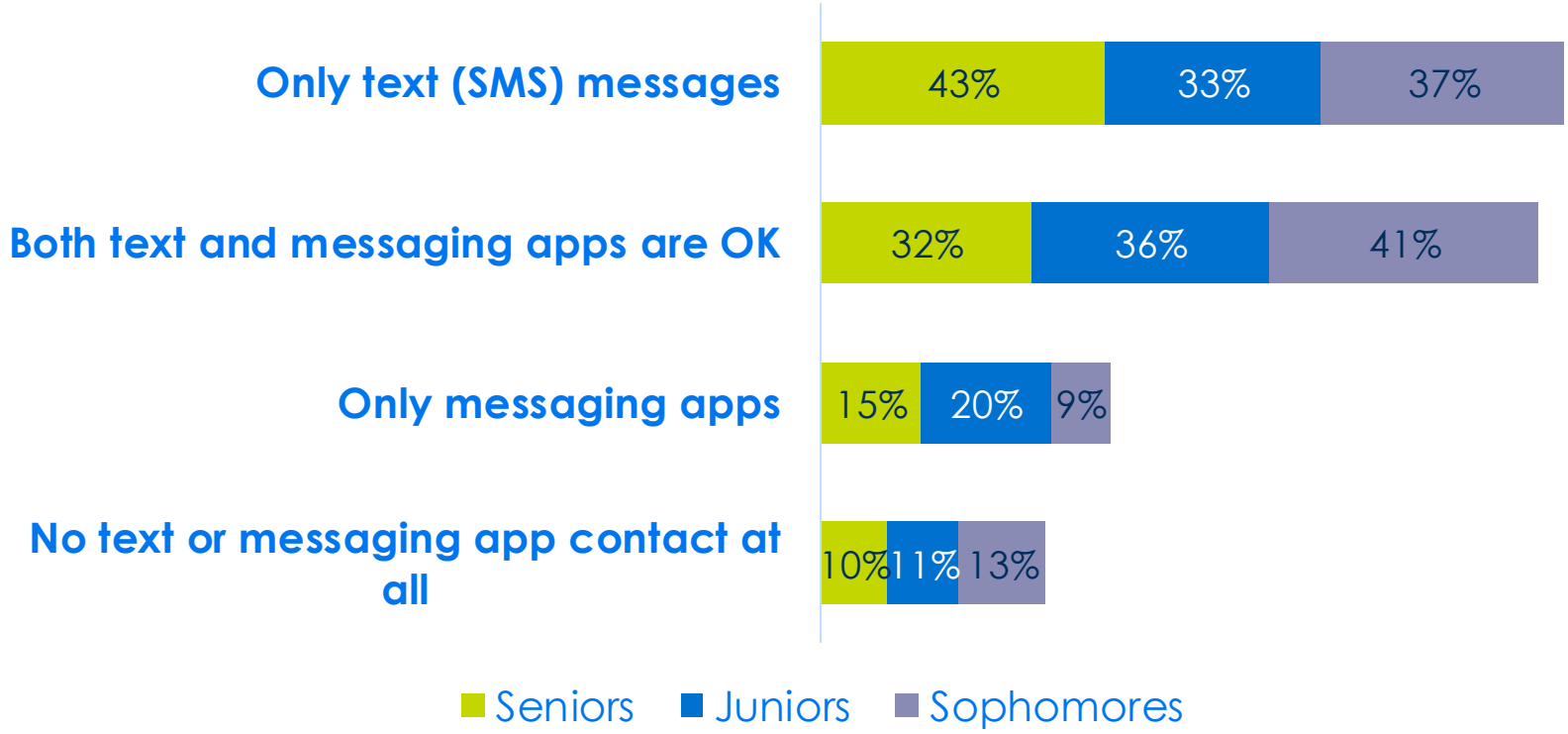


Harnessing Parent and Family Interest

- Nudge the nudgers
- Target throughout the funnel
- Pay attention to parent influencers
- Understand family involvement by gender, ethnicity, and parent educational experience.

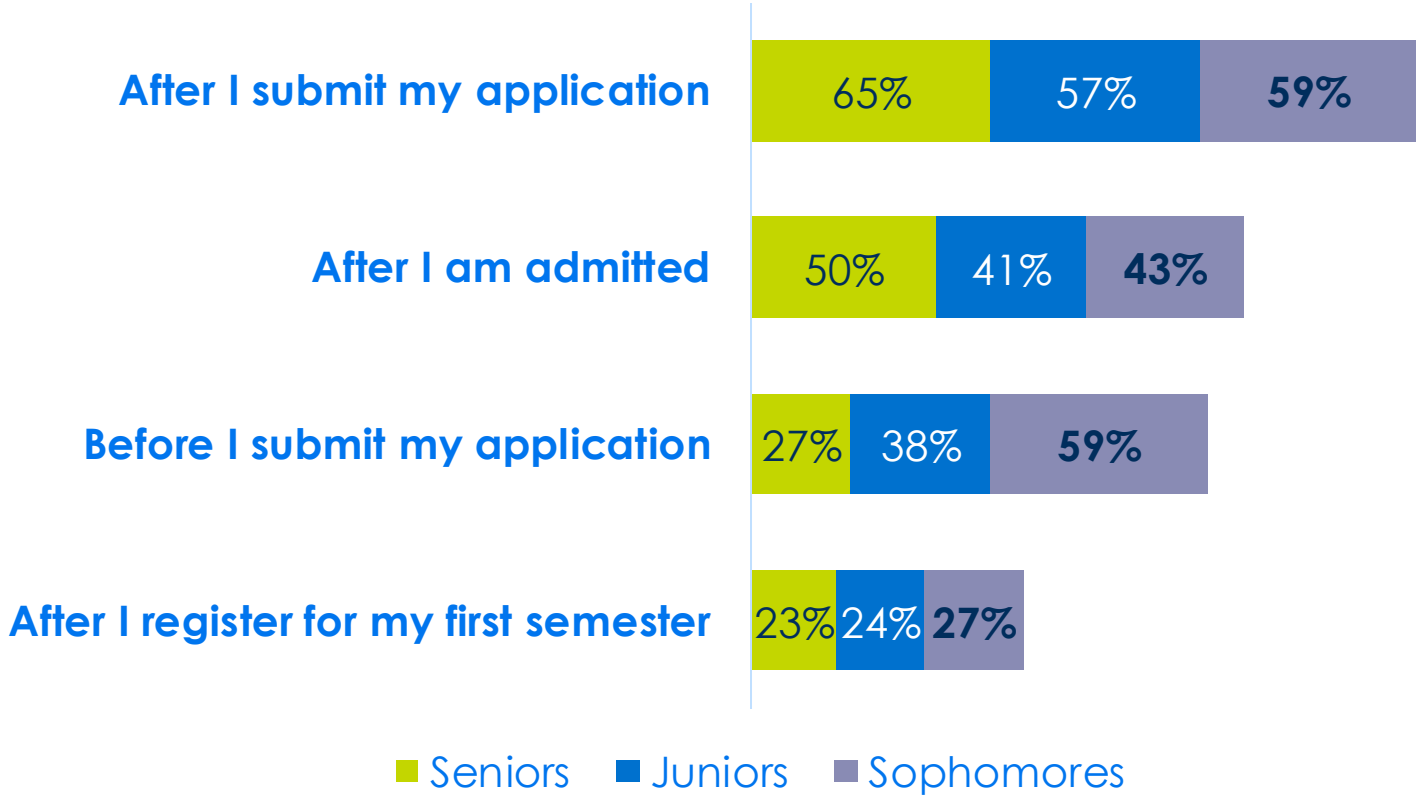
Text Messaging is
Essential

What is Your Preferred Text Format



© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

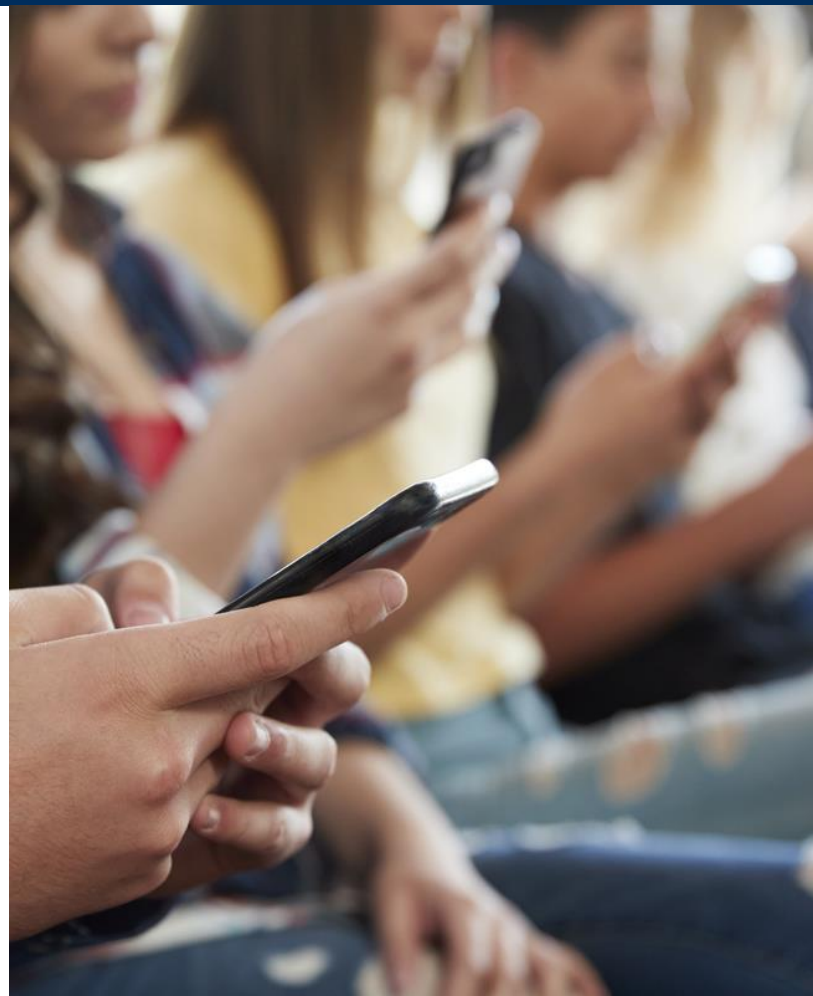
When is the Best Time to Text



© Copyright 2021 RNL, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Take Time to Text

- 9 out of 10 students are open to receiving text messages during the enrollment process
- Incorporate text at applicant and admission stages
- Make texts actionable
- Consider peer to peer
- Parent texting communication plan
- Ask their permission and category preferences (e.g. Financial Aid, Athletics, Housing, etc.)



Social is Visual

What Social Platforms are Students Using?

Top 5 Used Daily

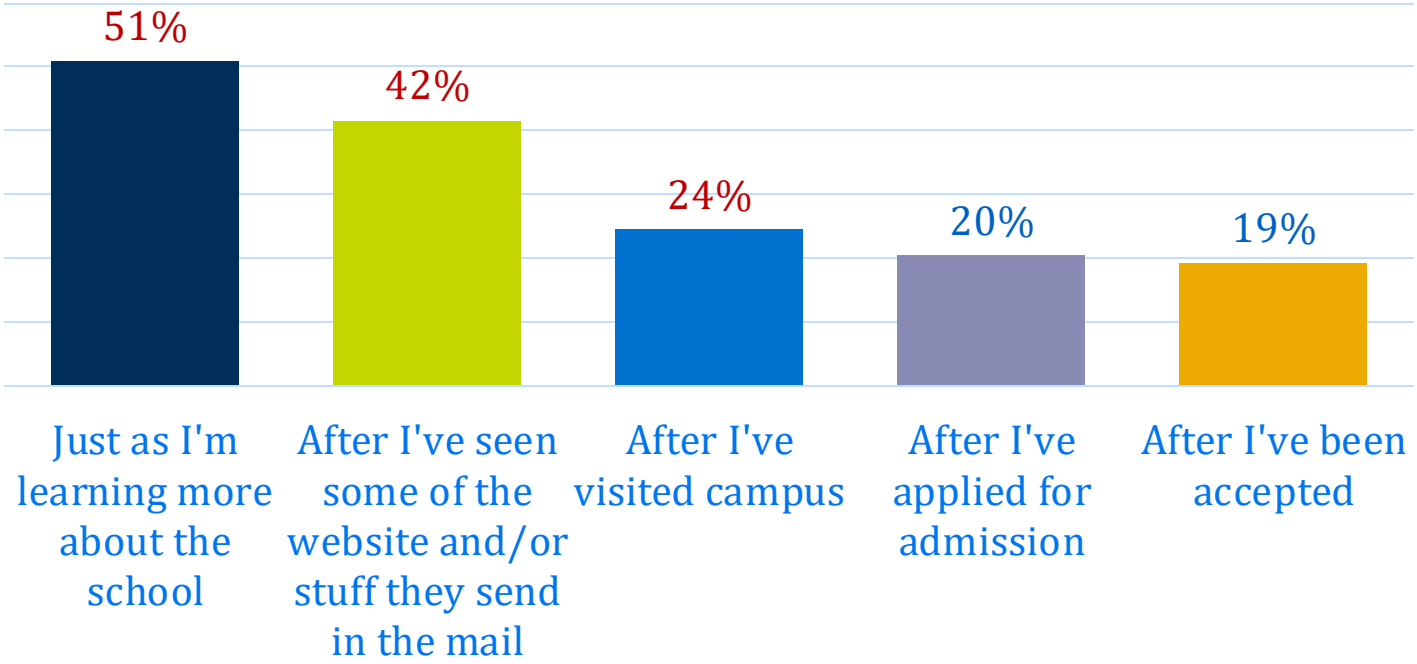
1. Snapchat
2. Instagram
3. YouTube
4. TikTok
5. Facebook

Top 5 Most Useful for College Search

1. Instagram
2. YouTube
3. Facebook
4. Twitter
5. TikTok

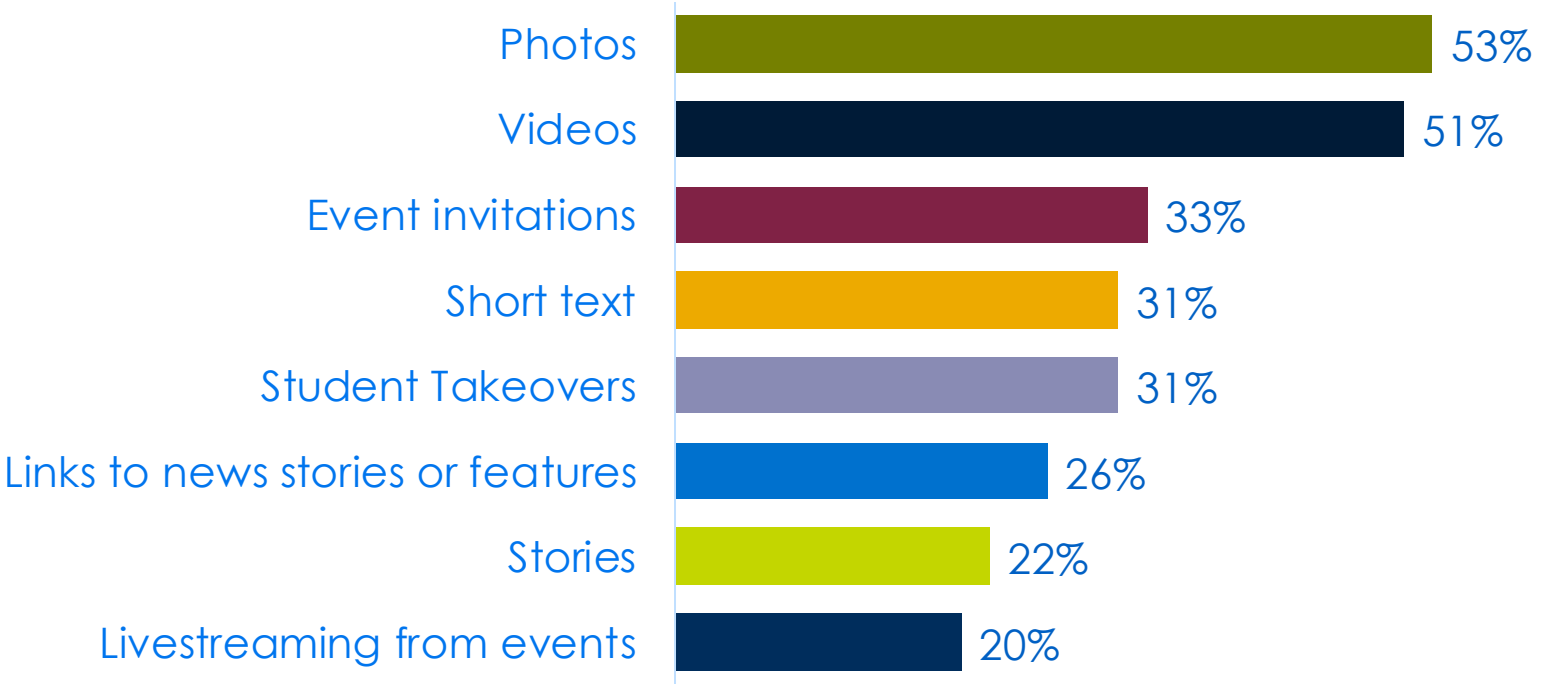
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Social media content is more useful **EARLY**!



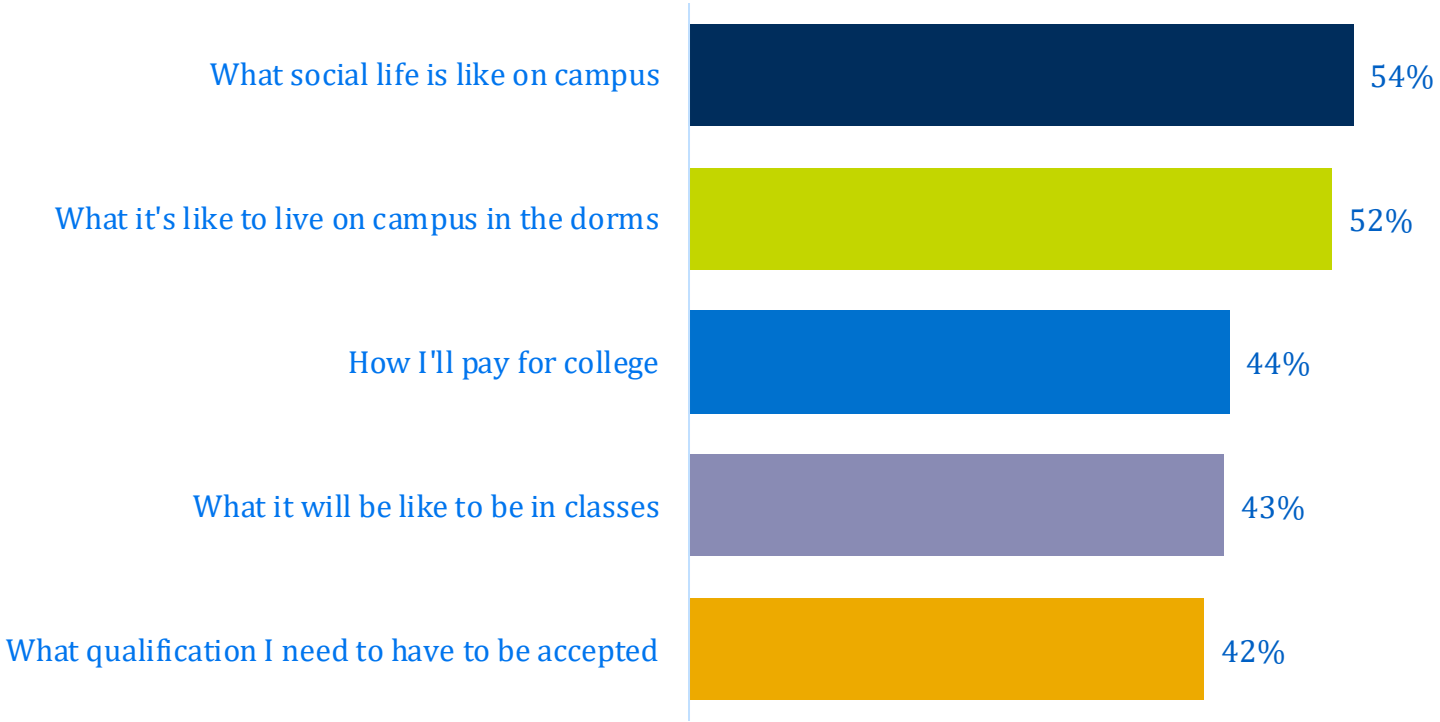
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Most Compelling Social Media Content



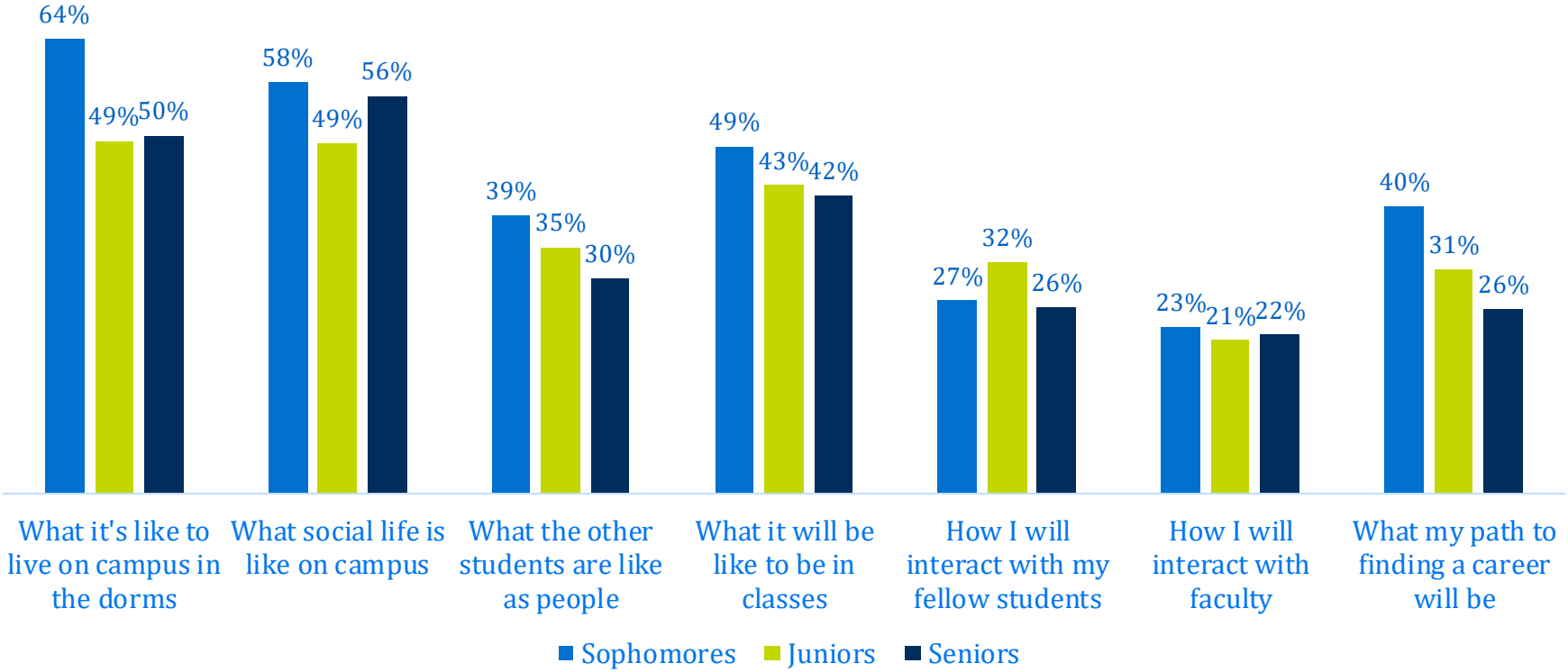
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

What topics are most interesting to you on college or university social media sites?



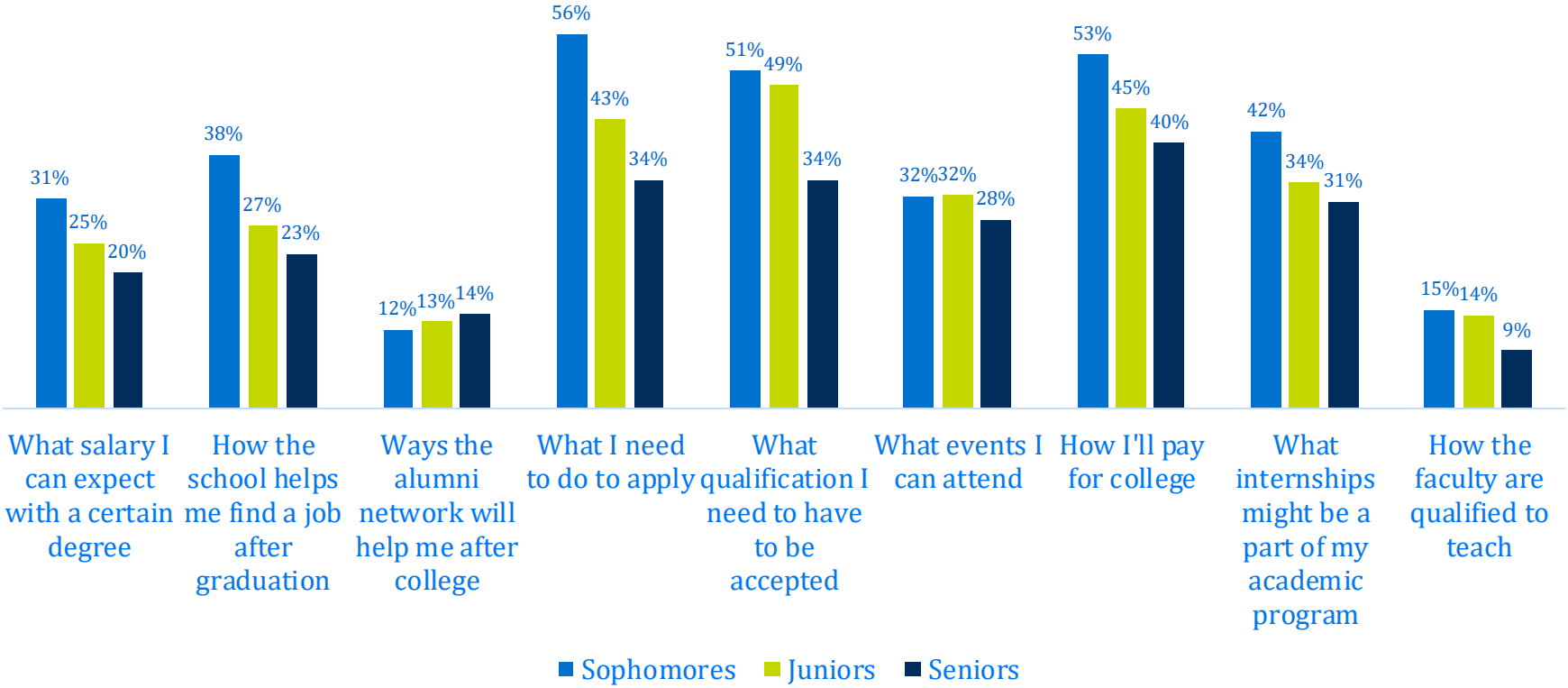
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

What topics are most interesting to you on college or university social media sites?



© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

What topics are most interesting to you on college or university social media sites?



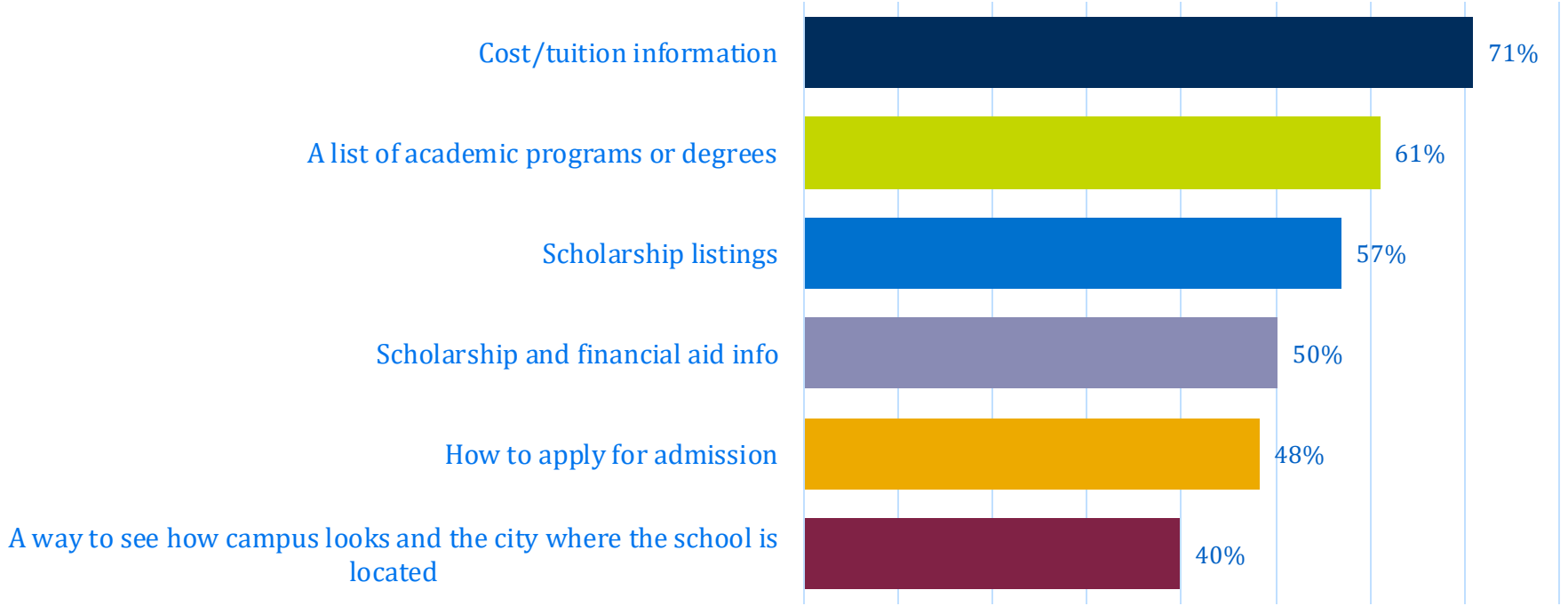
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Get Visual with Social

- Strategically select social media platforms
- Prioritize visual content
- Get current students involved
- Use YouTube to convey detailed instructions
- Incorporate livestreaming into your event calendars

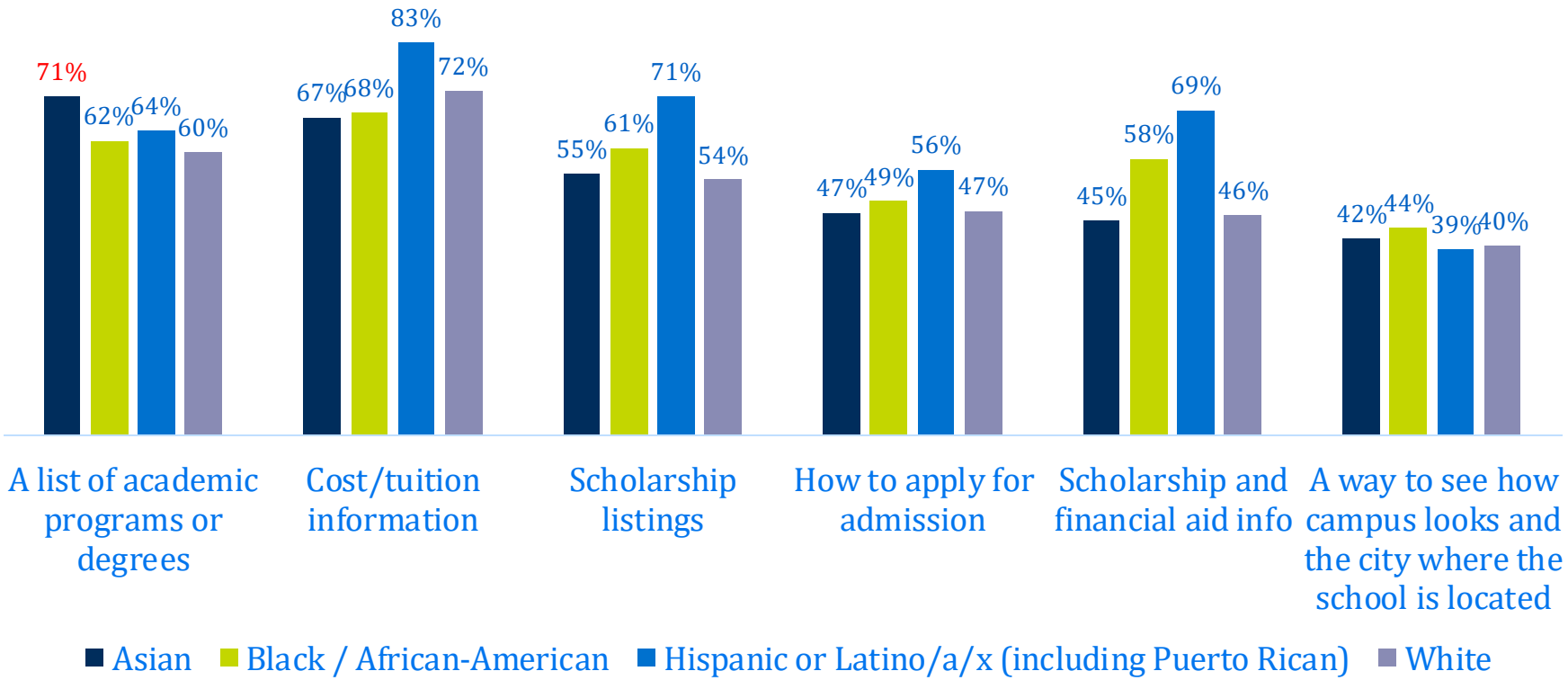
Your Website is Your Brand

Most Valuable Website Content to Students



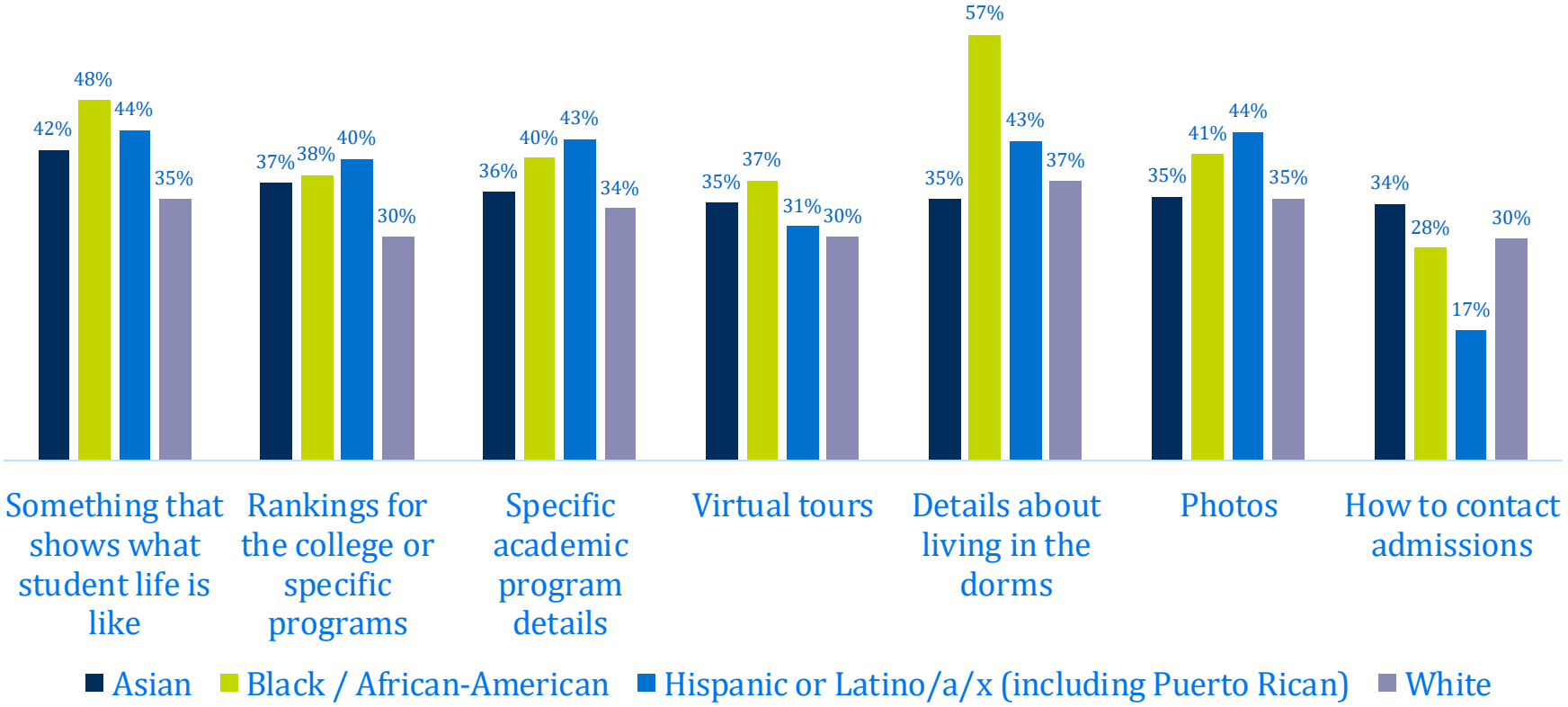
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Most Valuable Website Content to Students



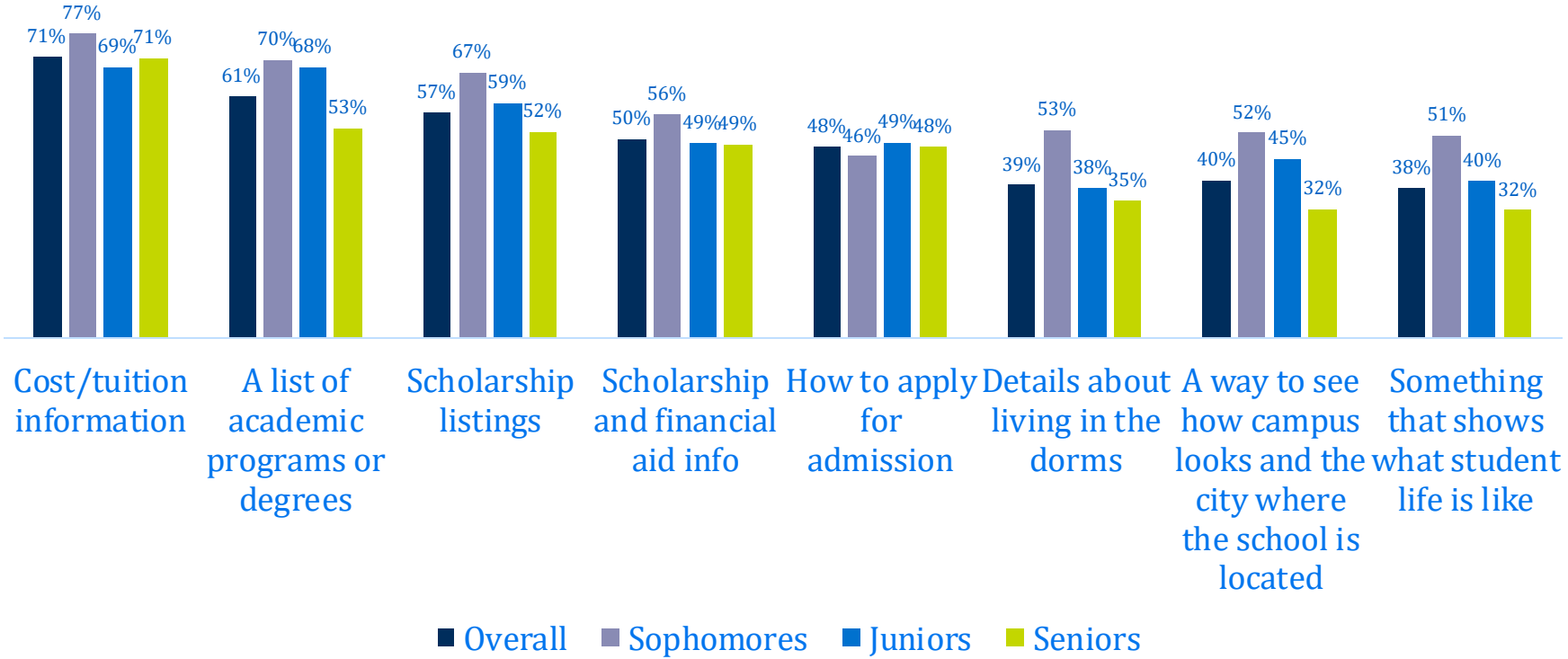
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Most Valuable Website Content to Students



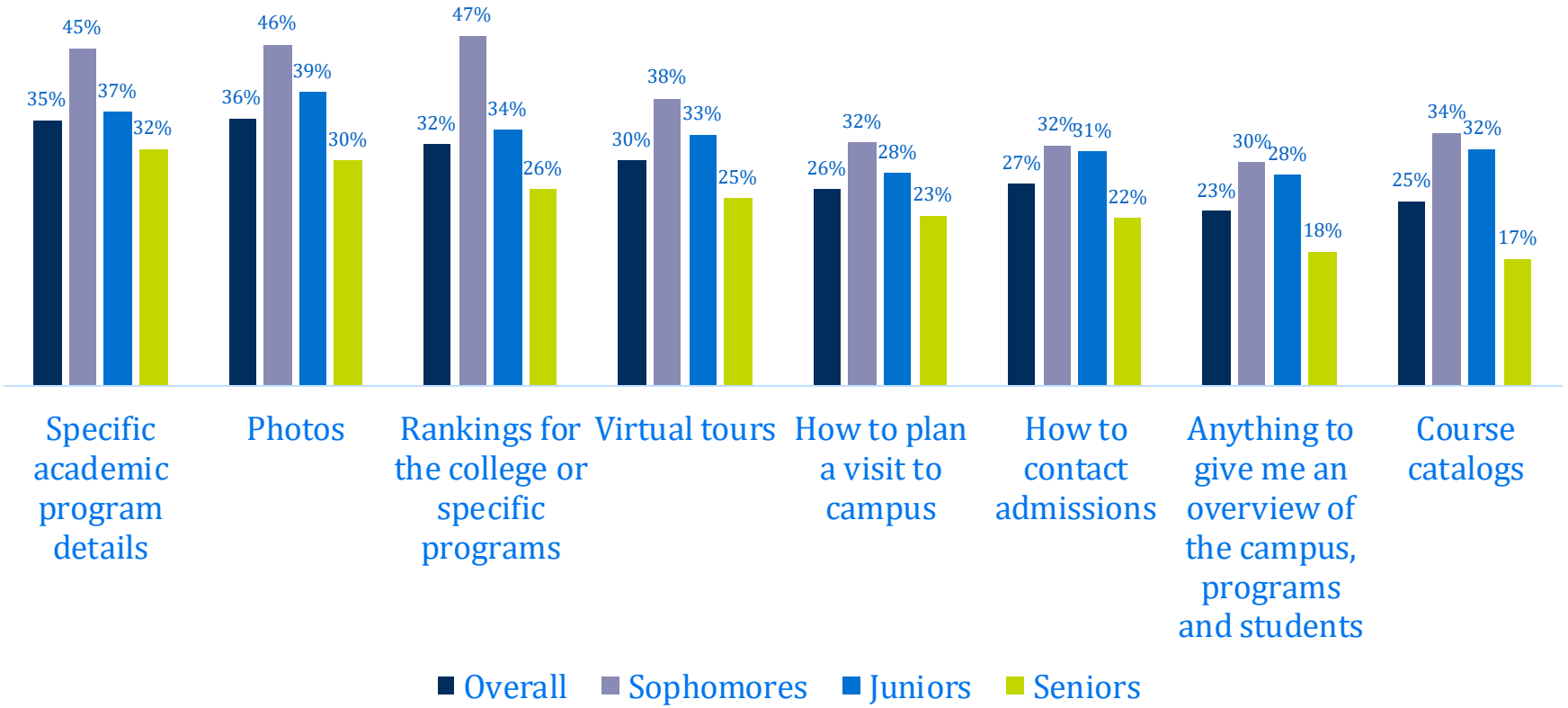
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Most Valuable Website Content to Students



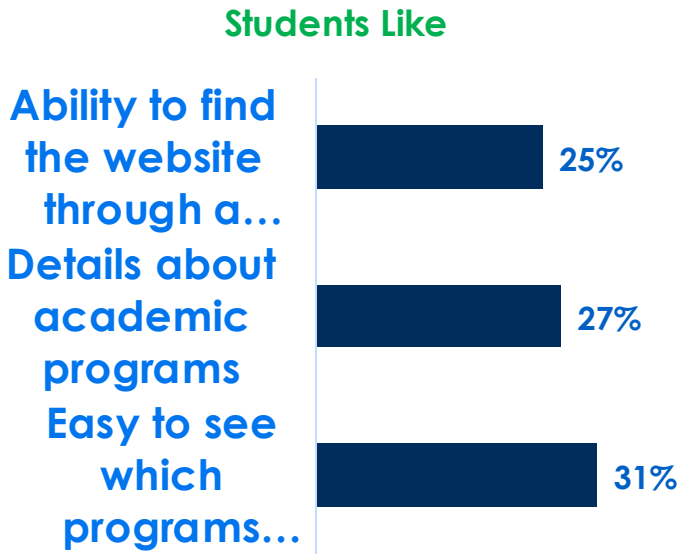
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

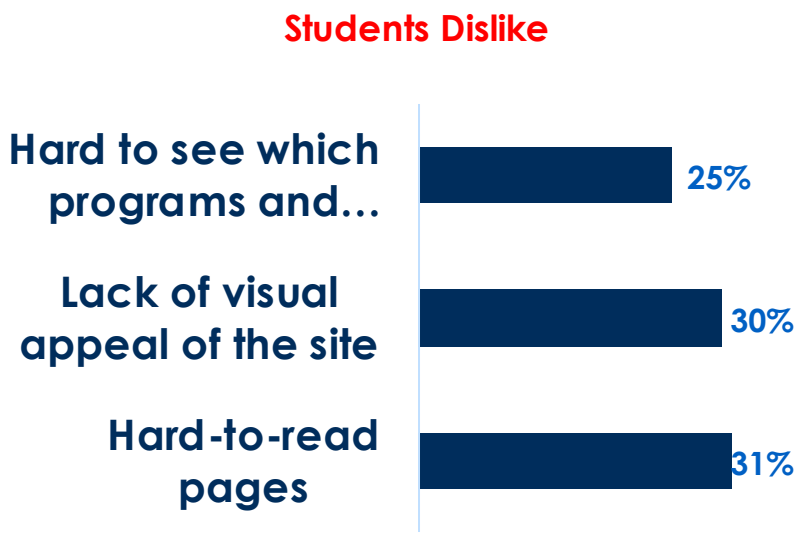
Most Valuable Website Content to Students



© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

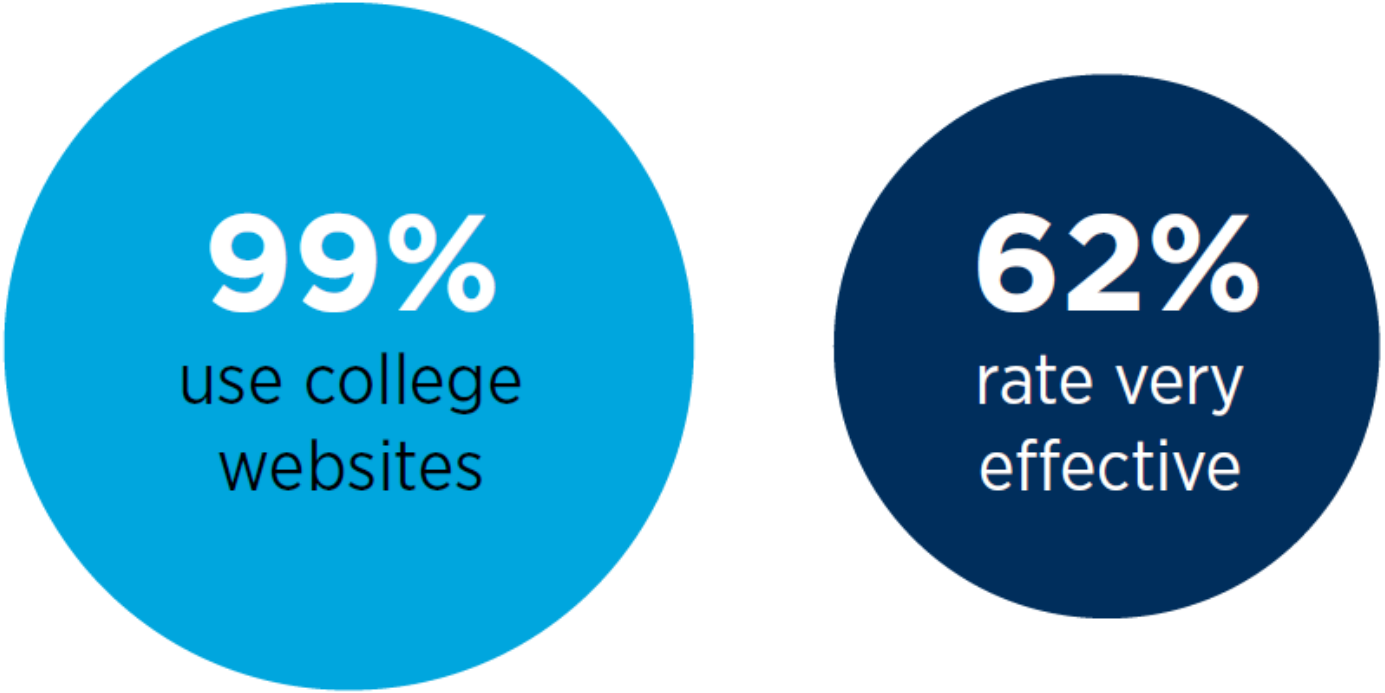
Top Website Experiences Students Like and Dislike





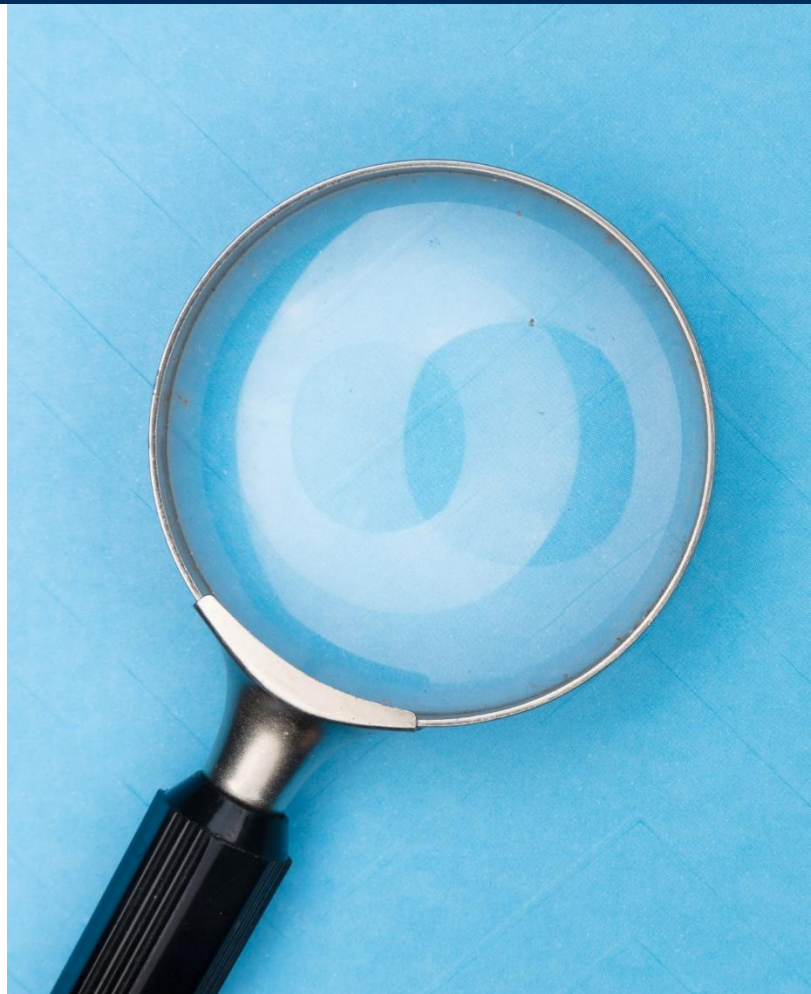
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Family Use of College Websites



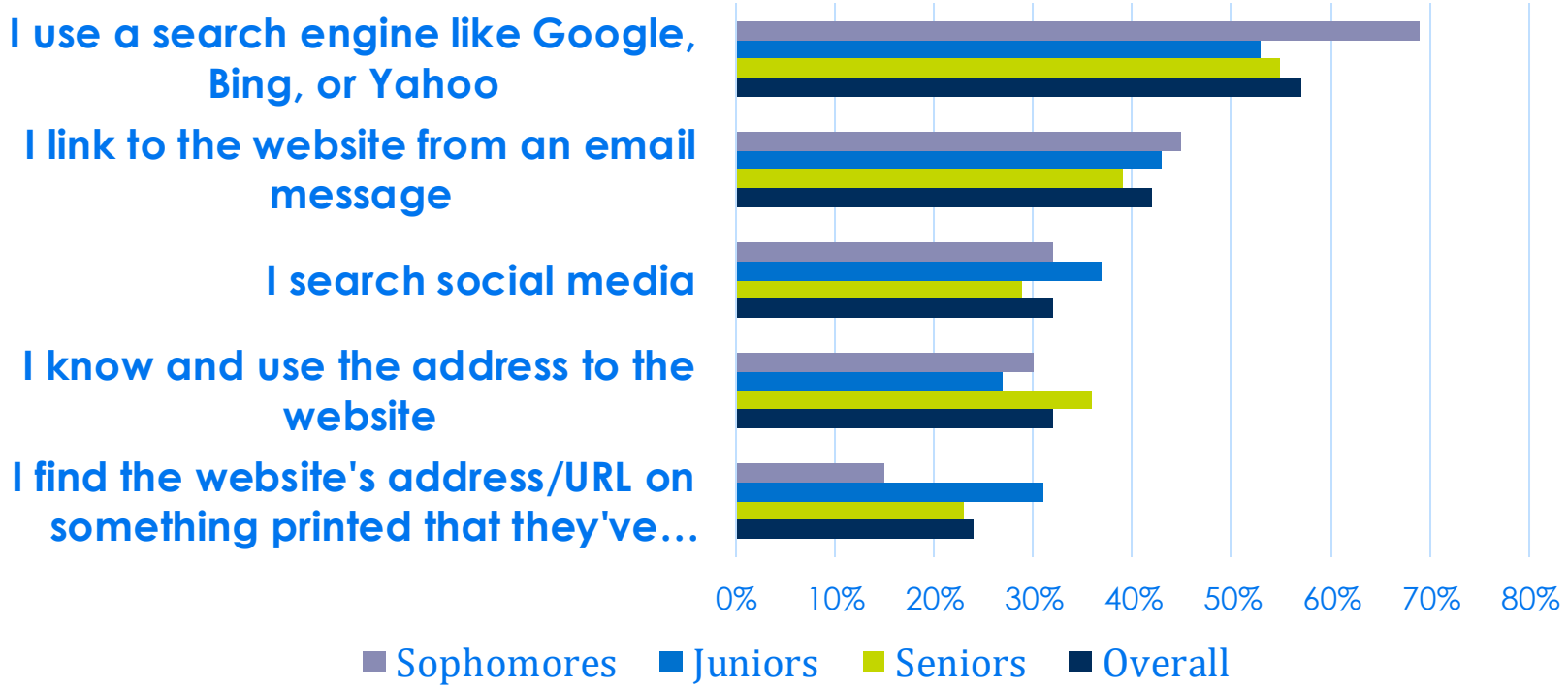
Deliver a Superior Website Experience

- Avoid site friction that can drive students away
- Make program search available, easy to find, and easy to use
- Make sure your forms and buttons are mobile responsive



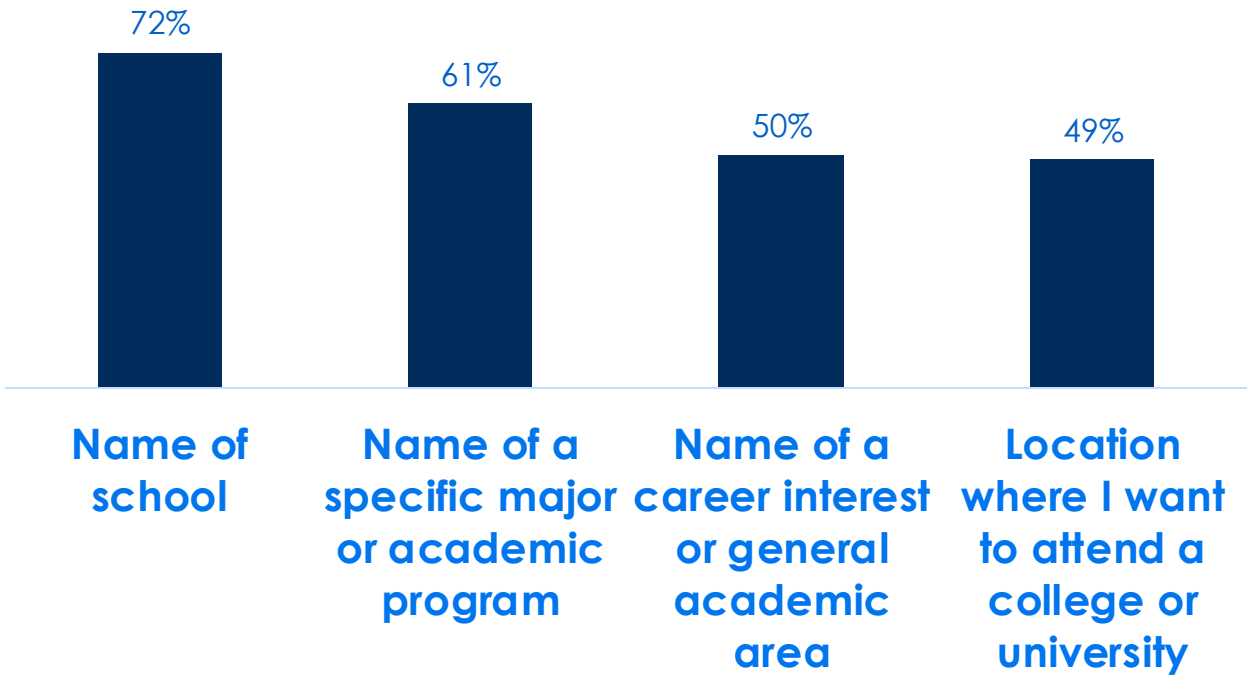
Search Engines Lead
the Way

How Students Navigate to College Websites



© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Search Terms Students Use to Find College Sites



© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Optimize Your Website to Build Traffic and Leads

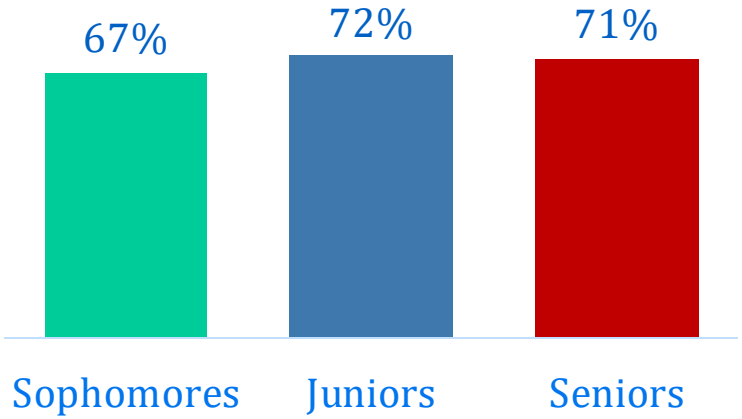
- Build your brand names
- Provide plenty of link-backs
- Optimize your program pages
- Answer their money questions
- Get mobile and voice search friendly

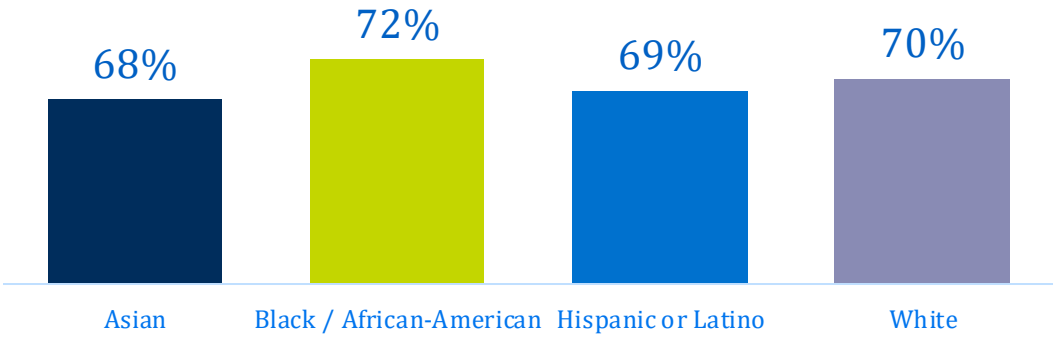
Videos on College Websites

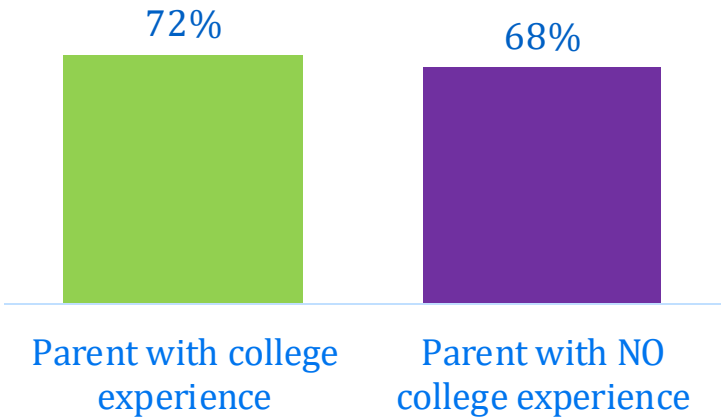
Have you ever watched a video that you found on a college website?

70%

Have watched a video

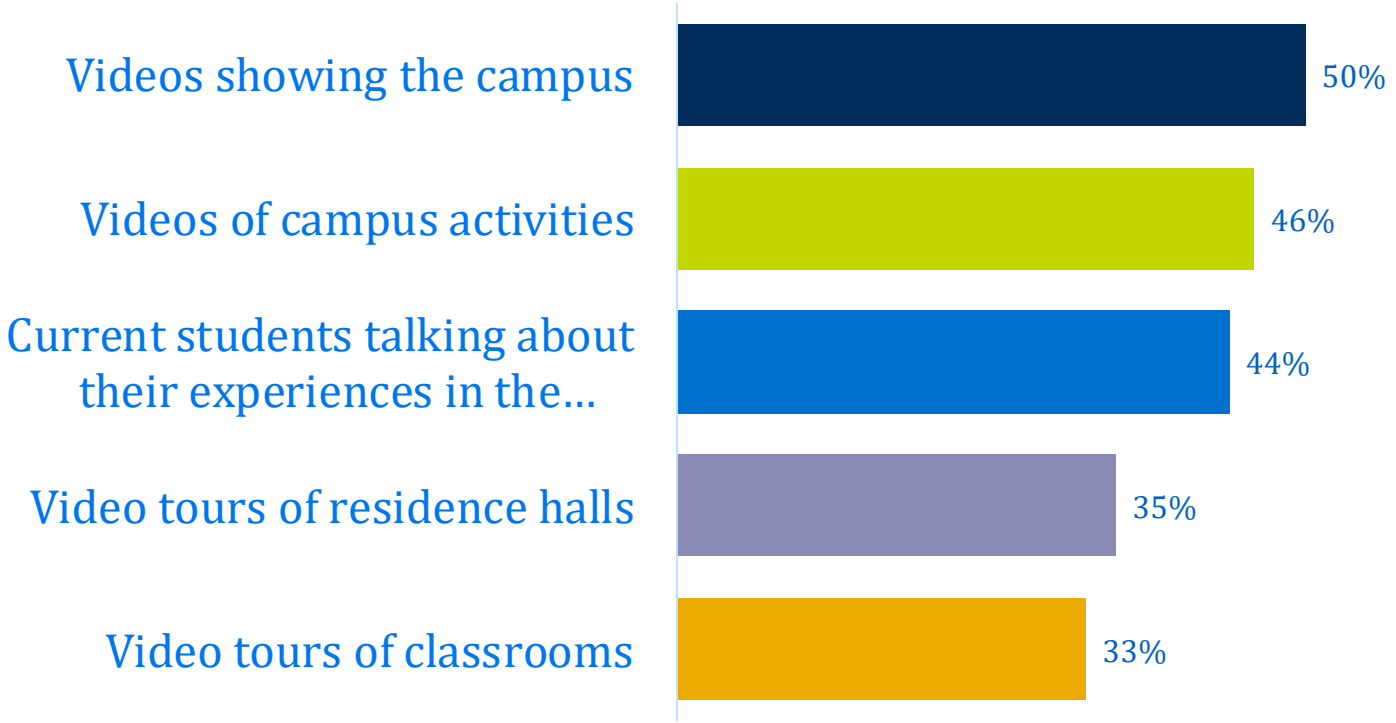






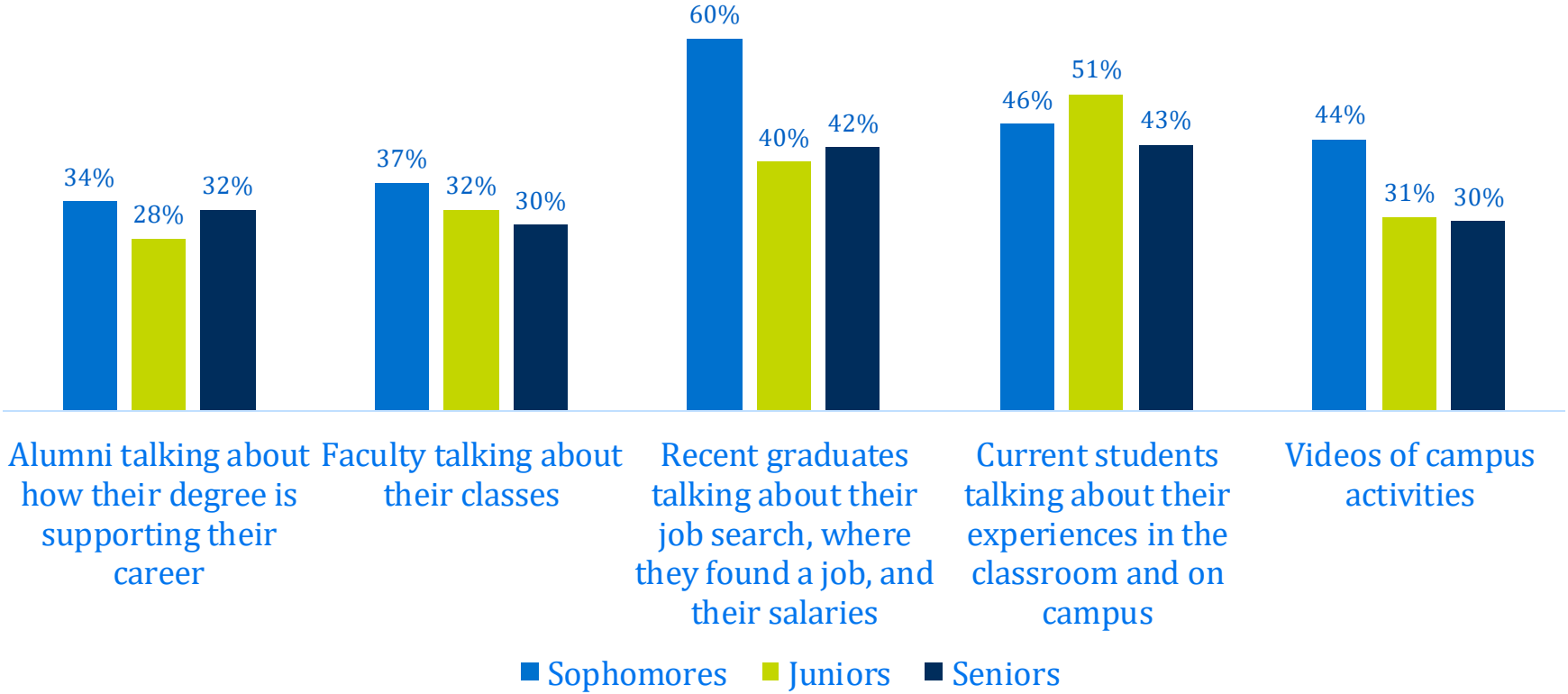
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

What kind of videos are most appealing to you?



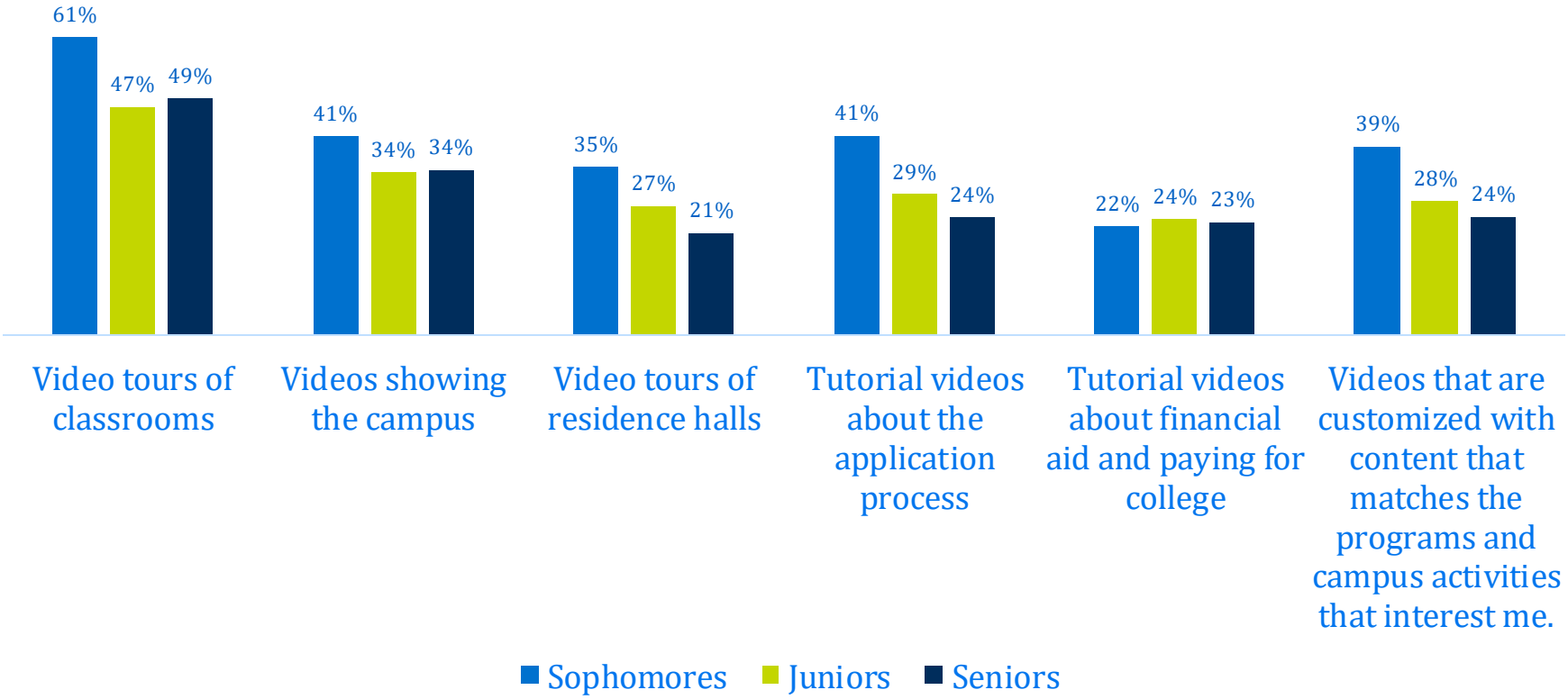
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

What kind of videos are most appealing to you?



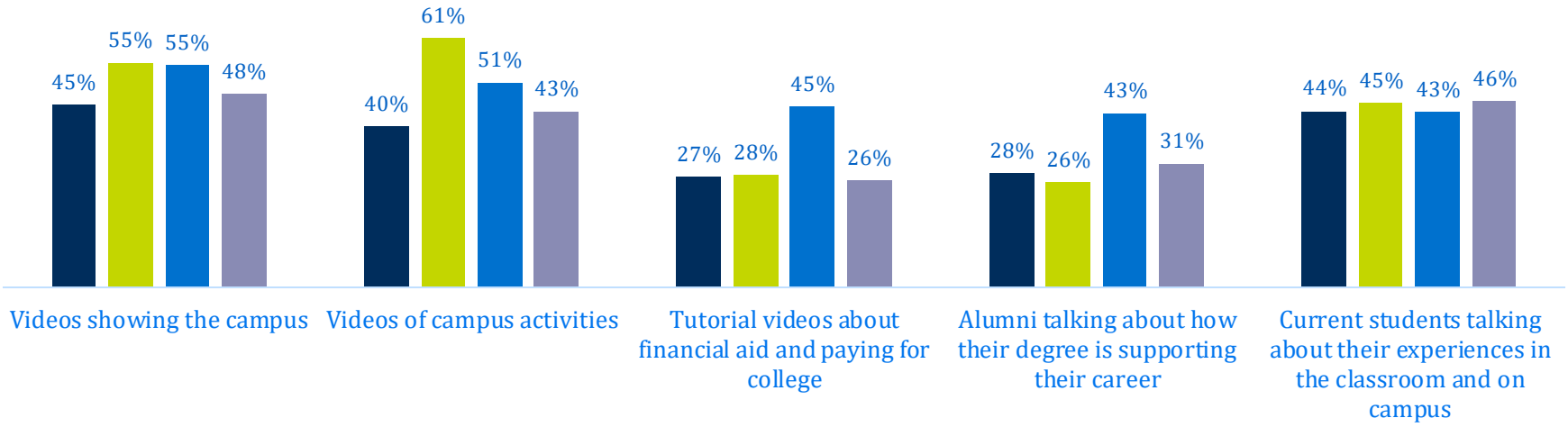
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

What kind of videos are most appealing to you? Continued



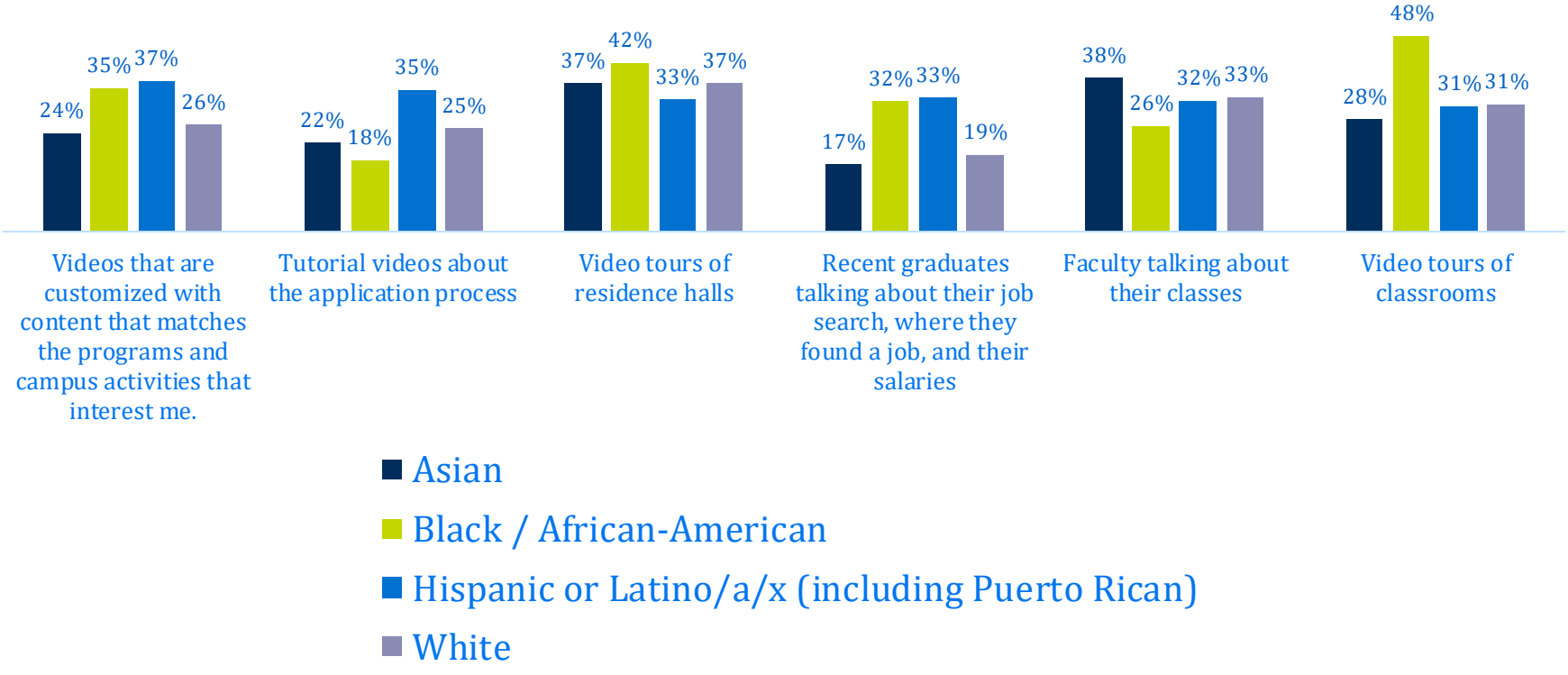
© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

What kind of videos are most appealing to you?



© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

What kind of videos are most appealing to you?



© Copyright 2021 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC, Modern Campus, Mongoose, Plexuss, Teen Life. *E-Expectations 2021*

Keep video content student-experience focused and concise

- Prioritize video development to use across all digital channels and track the ones that get watched and shared the most
- Use video to highlight programs
- Make sure videos are mobile friendly

Key Takeaways

Top Five Takeaways

- Optimize your omnichannel approach
- Video and texting are essential to engagement
- Personalize at scale (including chatbots!)
- Optimize your program pages
- Make your social visual