



PRESENTATION HANDOUT



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

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*Vice President and Senior Consultant*

# About our study

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

Number of completed surveys: 2,087

## High School Class

10 <sup>th</sup> grade	47%
11 <sup>th</sup> grade	33%
12 <sup>th</sup> grade	20%

## Academic Ability

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

## 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%

## 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%*

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

A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a blue checkered shirt. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand and have their left hand on a laptop keyboard. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. Centered over the image is white text that reads: "Students and Families Expect a Seamless, Multi-Channel Experience".

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*

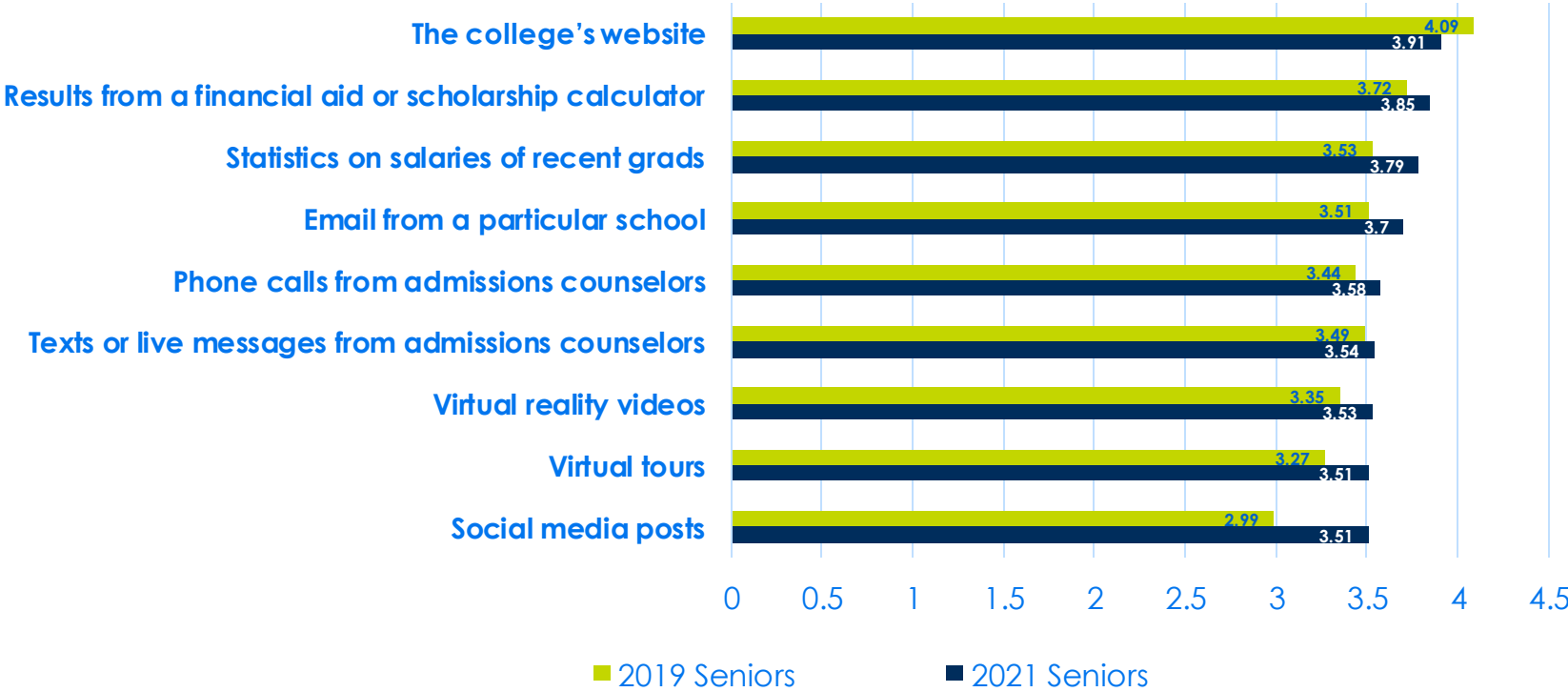
- Video
- Website
- Social media
- Text

## *Top desired content*

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



# Sources Ranked Most Influential in College Search



# Seamless Online Engagement is a Requirement

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



A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a blue checkered shirt. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand and have their left hand on a laptop keyboard. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. Centered over the image is the text "Inquiries are Increasingly Elusive" in a white, sans-serif font.

Inquiries are  
Increasingly Elusive



# Inquiries: How Do Students Want to Reach Out?

I fill out a form on the school's website



I email the school



I use college planning sites



I schedule a visit to campus



I respond to brochures or letters I get in the mail from specific schools



■ Overall 2019 ■ Overall 2021



# Chasing the Vanishing Inquiry

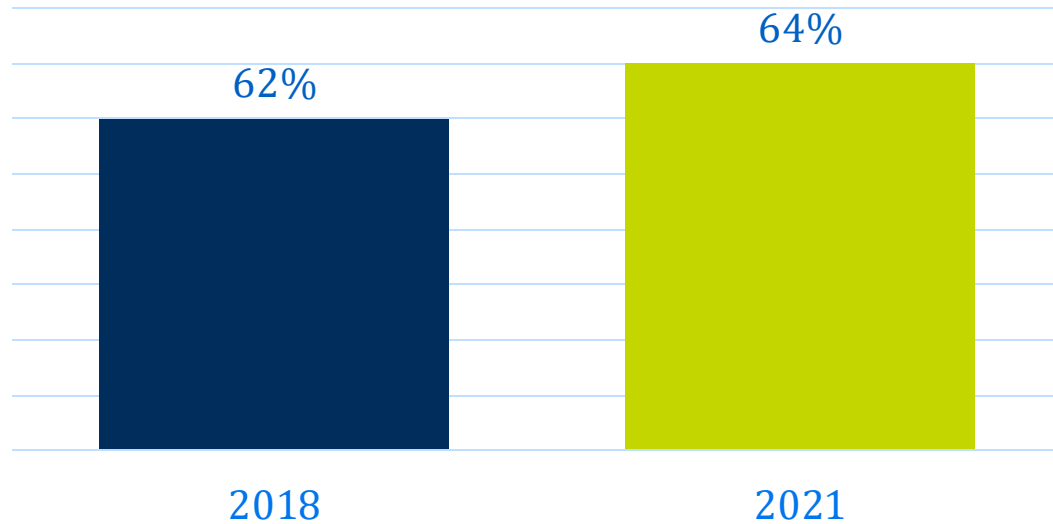
- Lean in to omnichannel search
- Add chatbots as inquiry options
- Don't shy away from email
- Customize the RFI by interest
- Go Digital





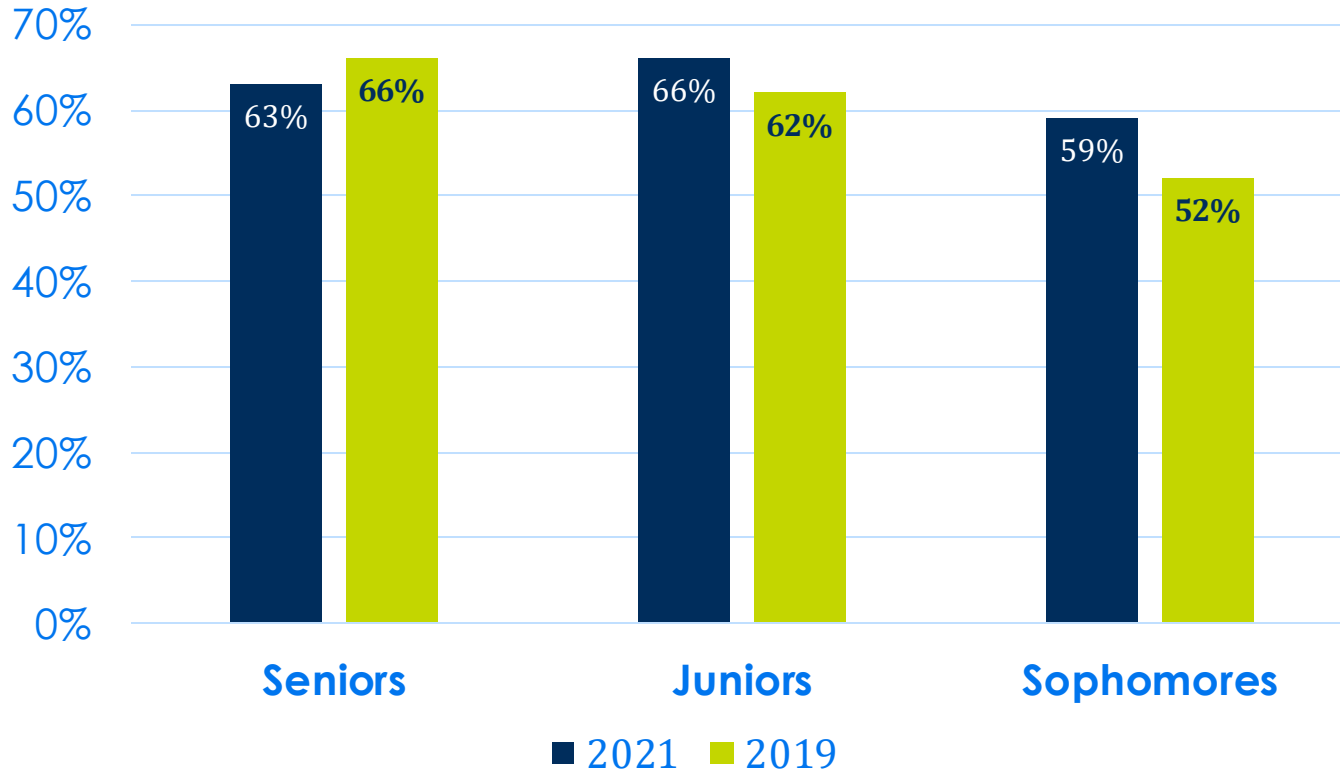
# College Search is a Family Affair

# Have Parents Been Involved in Your College Search?

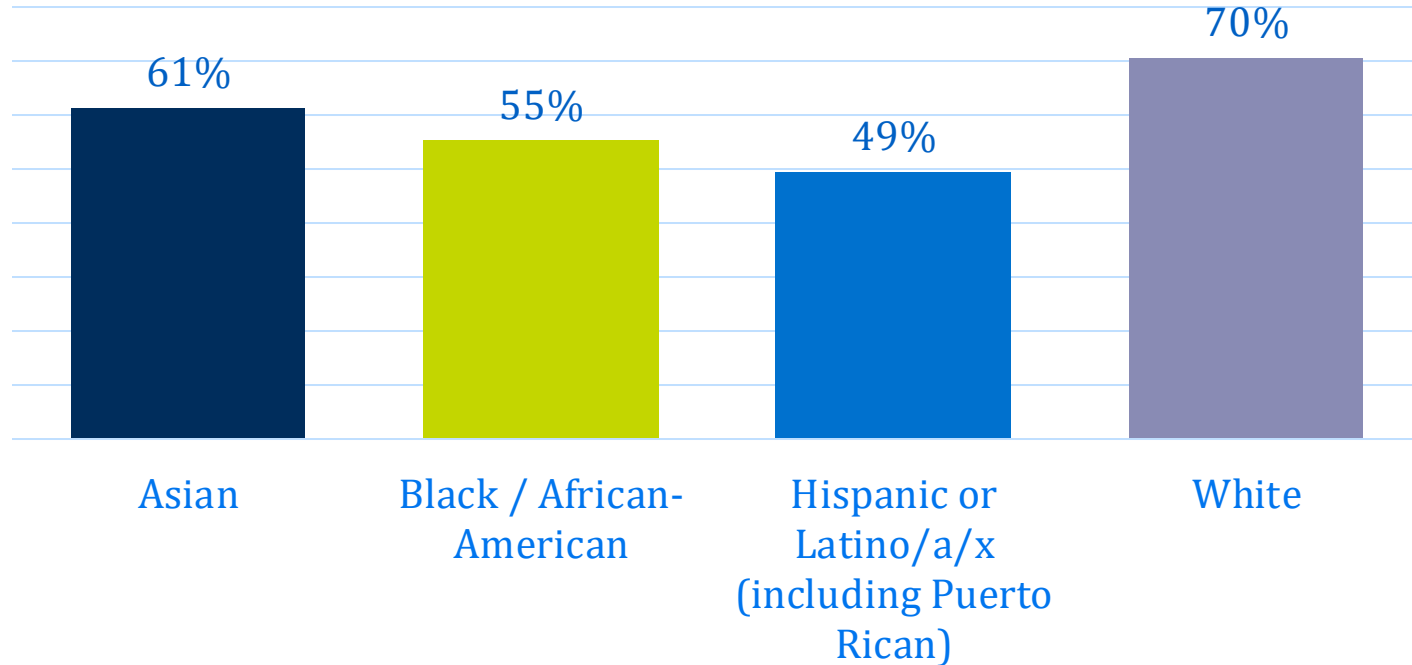


Percentage of students who answered yes

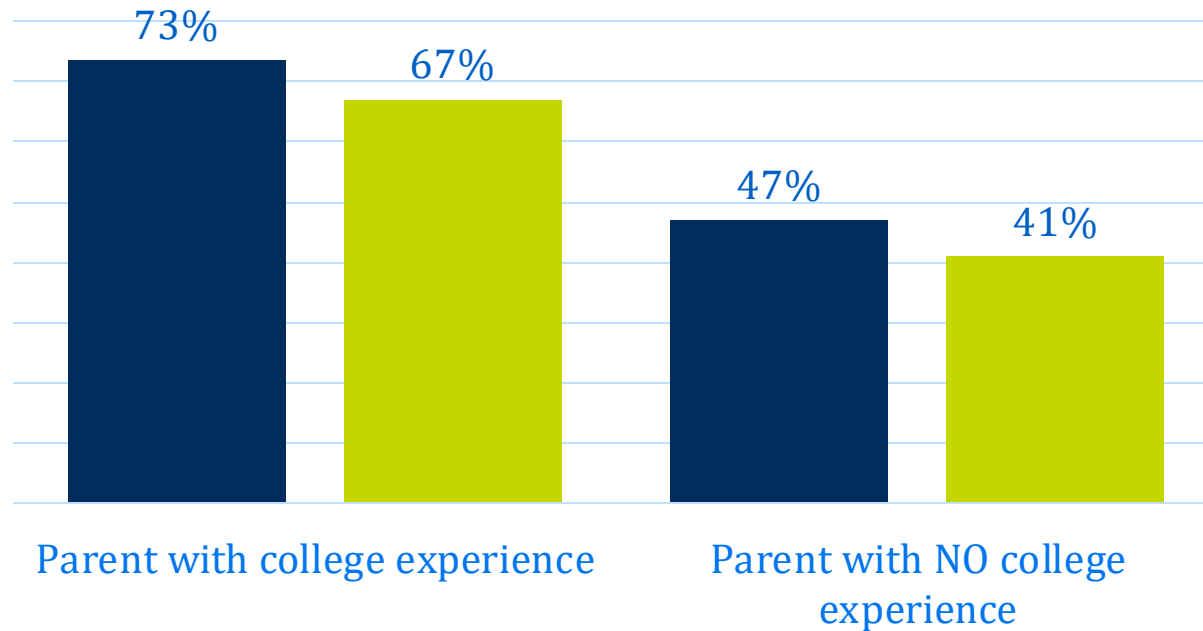
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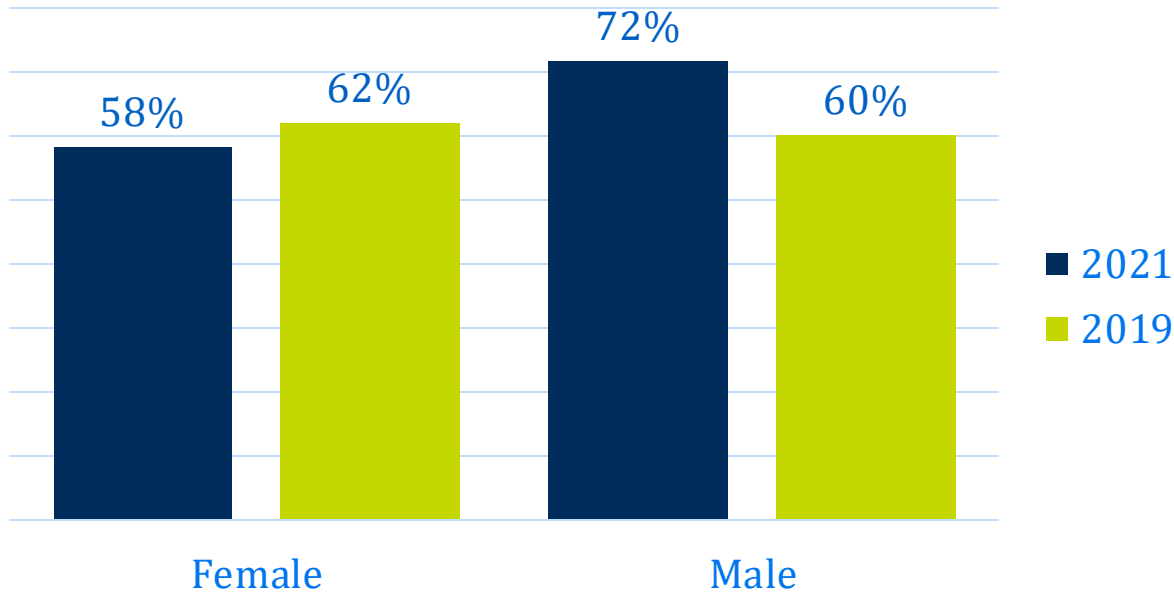
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# Have Parents Been Involved in Your College Search? 2019-2021

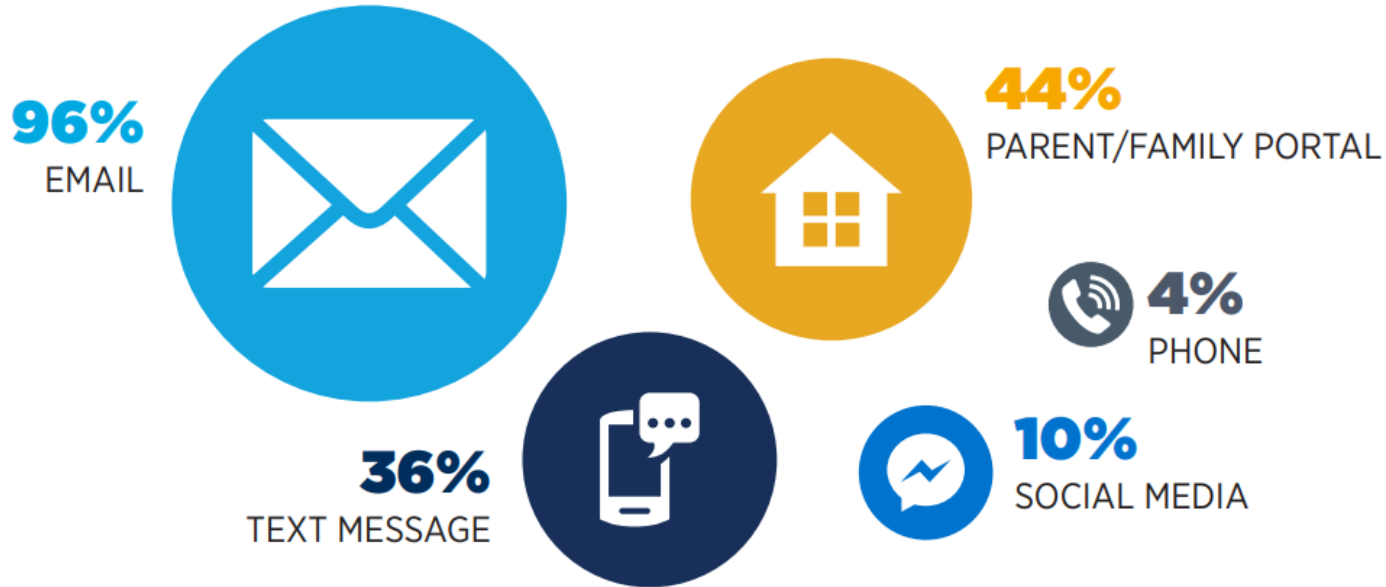


# Have Parents Been Involved in Your College Search?





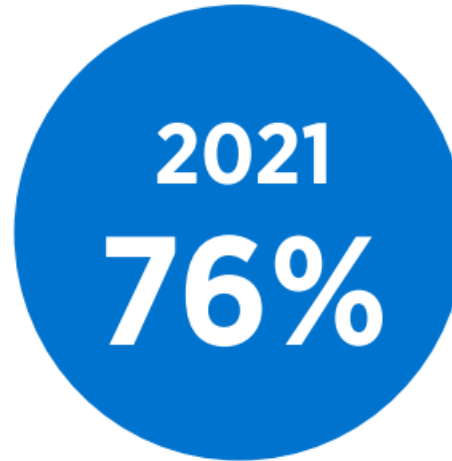
# Preferred Family Communication Channels



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# Preferred Family Communication Frequency

At least once per week



## Harnessing Parent and Family Interest

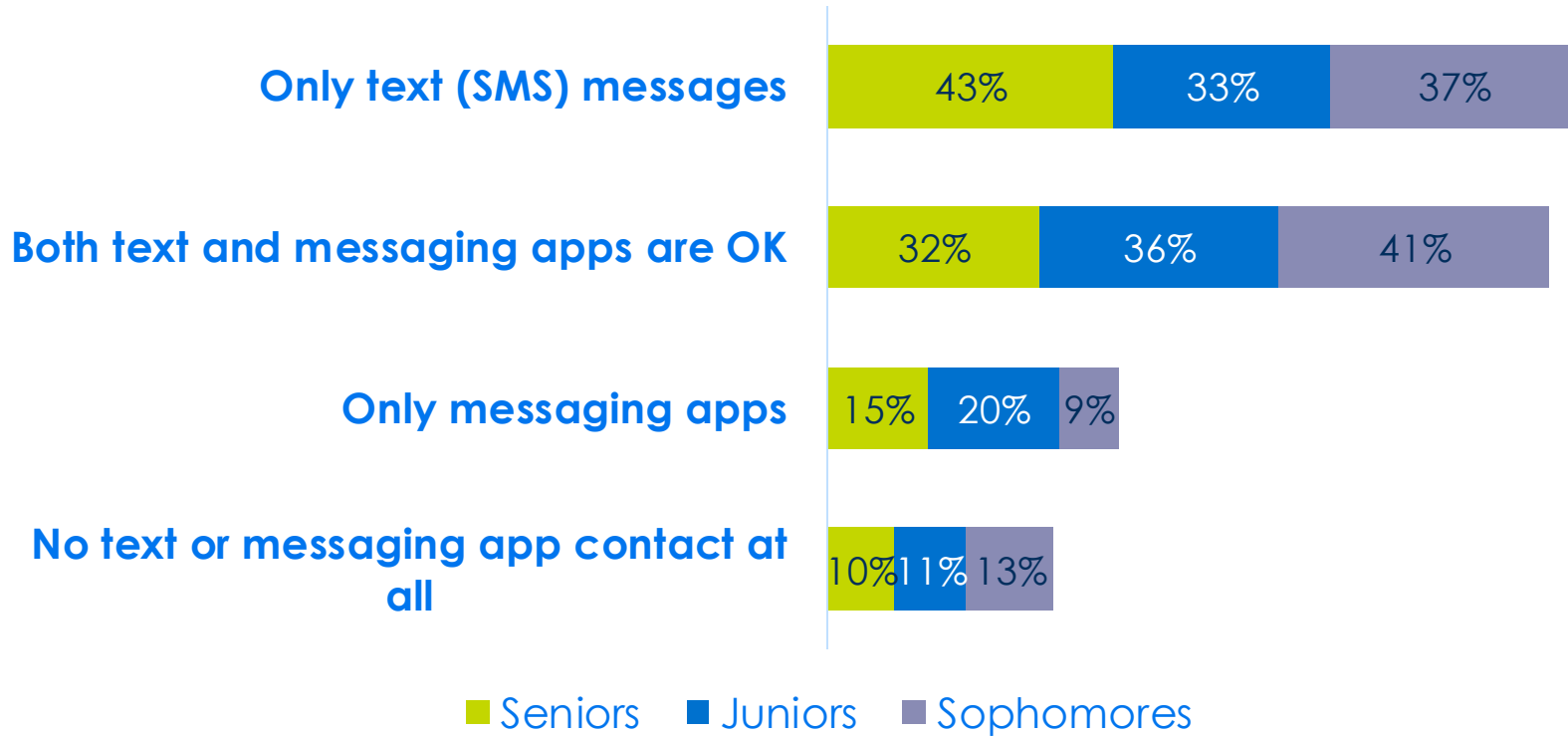
- Nudge the nudgers
- Target throughout the funnel
- Pay attention to parent influencers
- Understand family involvement by gender, ethnicity, and parent educational experience.



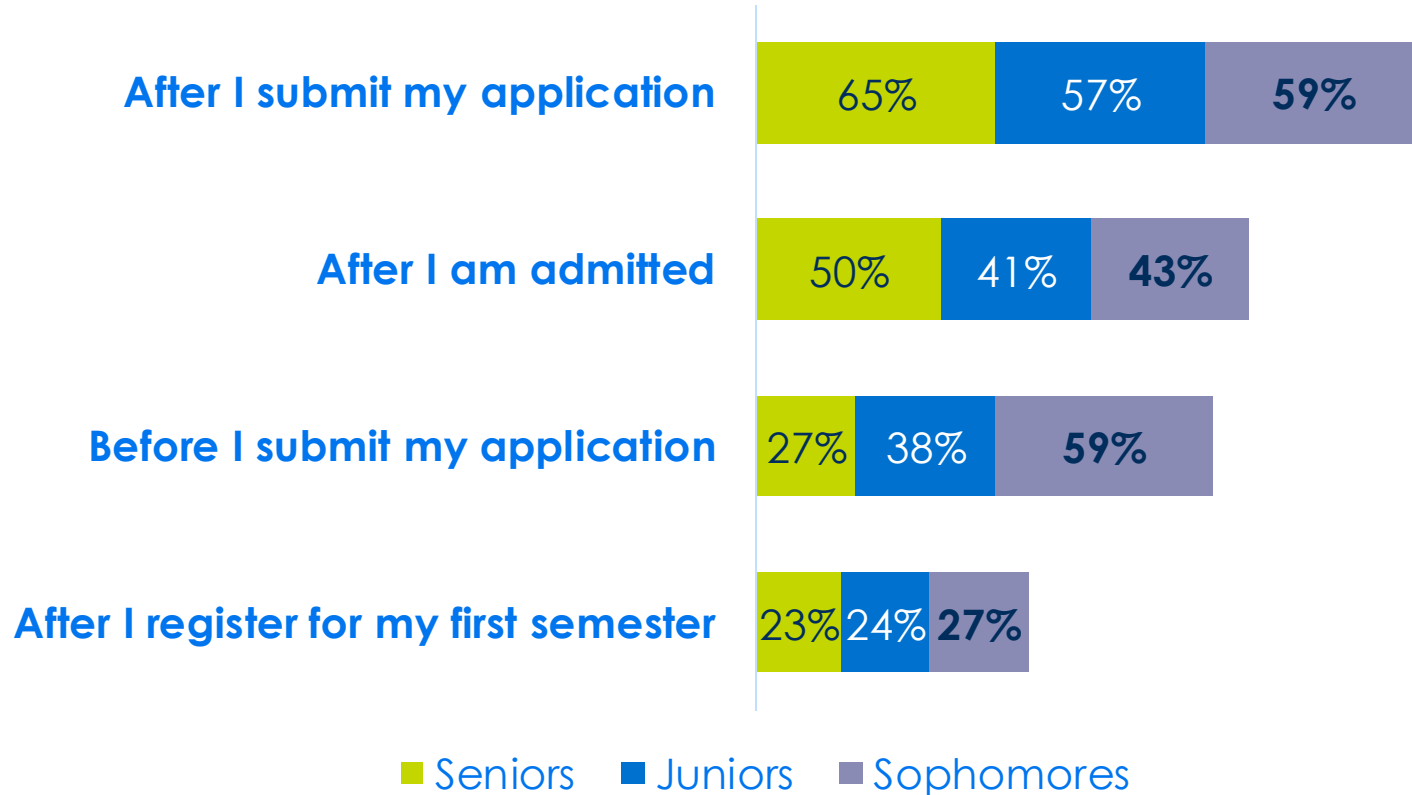
A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a blue checkered shirt. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand and have their left hand on a laptop keyboard. The background is a blurred office setting. The text "Text Messaging is Essential" is overlaid in white, centered on the image.

Text Messaging is  
Essential

# What is Your Preferred Text Format



# When is the Best Time to Text



## 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.)



A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a blue checkered shirt. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand and have their left hand on a laptop keyboard. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "Social is Visual" is centered in white, sans-serif font.

Social is Visual



# What Social Platforms are Students Using?

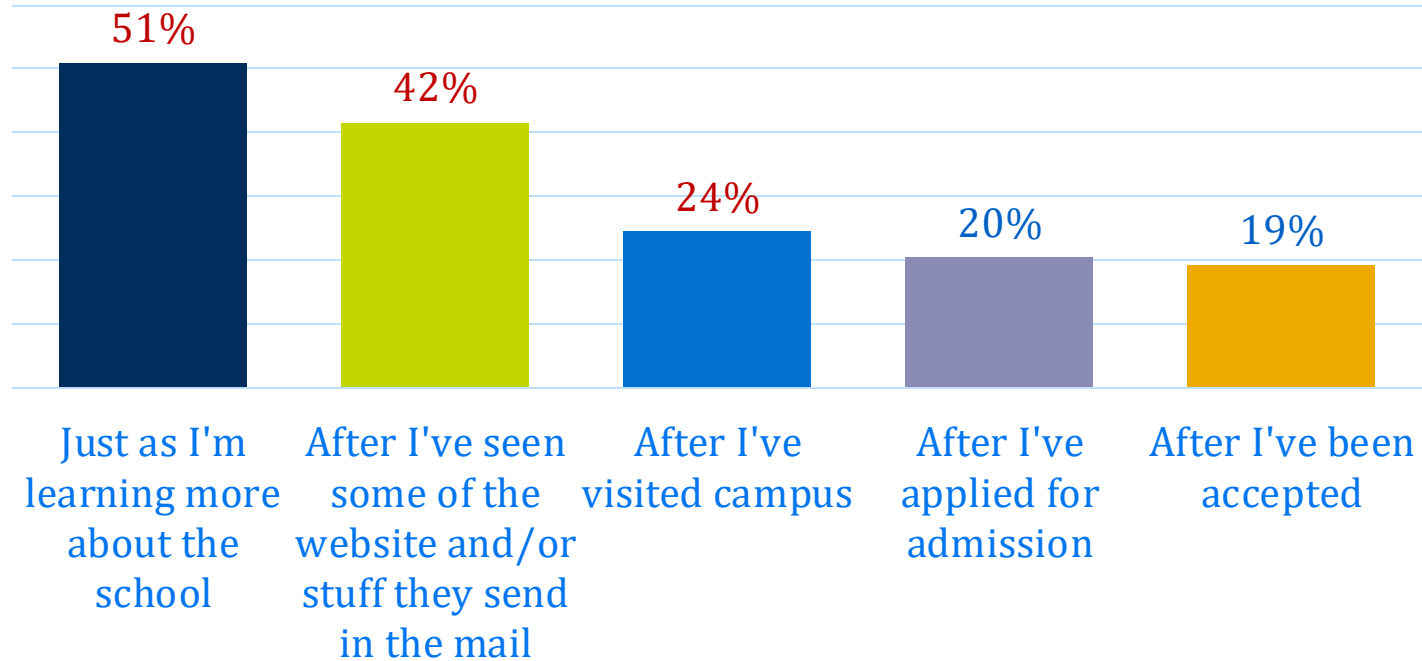
## Top 5 Used Daily

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

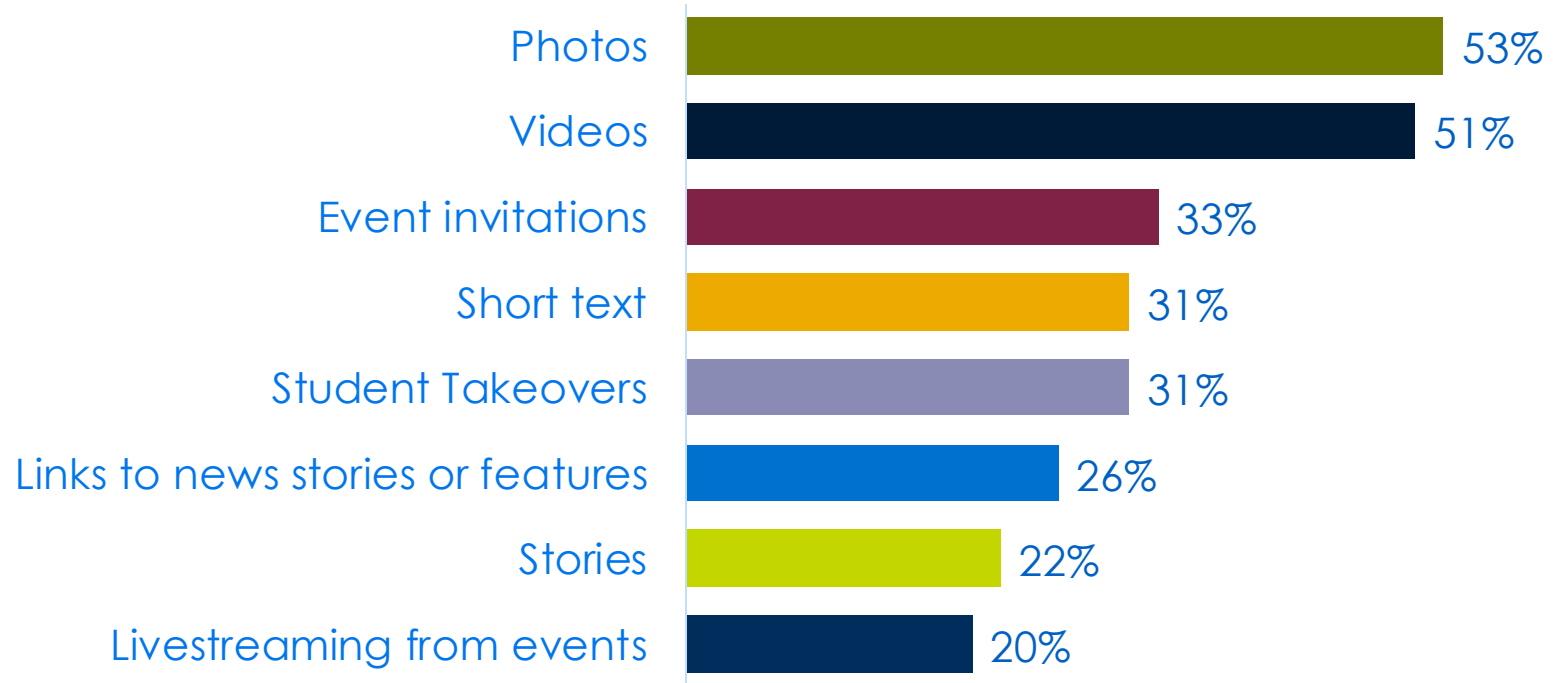
## Top 5 Most Useful for College Search

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

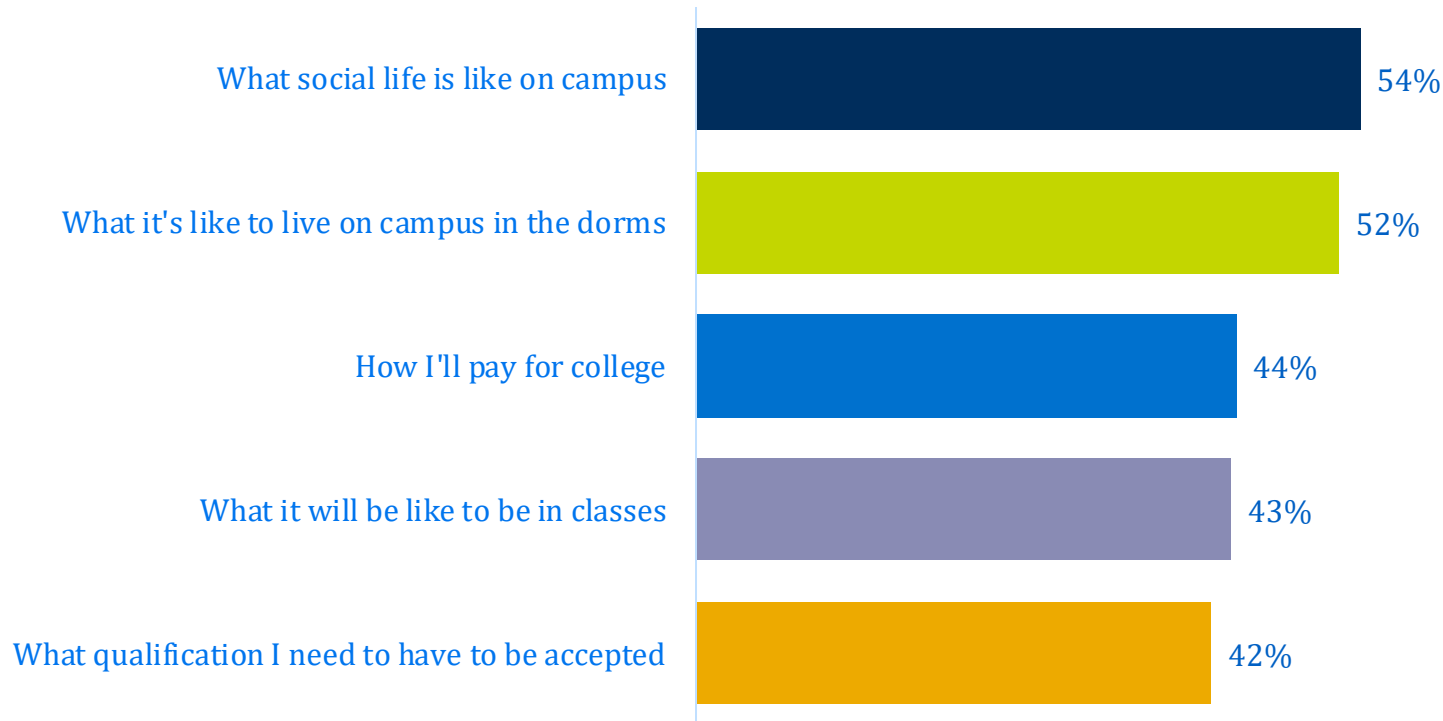
# Social media content is more useful **EARLY!**



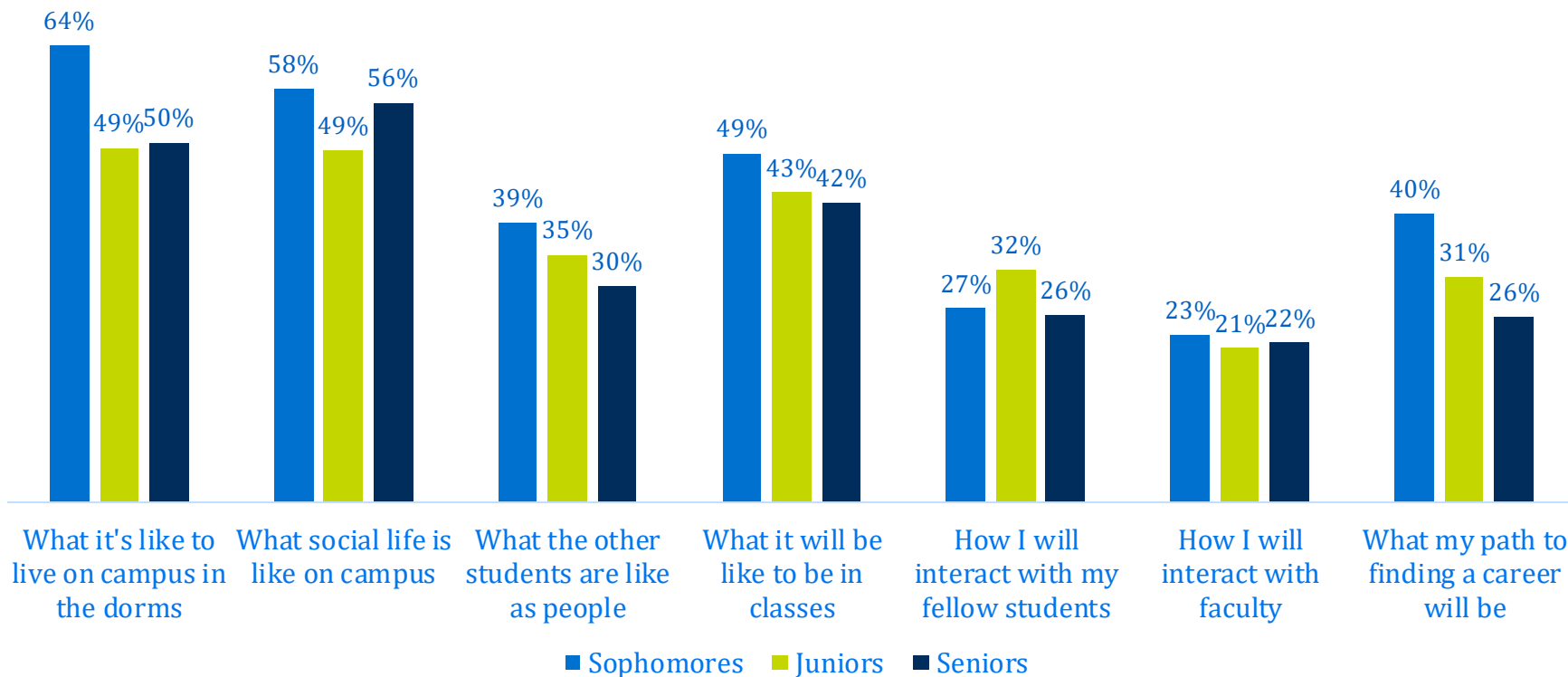
# Most Compelling Social Media Content



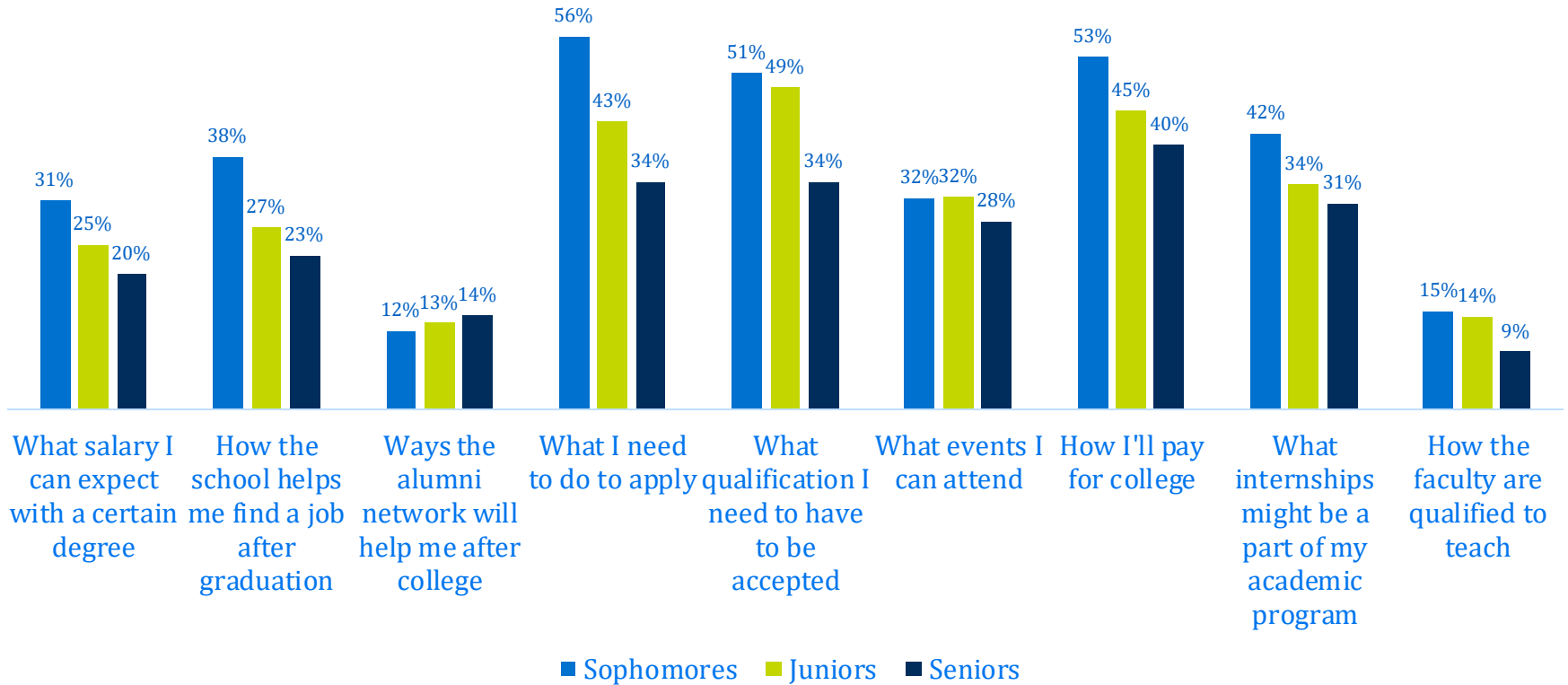
# What topics are most interesting to you on college or university social media sites?



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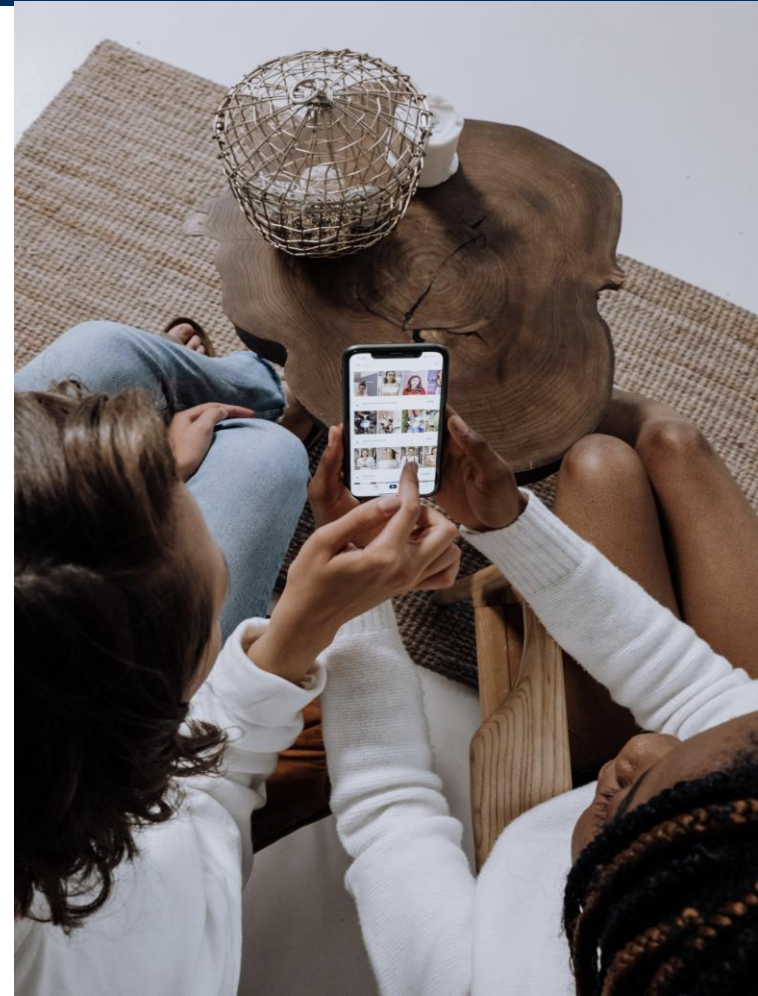


# What topics are most interesting to you on college or university social media sites?



## 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

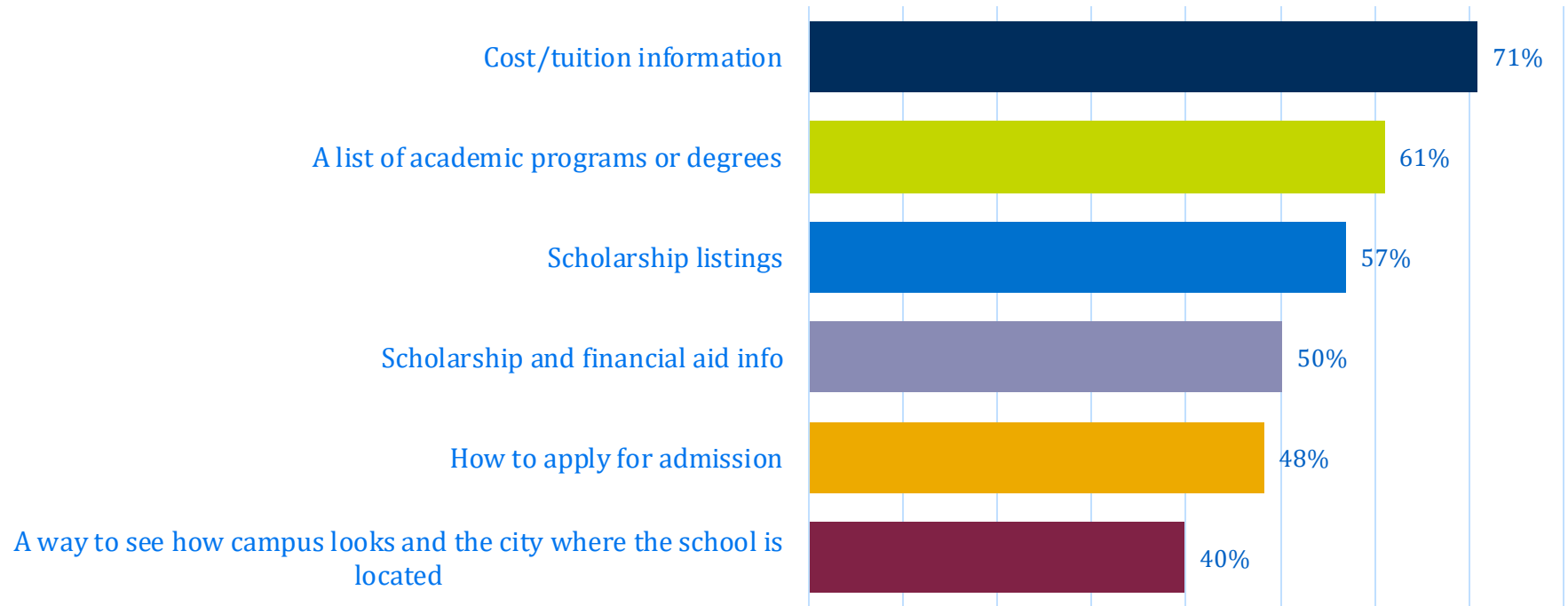


A group of people in a meeting looking at a laptop screen. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter. The text "Your Website is Your Brand" is centered in white. The background shows a woman in a light blue shirt talking on a phone, a woman in a dark sweater smiling and writing in a notebook, and a man in a red and black plaid shirt leaning over. There is a laptop, a coffee cup, and a smartphone on the table.

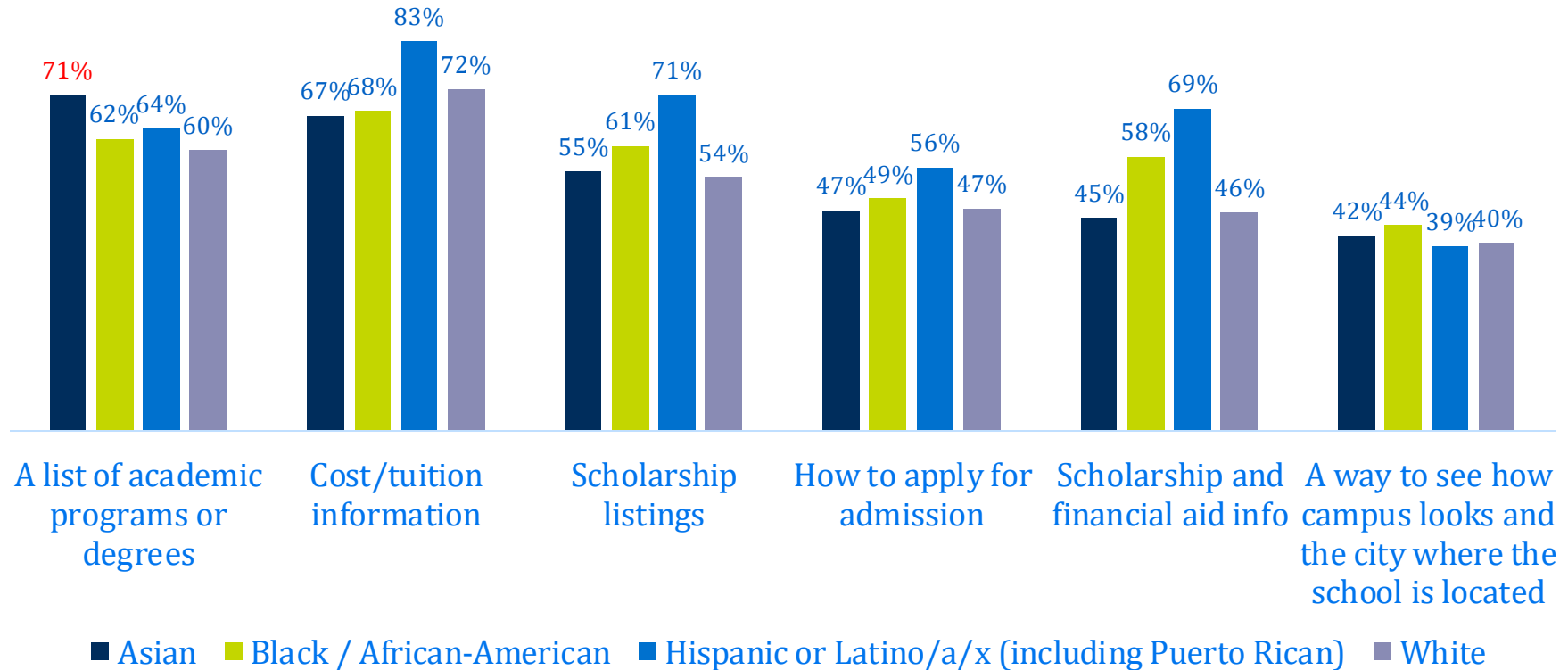
Your Website is Your Brand



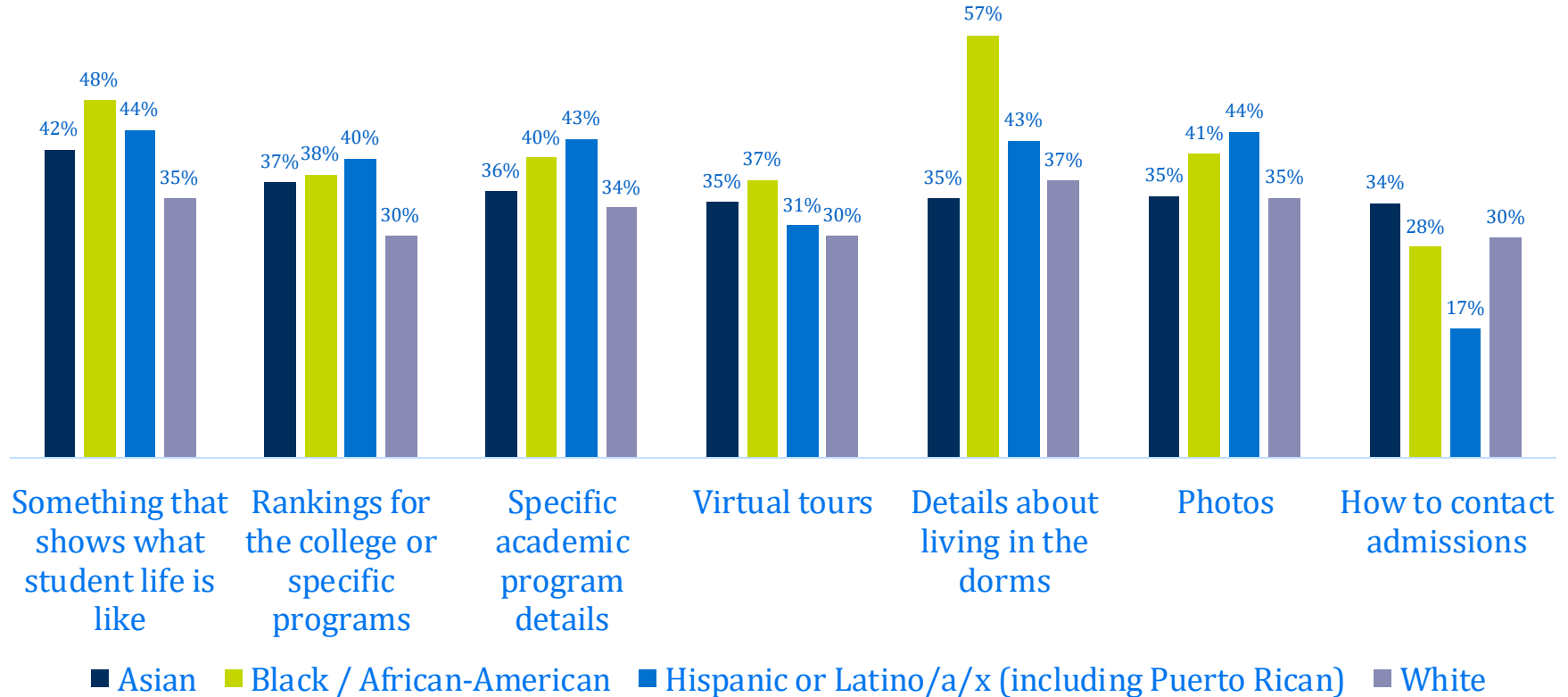
# Most Valuable Website Content to Students



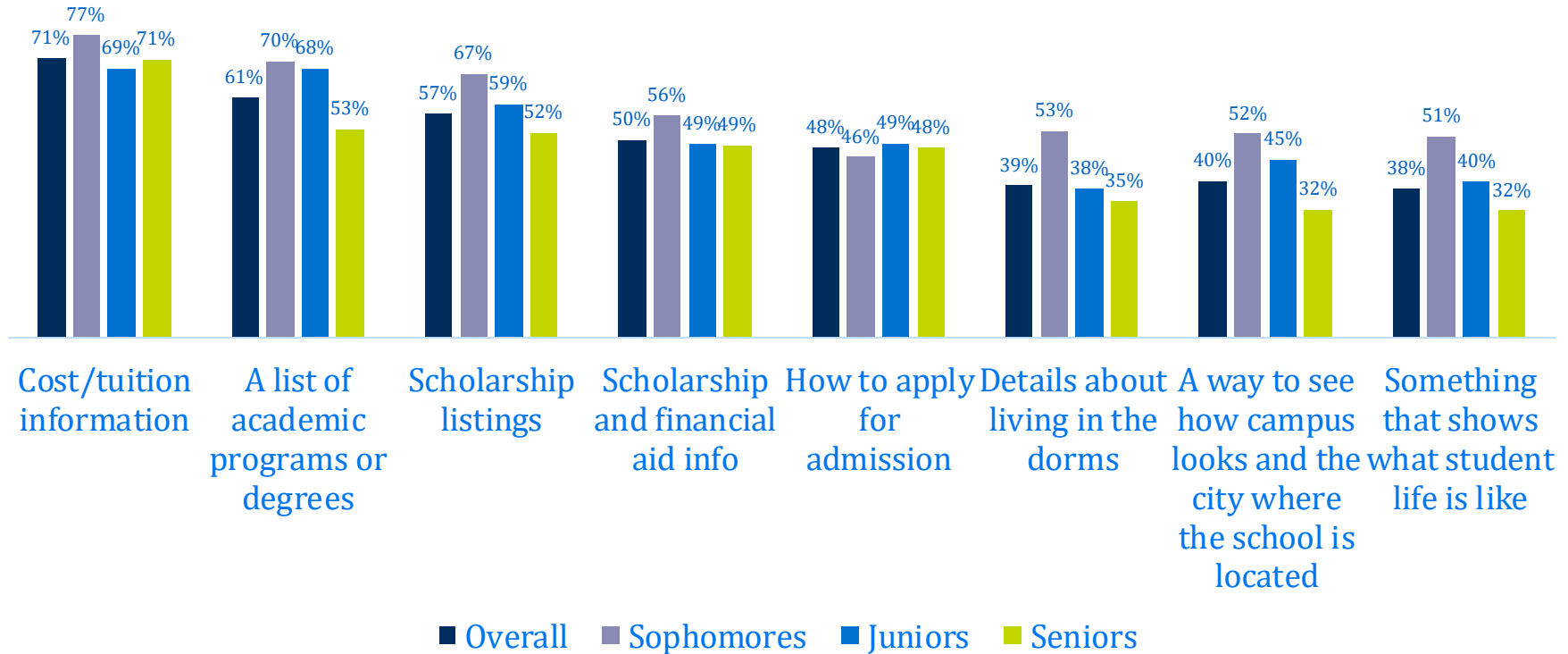
## Most Valuable Website Content to Students



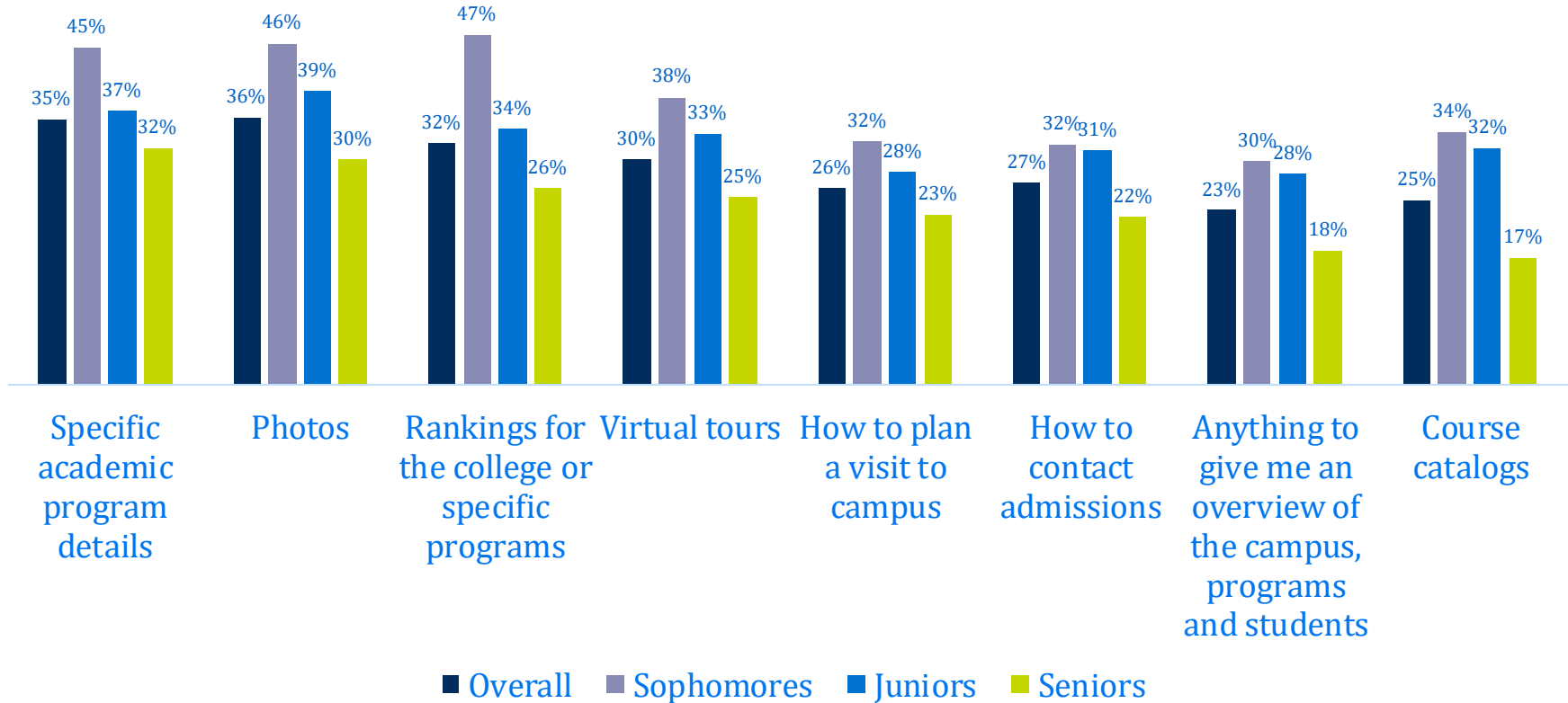
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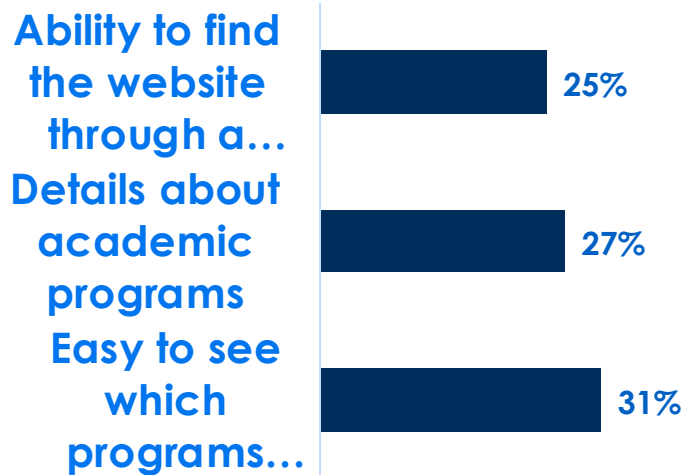


## Most Valuable Website Content to Students



# Top Website Experiences Students Like and Dislike

## Students Like



## Students Dislike



# Family Use of College Websites

**99%**

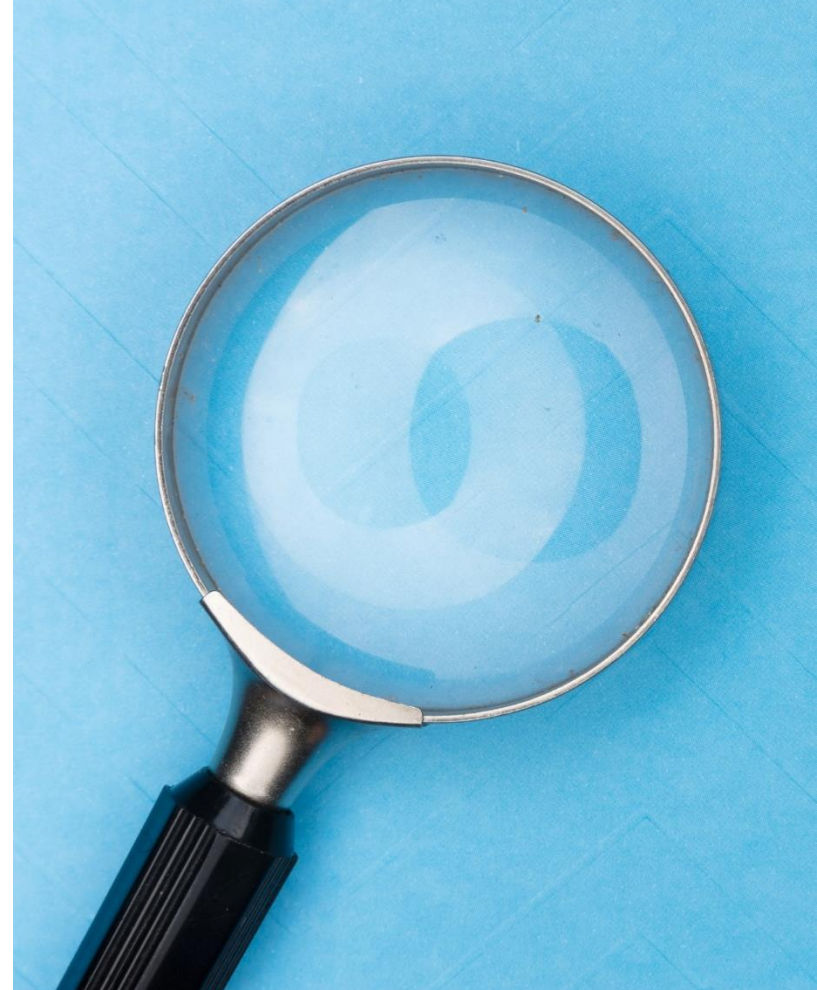
use college  
websites

**62%**

rate very  
effective

# 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

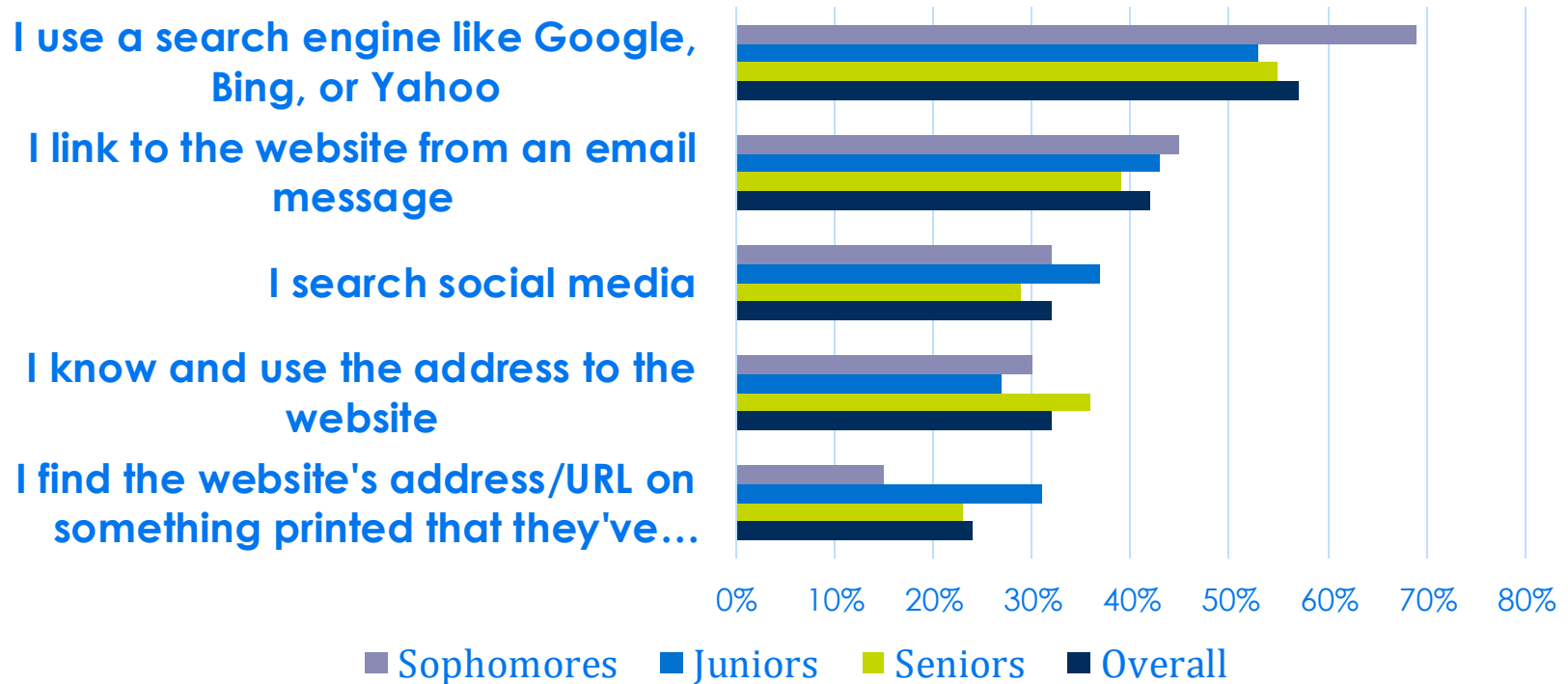




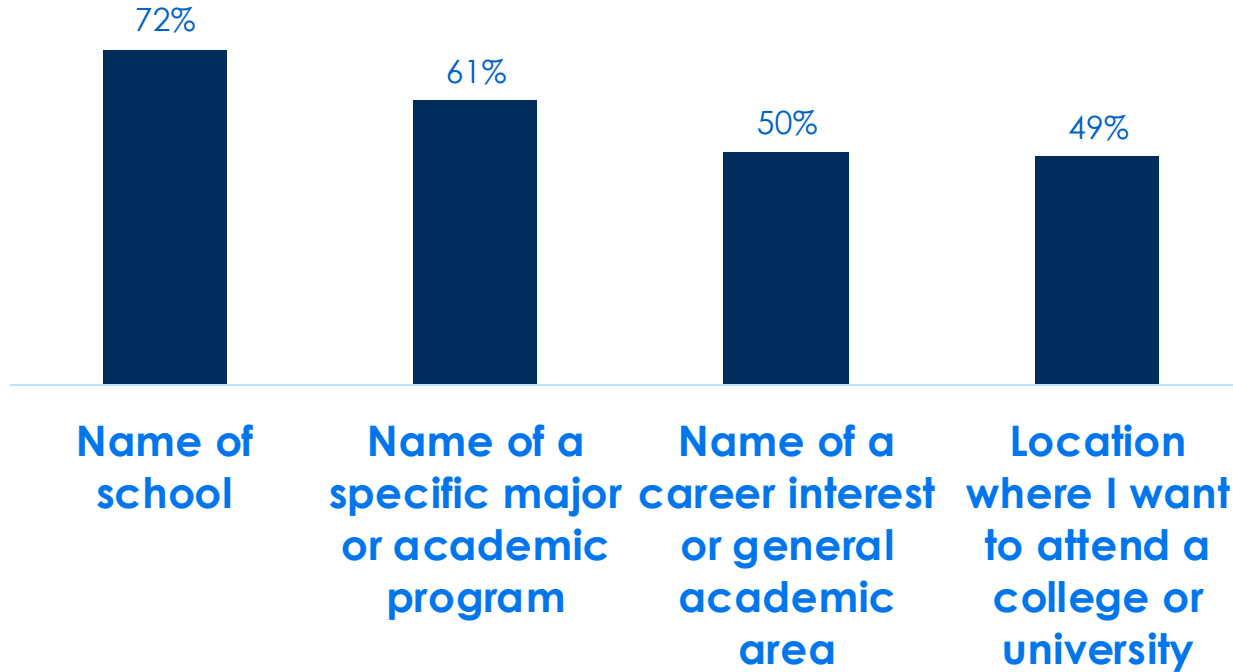
A group of people, including a woman with glasses and a man in a red plaid shirt, are gathered around a table in what appears to be a meeting or study session. They are looking at a laptop screen and some papers. The scene is dimly lit, with a blue and green color cast. The text "Search Engines Lead the Way" is overlaid in white, centered on the image.

Search Engines Lead  
the Way

# How Students Navigate to College Websites



# Search Terms Students Use to Find College Sites



# 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



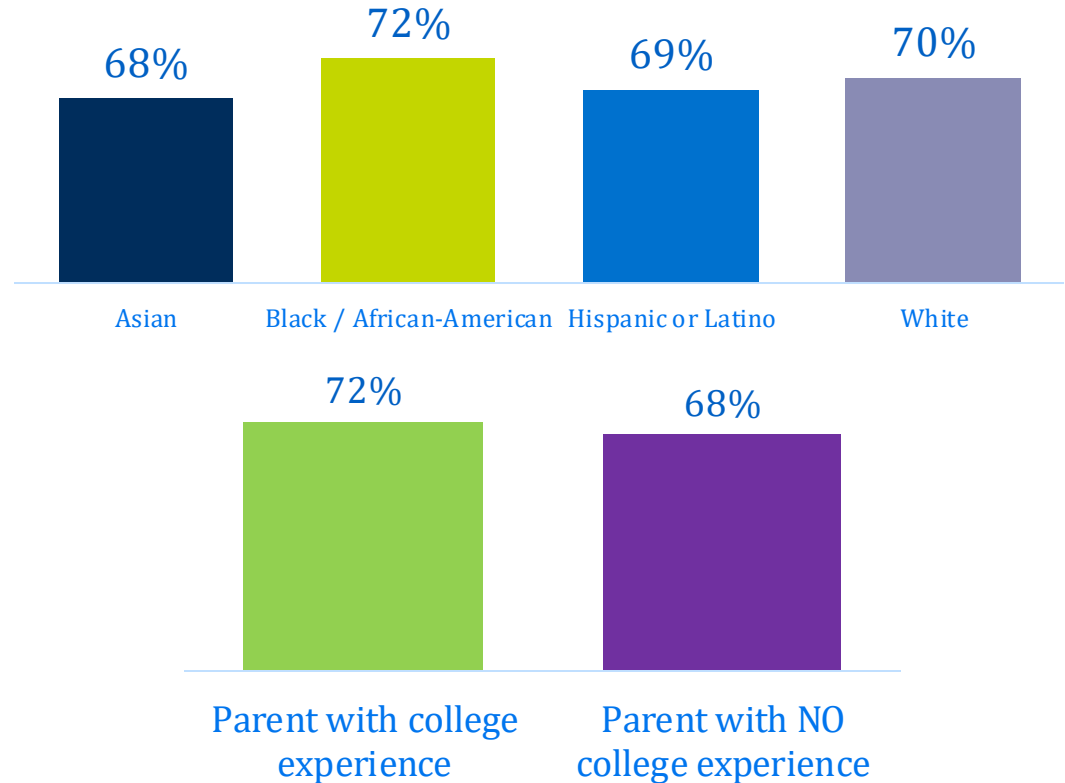
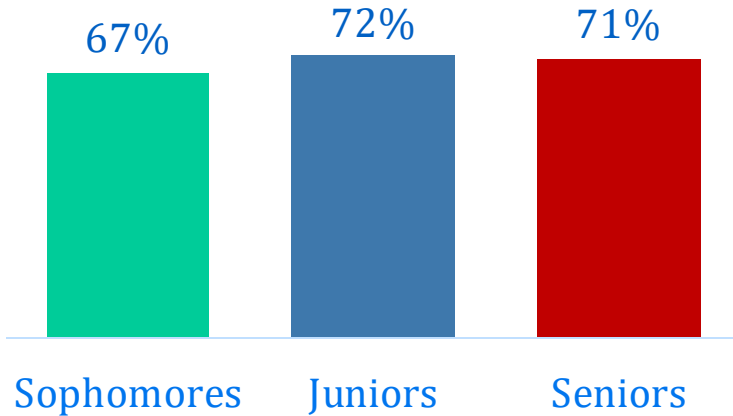


# Videos on College Websites

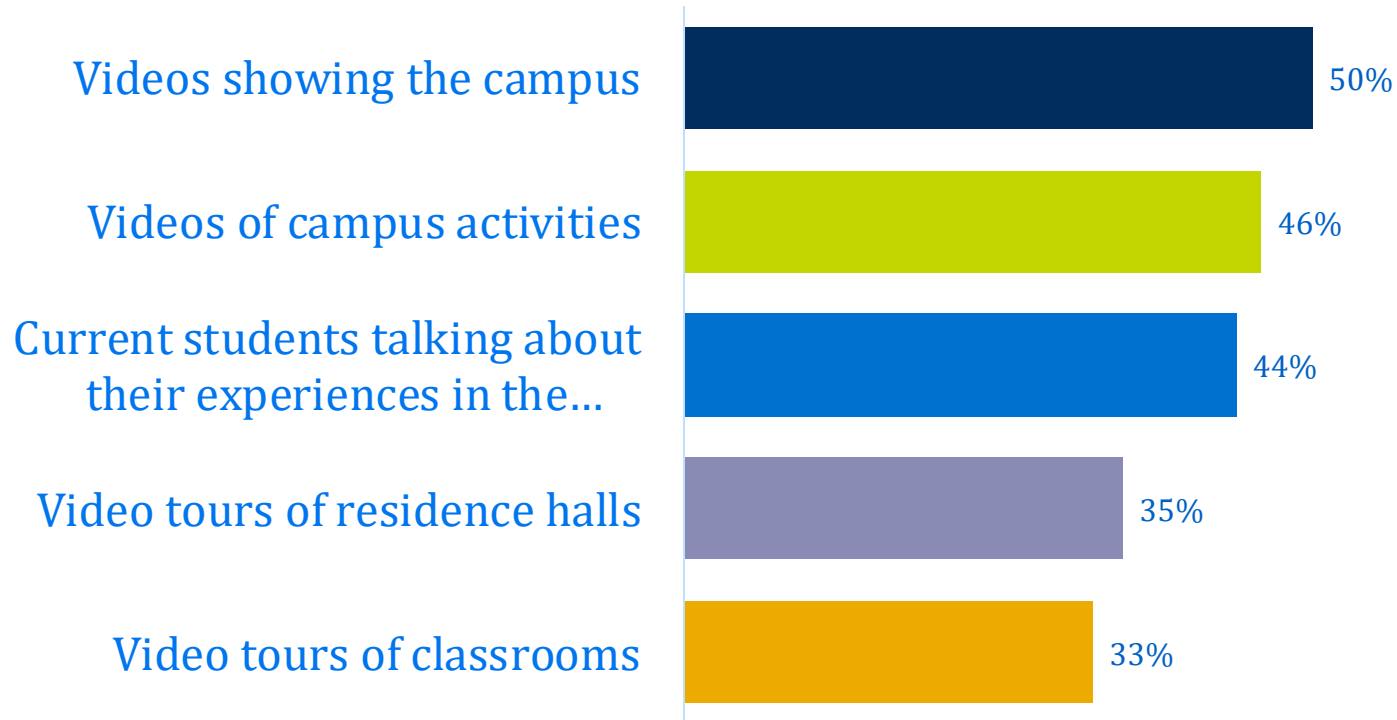
# Have you ever watched a video that you found on a college website?

**70%**

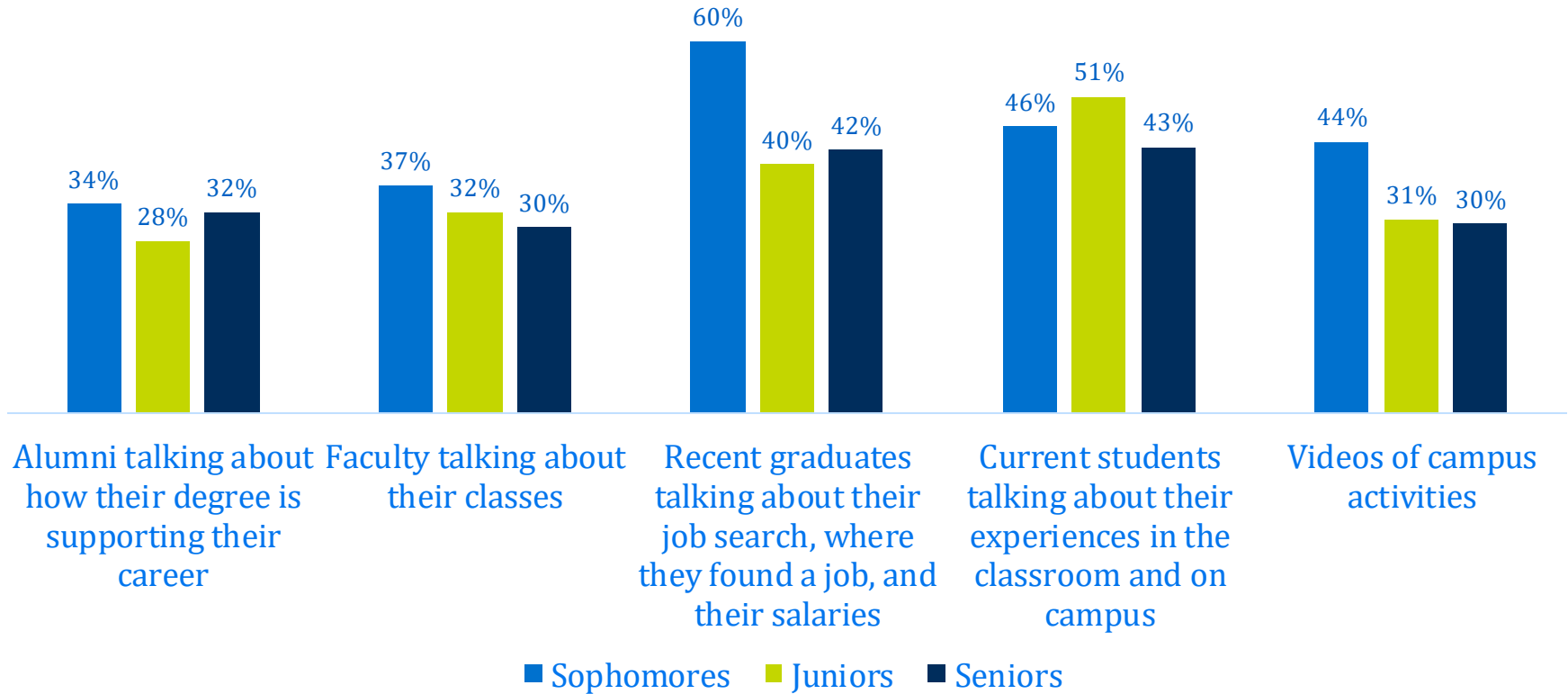
Have watched a video



# What kind of videos are most appealing to you?

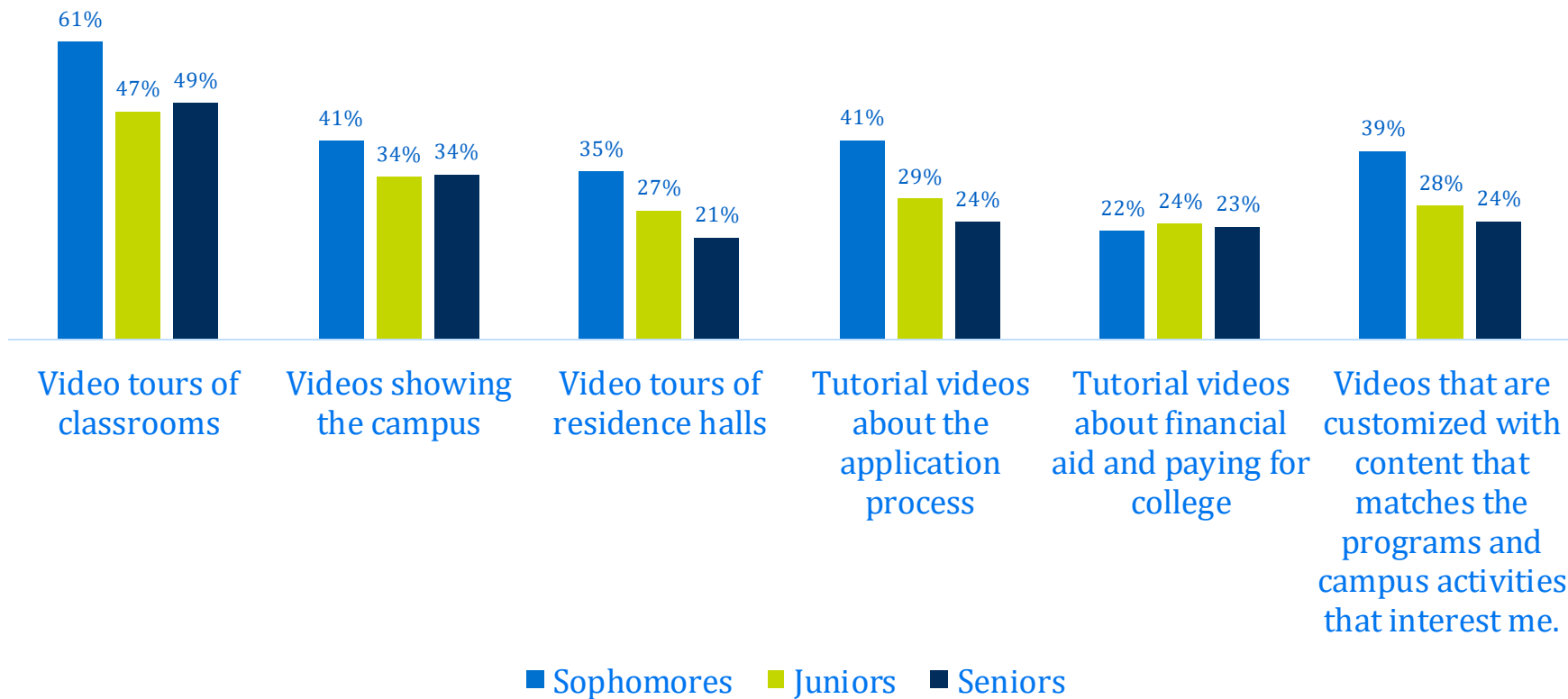


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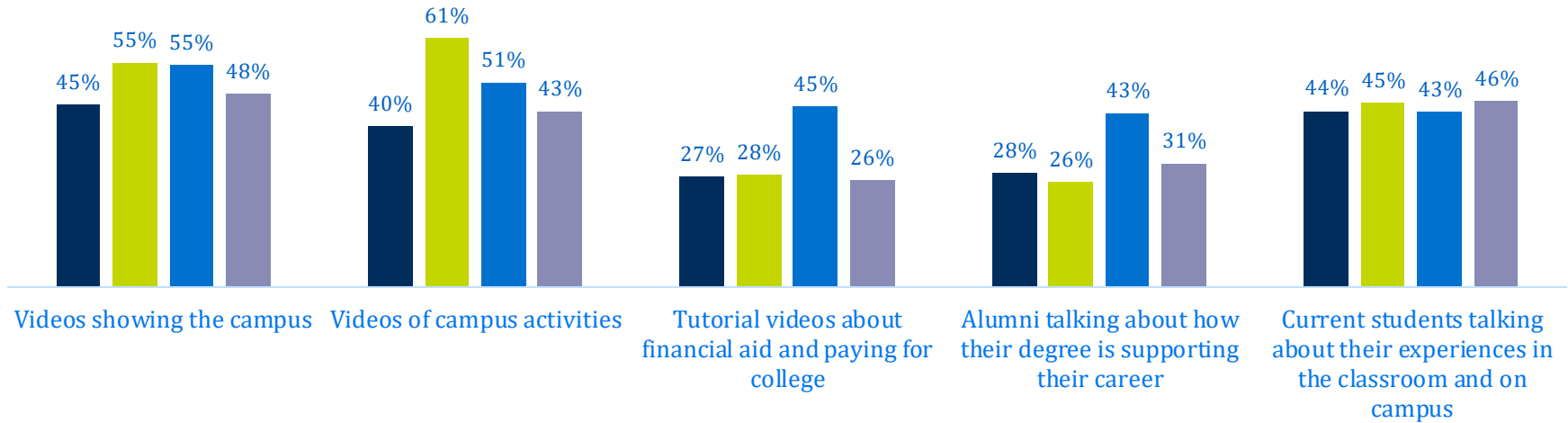




## What kind of videos are most appealing to you? Continued

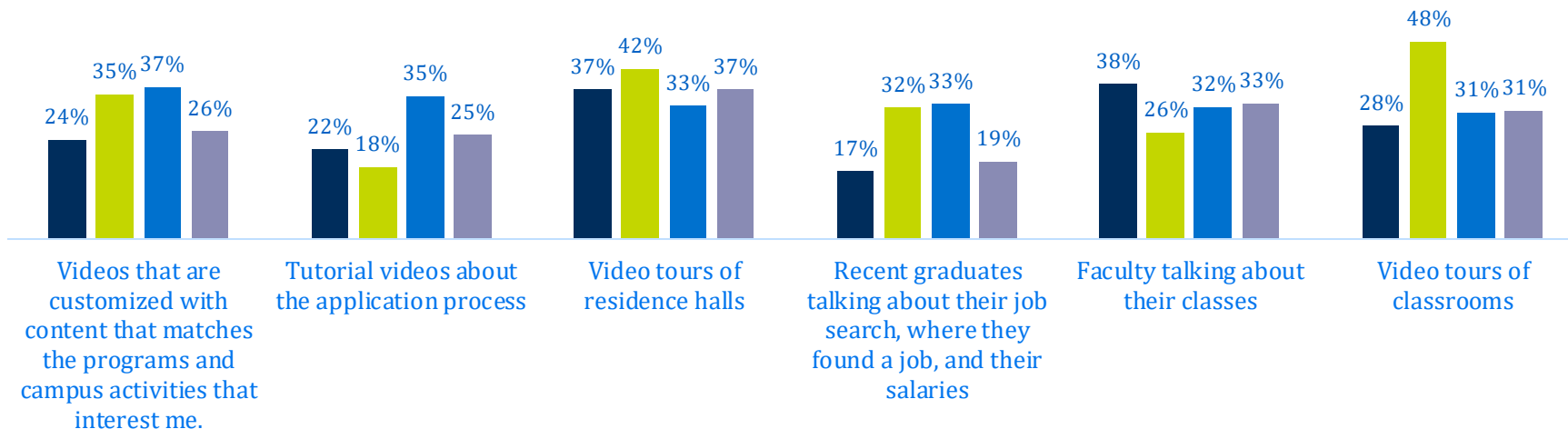


## What kind of videos are most appealing to you?



- Asian
- Black / African-American
- Hispanic or Latino/a/x (including Puerto Rican)
- White

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# 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