

Enabling Success Across the Student Lifecycle: Learnings from Millions Digital Conversations with Students

Dave Marshall, Founder & CEO, Mongoose
Jason Porter, VP of Revenue, Mongoose



Hello! Please Connect with Us!



Jason Porter
VP of Revenue, Mongoose



Dave Marshall
Founder & CEO, Mongoose

Who's here today?

1. I work at a 4-year institution
2. I work at a 2-year institution
3. I'm in admissions / enrollment
4. I'm in advisement / student success
5. I'm in advancement / alumni relations / donor relations
6. I'm part of the executive team / board / cabinet



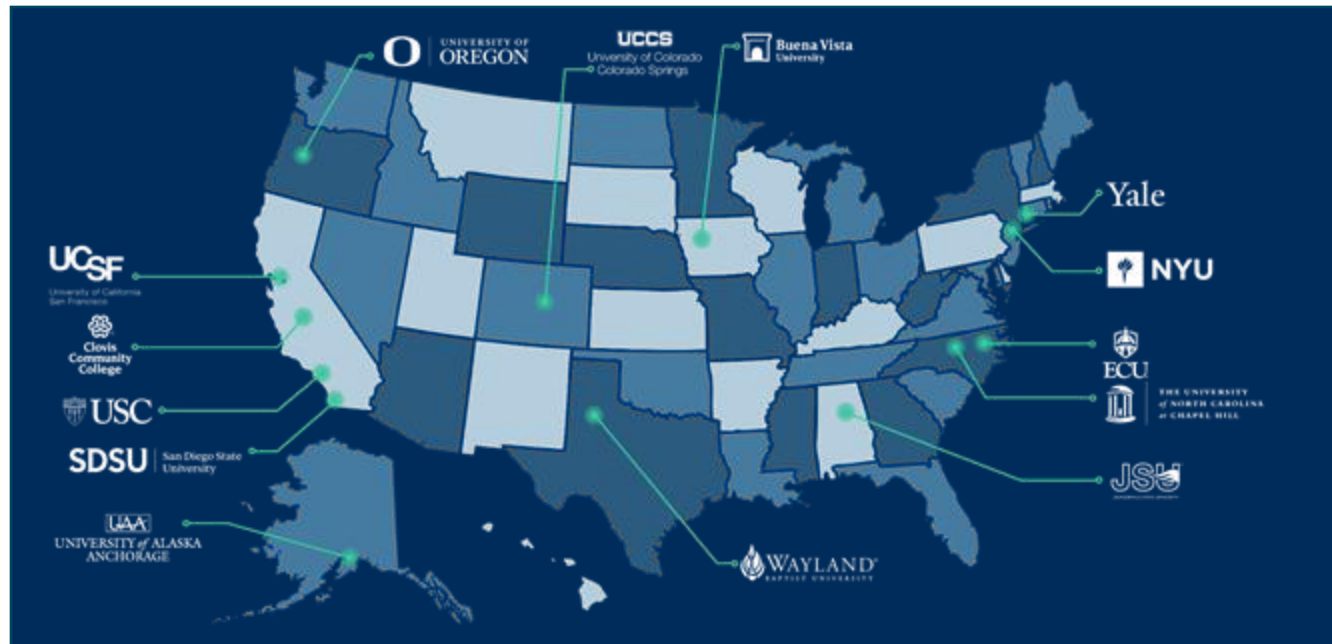
Mongoose was founded to move people forward. We do this by enabling empathy at scale with our Conversation Intelligence platform.

100M Conversations

1,000 Institutions

5,000 Teams

25,000 Users



Our Agenda Today

01.

What is Conversation Intelligence?

02.

Where does the data come from?

03.

Key insights & findings from The State of Higher Ed Messaging: Mongoose 2025 Benchmark Report

04.

Q&A

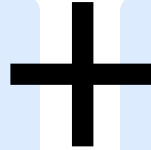
01

What is Conversation Intelligence?

What is Conversation Intelligence?

Conversation

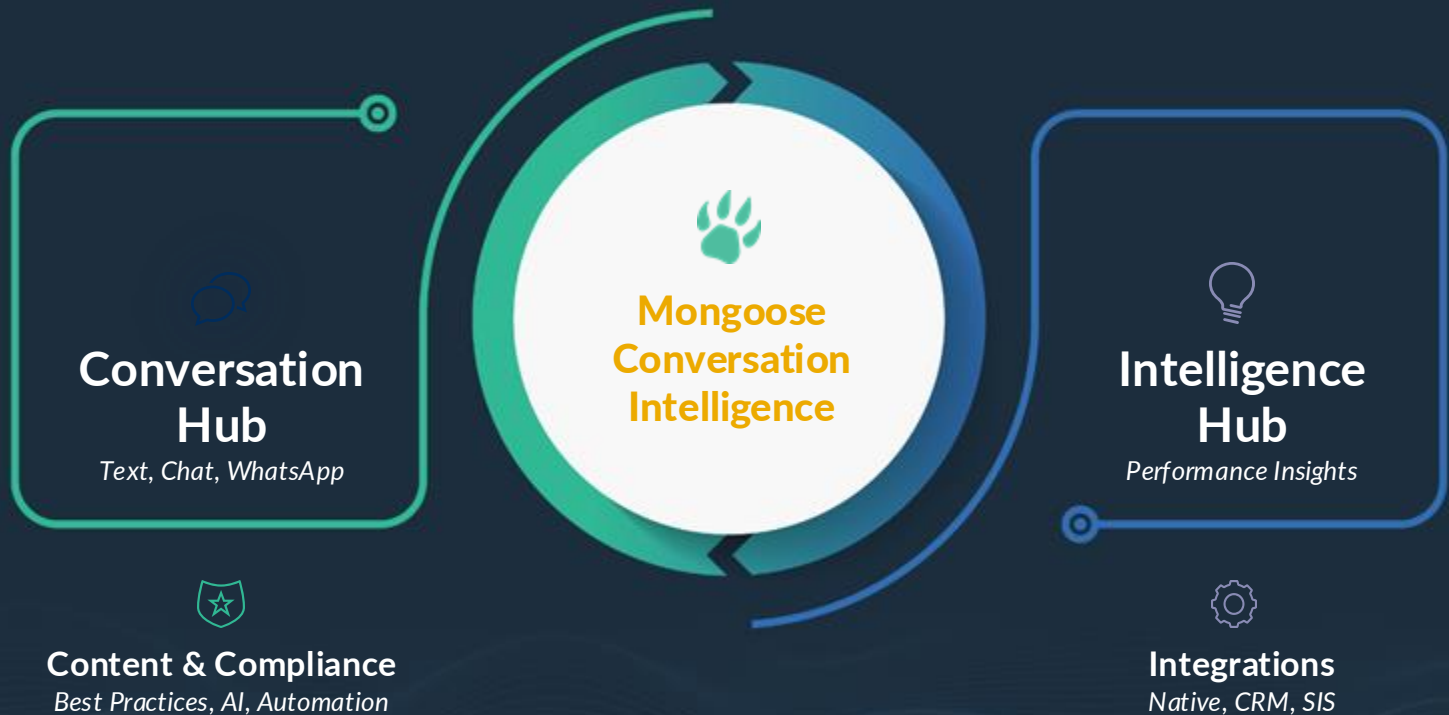
- Exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people
- Involves sharing information, asking questions, and responding in a dynamic and interactive manner



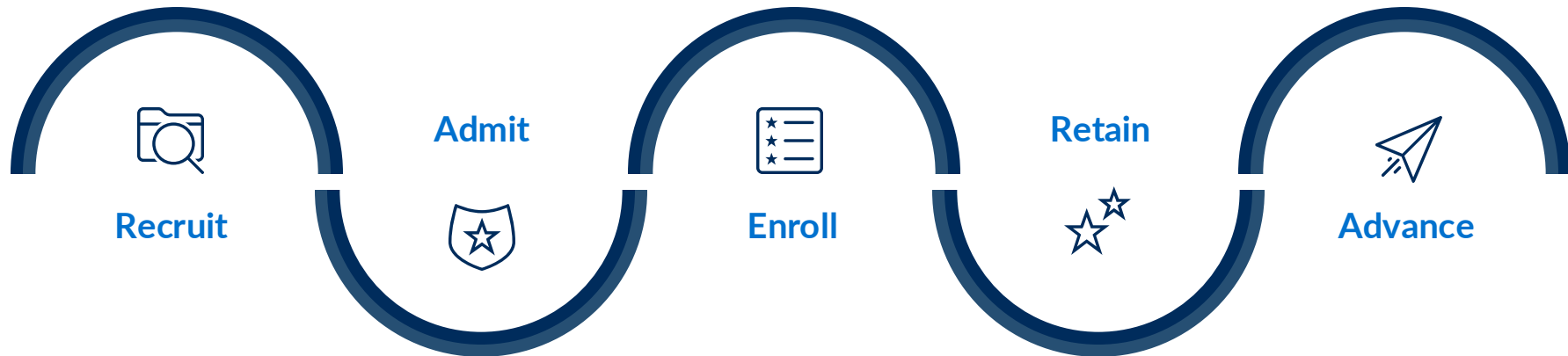
Intelligence

- The ability to learn, understand, and apply knowledge to adapt to new situations and solve problems
- Includes problem-solving, comprehension, and learning from experience

Mongoose Conversation Intelligence Platform



Conversations Happen Across the Student Lifecycle



Elucian

Microsoft Dynamics



slate

workday

ORACLE
PeopleSoft

Jenzabar

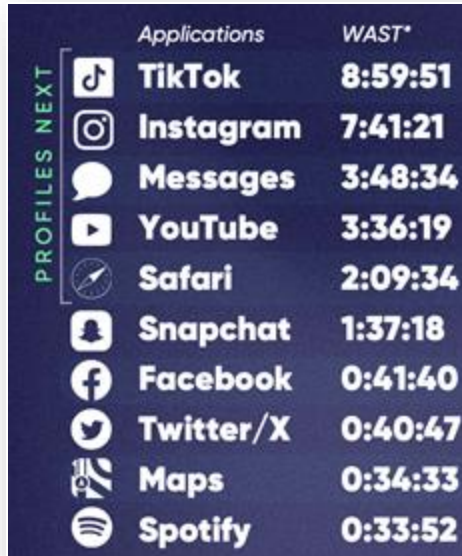


How do you communicate with students today?

- Email
- Phone
- In Person
- Messages (Text & WhatsApp)
- Web Chat
- Direct Messaging
- Vulcan mind meld



Top Apps used by GenZ, by Weekly Average Screen Time



Applications	WAST*
TikTok	8:59:51
Instagram	7:41:21
Messages	3:48:34
YouTube	3:36:19
Safari	2:09:34
Snapchat	1:37:18
Facebook	0:41:40
Twitter/X	0:40:47
Maps	0:34:33
Spotify	0:33:52

Email is missing...

Source: GenZ Screen Time Report 2023, DCDX
(December 2023)

Gen Z are More Comfortable Communicating Digitally

70%
Gen Z prefer digital
communications

Gen Z are more
inclined to share
emotions and feelings
digitally than via phone
or in person

Sources: [Study Finds](#), [Gen Z Study](#)

It's tough out there...



Traditional outreach to
students no longer
works



Enrollment is going
down and insights into
why are elusive at best



It's unclear what's on
the minds of students –
and how to engage
them

What does a Conversation Intelligence platform do?

- Helps you engage in authentic, relevant conversations in any channel (Text, WhatsApp, and Chat)
- Turns your team into experts with messaging best practices, AI, and automation built-in
- Provides actionable insights into conversation topics and sentiment
- Ensures messaging compliance for you
- Integrates with your existing systems

**Enables teams to
improve results
through better
conversations**

Conversation Intelligence



02

Where does the data come from?



Our Benchmark Report Dataset

Using Mongoose data from the 2023-2024 academic year, we analyzed key insights on conversational effectiveness and engagement

Text Dataset

- 600 Institutions
- 4000 Teams
- 19,000 Users
- 80 million text messages

Chat Dataset

- 133,000 chat conversations

03

Key findings and insights



Key Questions the Report Answers

1

When audiences, such as students or alumni, are most likely to engage

2

What message formats work best

3

How different types of messages influence engagement

4

Which conversation topics generate the most engagement and resolution

5

How AI-driven messaging and chat solutions impact student and alumni interactions

The State of Higher Ed Messaging: Mongoose 2025 Benchmark Reports

- Download the reports to get more insights!



Admissions

Best Times to Engage: When Students Reply Most



Four-Year Institutions - Admissions

Differences between functions & institution types



Admissions

Monday and Thursday see the highest engagement, while Saturday has the lowest (8x lower than Monday).



Student Success

Sunday and Wednesday are the best days for engagement, while Monday and Saturday are the worst.



Advancement:

Unlike Admissions and Student Success, Advancement messages perform equally well on all weekdays, with weekends seeing slightly lower response rates.



2-Year Institutions (all areas)

Engagement remains steady across all weekdays, but Saturdays see a significant drop.

Differences in Peak Engagement Times

Admissions:

The afternoon (1-2 PM) and late evening (8-9 PM) see the highest reply rates—aligning with times when prospective students are taking breaks from school or personal obligations.

Student Success:

The early morning (7 AM) and mid-afternoon (2-3 PM) see peak engagement—suggesting that current students are more responsive earlier in the day than prospects.



Advancement:

Late at night (8-10 PM) and mid-morning (10 AM-12 PM) see stronger alumni and donor engagement—highlighting the flexibility alumni have in responding to institutional outreach.

2-Year Institutions (all areas):

Late morning (10 AM-12 PM) and early afternoon (1-3 PM) see peak reply rates, aligning more closely with student success teams but differing from four-year institutions.

Message Length: Keep it Short!

50-100 character messages perform best achieving,



higher reply
rates than longer
messages.

Messages over 250 characters
have the lowest reply rates.

What is a Smart Message?

The image shows two side-by-side smartphone screens illustrating the difference between a 'Batch Message' and a 'Smart Message'. The 'Batch Message' screen shows two identical messages sent to a single contact, while the 'Smart Message' screen shows a single message that branches into different options based on the recipient's choice.

BATCH MESSAGE

Hi Matt! Our Sept Open House kicks off tomorrow morning at 8 am in Hynes Gymnasium — we hope to see you there!

Hi Matt! Our Sept Open House kicks off tomorrow morning at 8 am in Hynes Gymnasium — we hope to see you there!

Thanks, I hope to make it

Sorry, something came up. Is there a next one?

SMART MESSAGE

Hi Matt!, What excites you most about our October 'AI' Open House tomorrow?

A: Student Club FAir,
B: AirPods drawing,
C: AI Lab Walkthrough

C... 🙄

Great! Meet at Mob Hall B #102 at 1, 2 or 4pm!

Wow, that was amazing... did students really already start AI companies there?

The power of Smart Messages and asking direct questions

Smart Messages generate **3x higher reply rates** than non-Smart Messages.

Messages that ask a direct question with a clear call to action see **3x higher engagement** than generic messages.

Reach more students with less effort: Smart Message batches are, on average, twice the size of non-Smart Message batches.

Message Content: What Drives or Reduces Engagement?



Messages with questions receive
2x the replies
of messages without.



Adding a call-to-action
(e.g., multiple-choice
options) increases reply
rates even further—
up to 3x.



Messages with URLs have
**5x lower
reply rates**
than those without, as they
pull recipients away from the
conversation.



Messages without images have
**1.5x higher
reply rates**
than those with images.

What topics is your institution talking with students about via text?

- Scholarships & financial aid
- Campus visits
- Admissions processes / applications
- Withdrawals & deferrals
- Student life
- Tech support / account access
- I have no idea



What are conversation topic categories?

Mongoose's AI model categorizes conversations based on institutional role:



Admissions & Enrollment teams have distinct key topics related to application processes, campus visits, and scholarships.

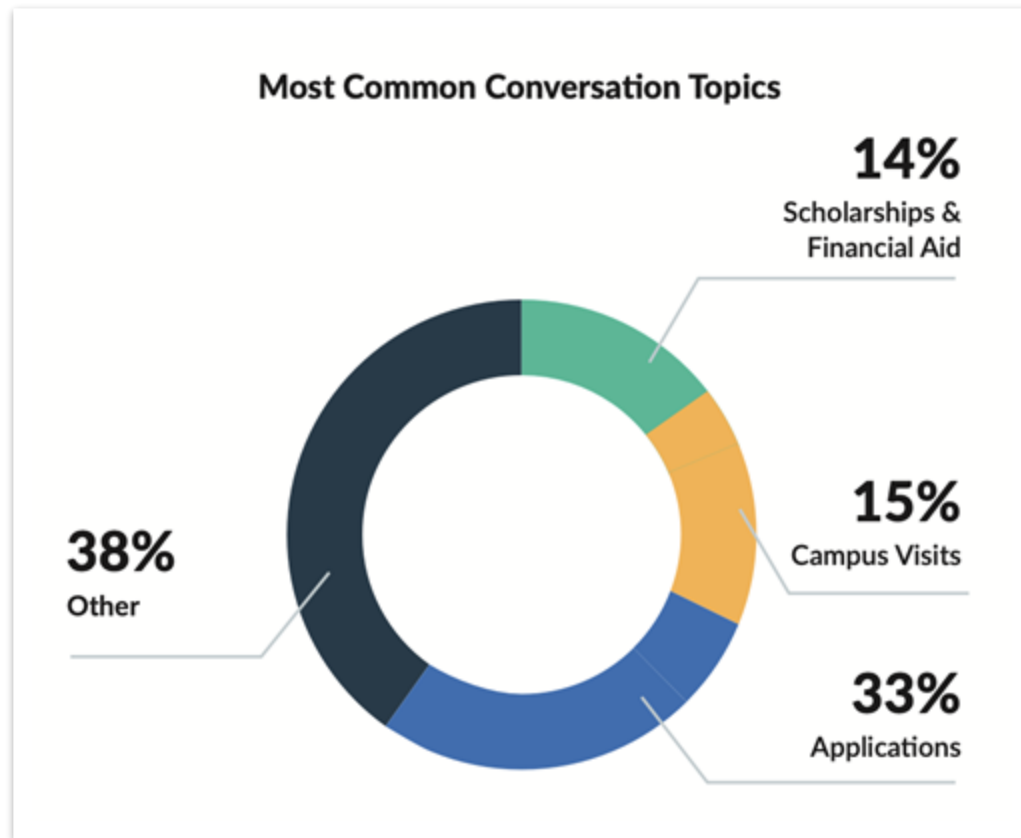


Student Success teams focus on advising, academic support, and retention efforts.



Advancement teams track donor engagement, alumni relations, and fundraising.




What are Students Talking About?



Four-Year Institutions - Admissions

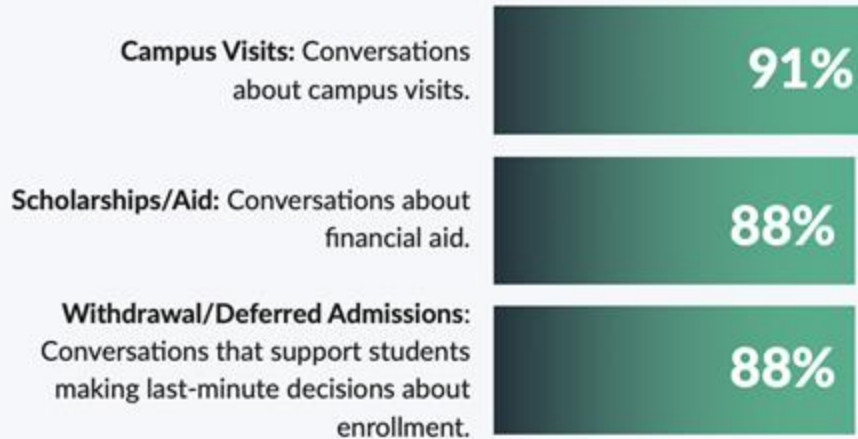
How do different conversations get identified as resolved?

Resolution measures the percentage of conversations determined by Mongoose's AI technology to be resolved, based on whether all student inquiries were answered, and is a key engagement metric.

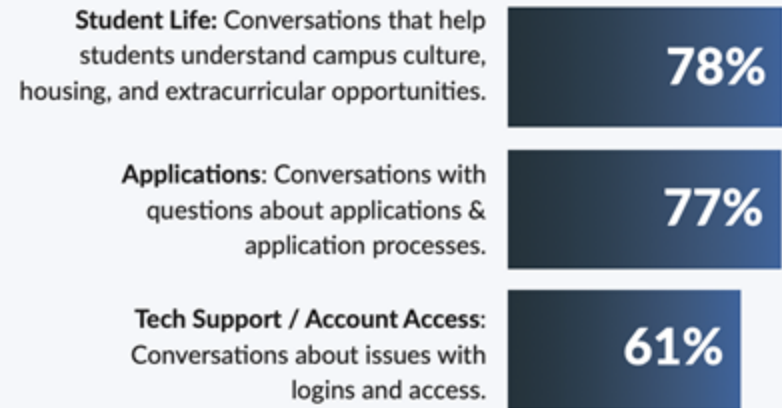
-  **Resolved:** The student's need was met, and no further action was required.
-  **Responded:** The staff member replied, but the conversation remained unresolved, indicating a possible follow-up.
-  **Unresolved:** The inquiry was left open-ended, signaling a potential engagement gap.

How do different topics get resolved?

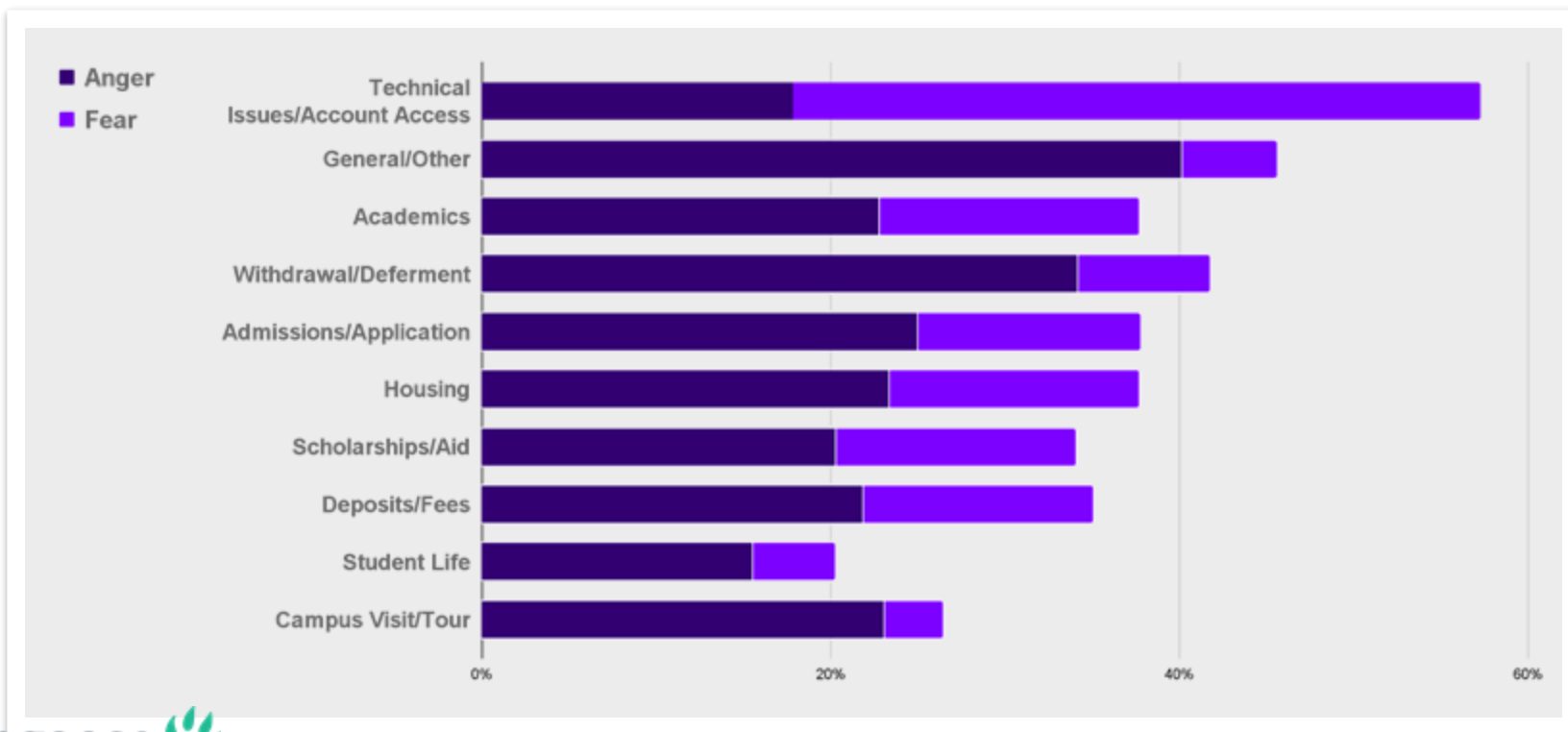
Topics with the Highest Resolution Rates



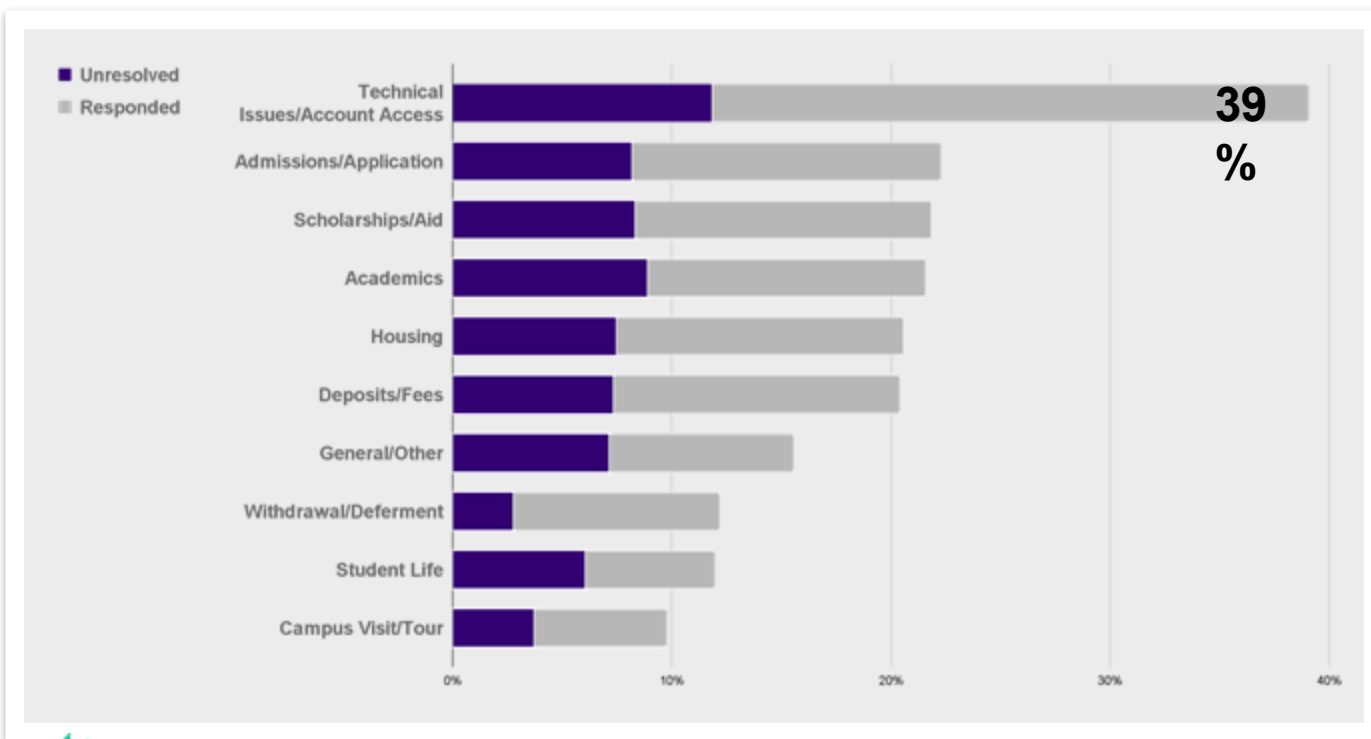
Topics with the Lowest Resolution Rates (High Opportunity Areas)



Anger and Fear by Topic



Unresolved Conversations

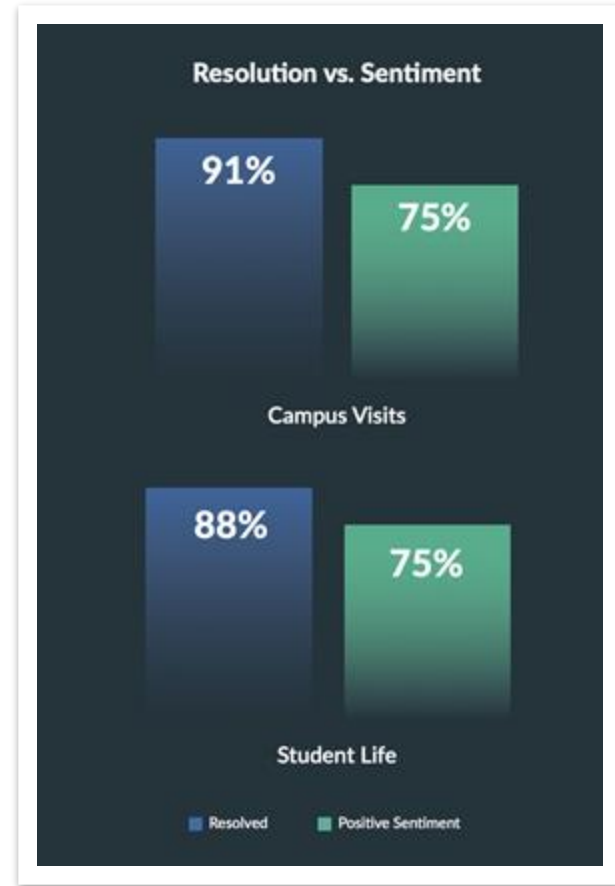


Resolution vs. Sentiment:

High-resolution topics tend to have positive sentiment

Sentiment Analysis:

AI-driven analysis of conversation tone: Appreciation (Positive Sentiment), Frustration (Negative Sentiment), or Neutral.



Resolution vs. Sentiment: High- resolution topics tend to have positive sentiment

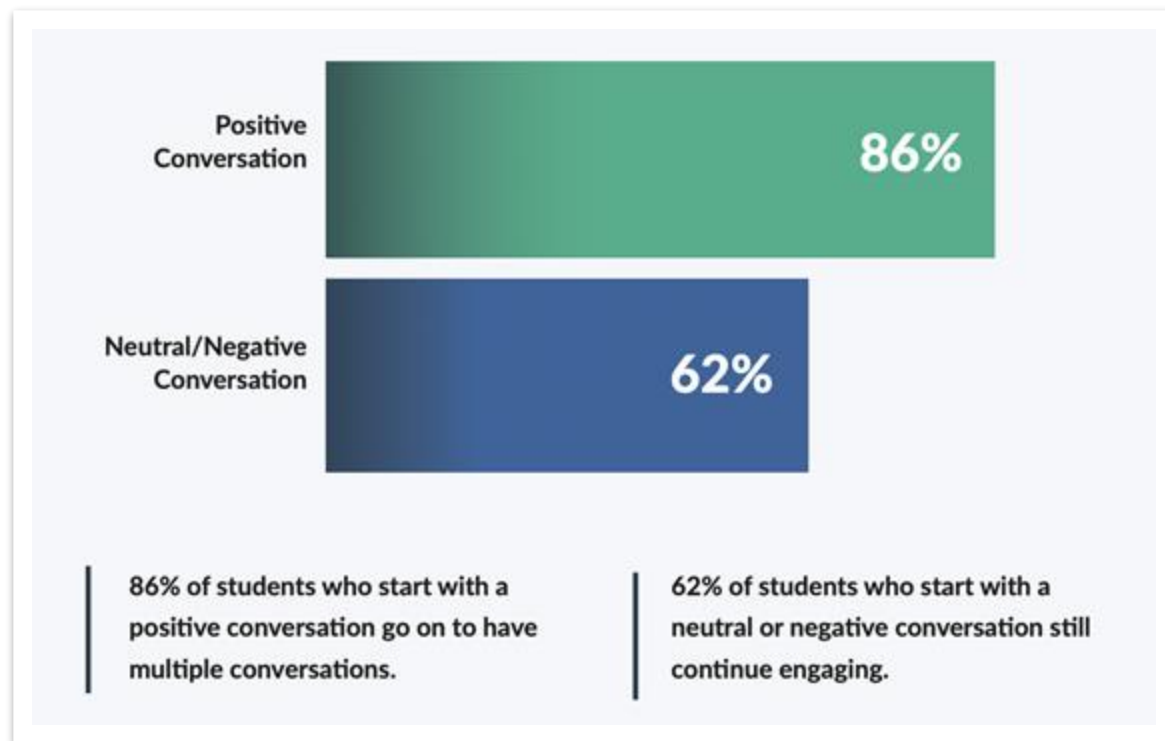
Complex admissions processes have lower resolution rates:

- **Scholarships & Financial Aid (78% resolved, 70% positive sentiment):**
While most students appreciate financial aid guidance, these conversations often require follow-ups, leading to a lower level of resolution.
- **Applications (77% resolved, 64% positive sentiment):**
Application-related conversations frequently involve multiple steps, deadlines, and document submissions, contributing to longer resolution times.
- **Tech Support / Account Access (61% resolved, 50% positive sentiment):**
Login and access issues generate frustration, leading to the lowest sentiment among all categories.

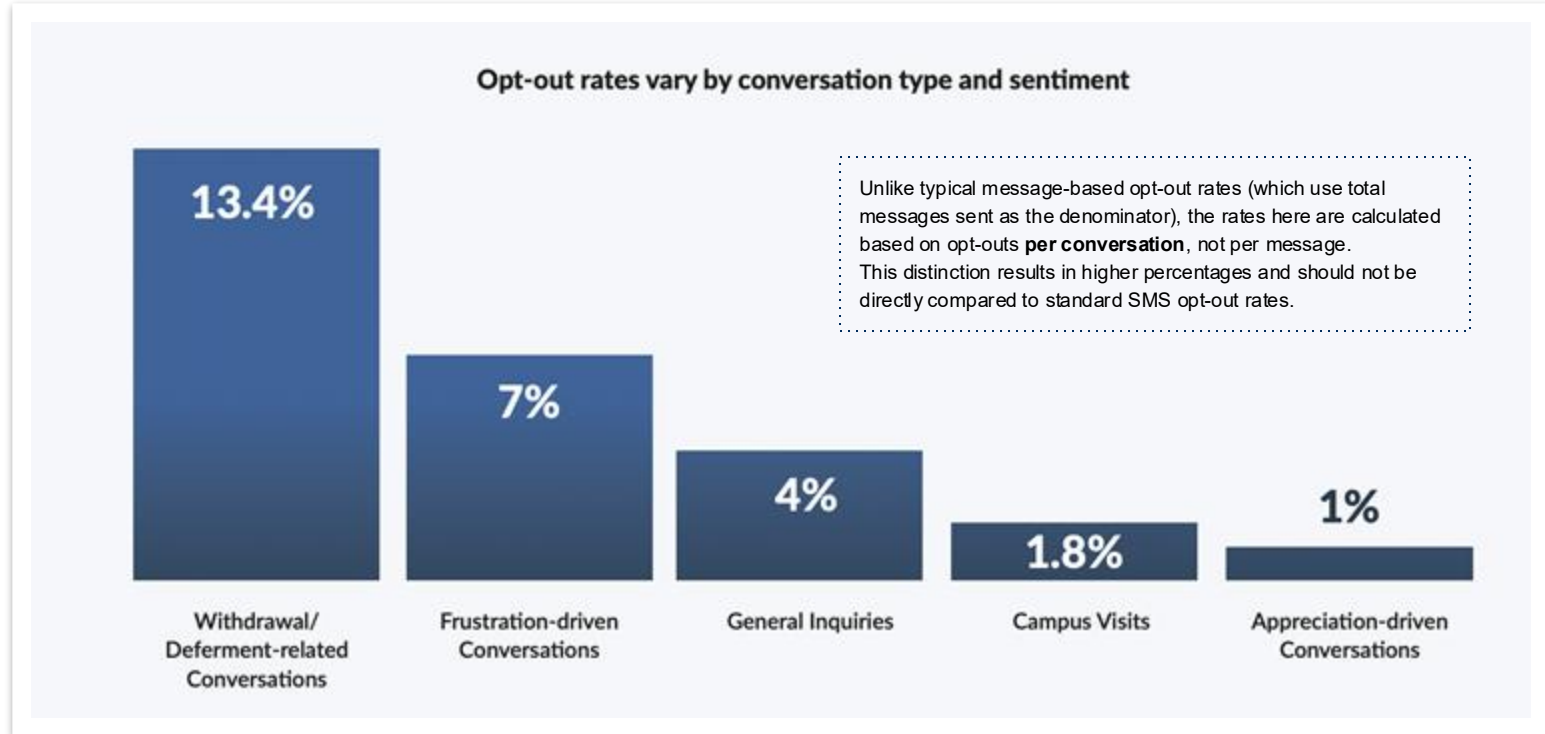
Even difficult conversations maintain relatively high sentiment:

- **Withdrawal/Deferred Admissions (66% positive sentiment):**
Although these discussions often involve difficult decisions, students still appreciate clear guidance and support.

Students who have a positive first conversation are more likely to continue engaging with the Admissions team



Frustration is related to higher opt outs



Four-Year Institutions - Admissions

Conversations vs. notifications

A Text Conversation

A conversation is a series of text messages exchanged between a recipient and a sender within a specific inbox over a rolling 3-day period.

- **Longer, Ongoing Conversations:** Multi-message interactions that require follow-ups

VS

Notifications and Reminders

Typically one-way triggered messages to remind to nudge a student to take an action.

How much higher do you think application completion is for students that engaged in conversations via text?

- 2x higher
- 8x higher
- 15x higher
- 21x higher
- 34x higher



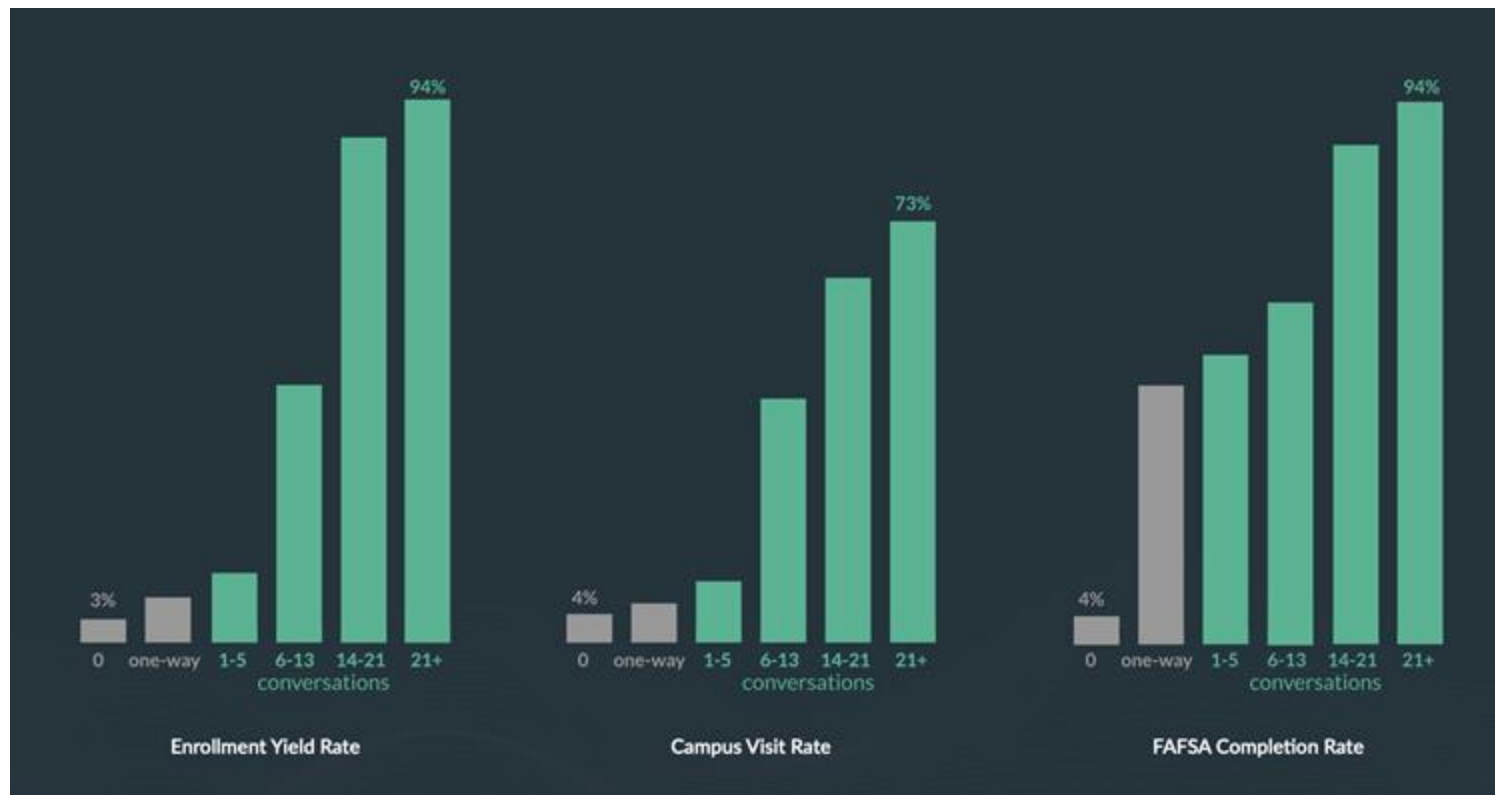
The power of conversations over notifications

Students who engage in two-way conversations—even brief ones—are 7.5x more likely to take action than those who receive static notifications.

How Conversations Improve Enrollment Outcomes

Outcome	Notification Impact	Conversation Impact
Application Completion	7x increase	34x increase
Enrollment Yield	2x increase	4x increase
Campus Visits	9x increase	45x increase
FAFSA Submissions	10x increase	13x increase

The number of conversations matters



Best Practices for Admissions Teams



Optimize messaging timing

Send messages during peak reply windows (afternoons, early evenings, Mondays & Thursdays).



Keep it concise

Shorter messages (under 100 characters) drive significantly higher engagement.



Leverage Smart Messages

Interactive, question-driven messages with a clear call to action triple response rates.



Focus on conversations, not just notifications

Engagement is 7.5x higher when students interact in two-way messaging.



Limit links & MMS

Messages without URLs or images consistently perform better.



Improve financial aid & application support

These categories have high student engagement but low resolution rates—optimizing these conversations can significantly impact enrollment.



Convert neutral conversations into positive ones

Schools should work to reduce neutral sentiment by responding quickly, using empathetic language, and ensuring staff training focuses on key student concerns.



Improve response to unresolved conversations

Hundreds of thousands of admissions inquiries remain unanswered; optimizing response times and message clarity can significantly impact application completion rates.



Address tech support frustrations:

Students struggle with account access issues, leading to lower engagement. Schools should ensure login and platform support are easily accessible and efficiently handled.

Student Success

Best Times to Engage: When Students Reply Most

Best Times to Engage: When Students Reply Most

The timing of a message plays a significant role in engagement.

Best Times of Day for Replies:

7 AM, 2 PM, and 6 PM see the highest reply rates, aligning with when students are most available for outreach.

Fastest Replies:

Fastest replies occur between 2-4 PM and 11 AM-1 PM. Mornings and evenings tend to see slower response times.

Monday has the fastest response time, while weekends have the slowest—3-4x slower than weekdays.



Message Length: Keep it Short!

2x

Higher Reply Rates

*Messages 100-150 characters vs
300+ characters*

Four-Year Institutions - Student Success

The power of Smart Messages, asking direct questions, & no images or URLs

4.5x

**Higher Reply
Rates**

*Smart Messages
vs Regular
Messages*

2x

**Higher Reply
Rates**

*Messages with
no images*

3x

**Higher Reply
Rates**

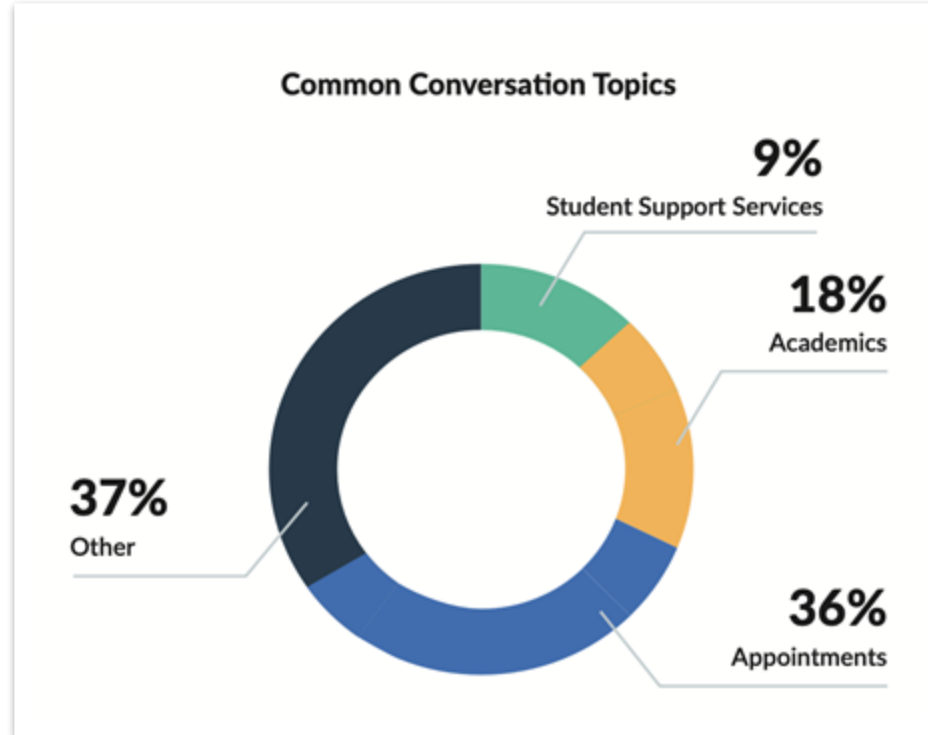
*Messages with
Questions*

6x

**Higher Reply
Rates**

*Messages with
no URLs*

What are Students Talking About?



How do different topics get resolved?

Topics with the Highest Resolution Rates

Student Life: Conversations about housing, campus activities, and engagement opportunities.

94%

Graduation & Career Support: Conversations about career coaching, resume support, and job search guidance.

87%

Appointments: Conversations about scheduling and confirming meetings with advisors or career counselors.

87%

Topics with the Lowest Resolution Rates *(High Opportunity Areas)*

Financial Aid: Conversations about student aid, such as eligibility, deadlines, or required documents.

79%

Technical Issues/Support: Conversations about logins, account access, and online platform navigation.

70%

Mental Health Support: Conversations addressing mental health services.

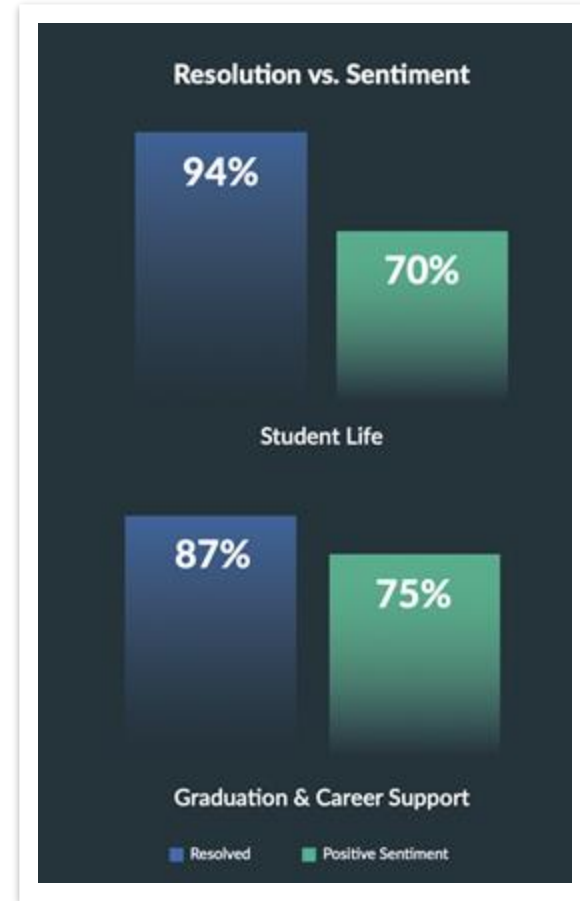
61%

Resolution vs. Sentiment: High- resolution topics tend to have positive sentiment

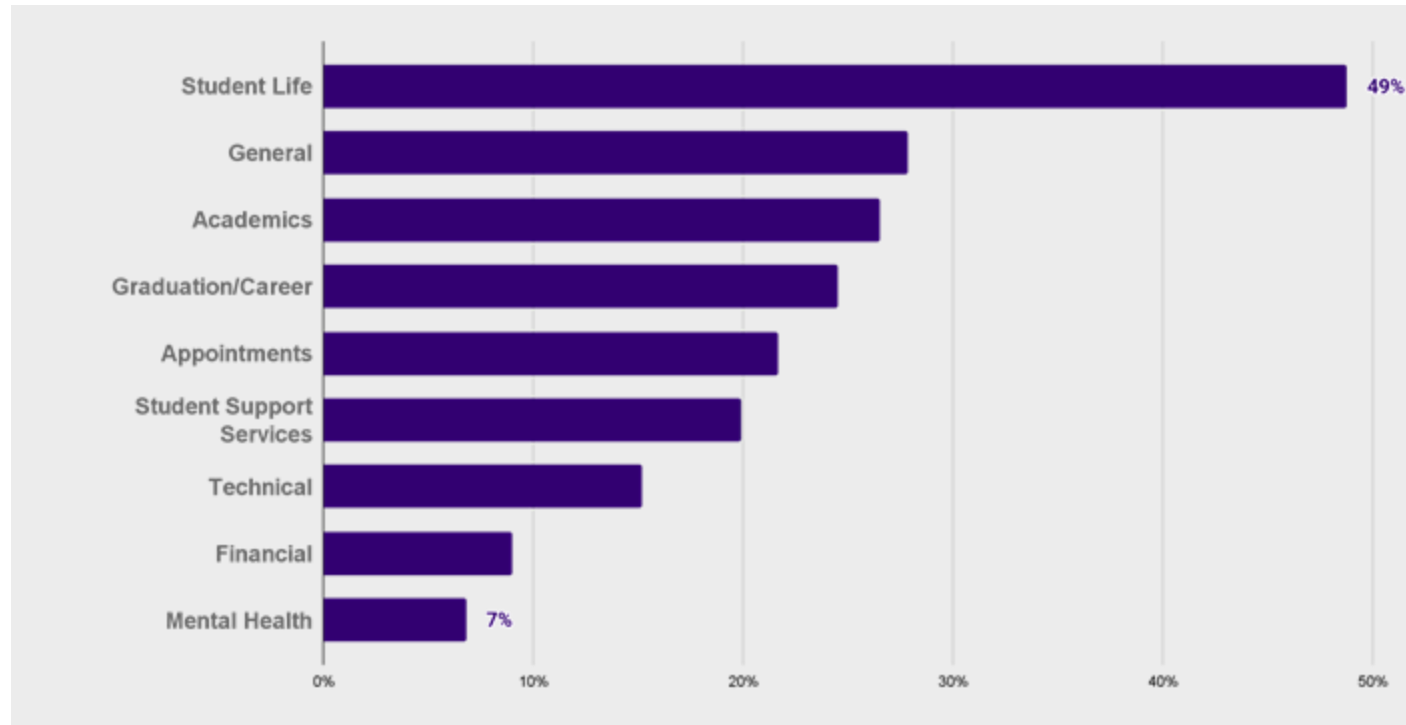
Sentiment Analysis:

AI-driven analysis of conversation tone:

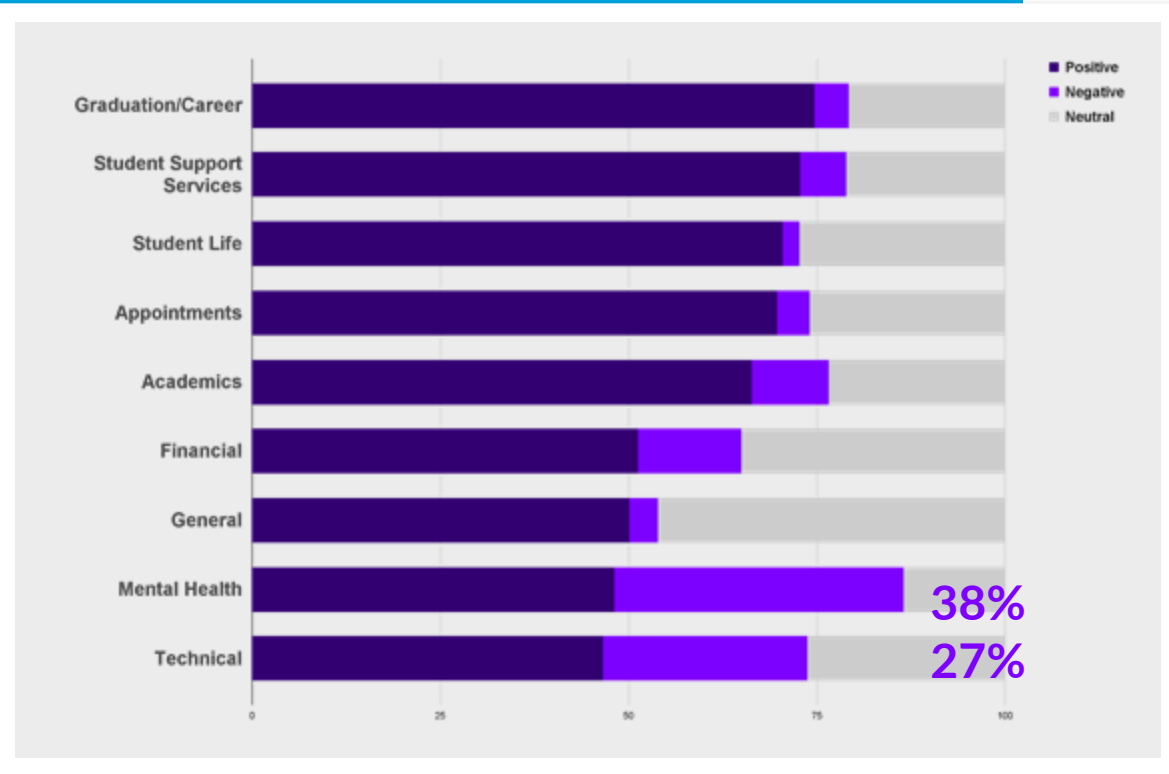
Appreciation (Positive Sentiment), Frustration
(Negative Sentiment), or Neutral.



What topics bring students joy?



Sentiment by topic



Resolution rate by topic

■ Resolved
■ Responded
■ Unresolved

Student Life

Graduation/Career

Appointments

Student Support
Services

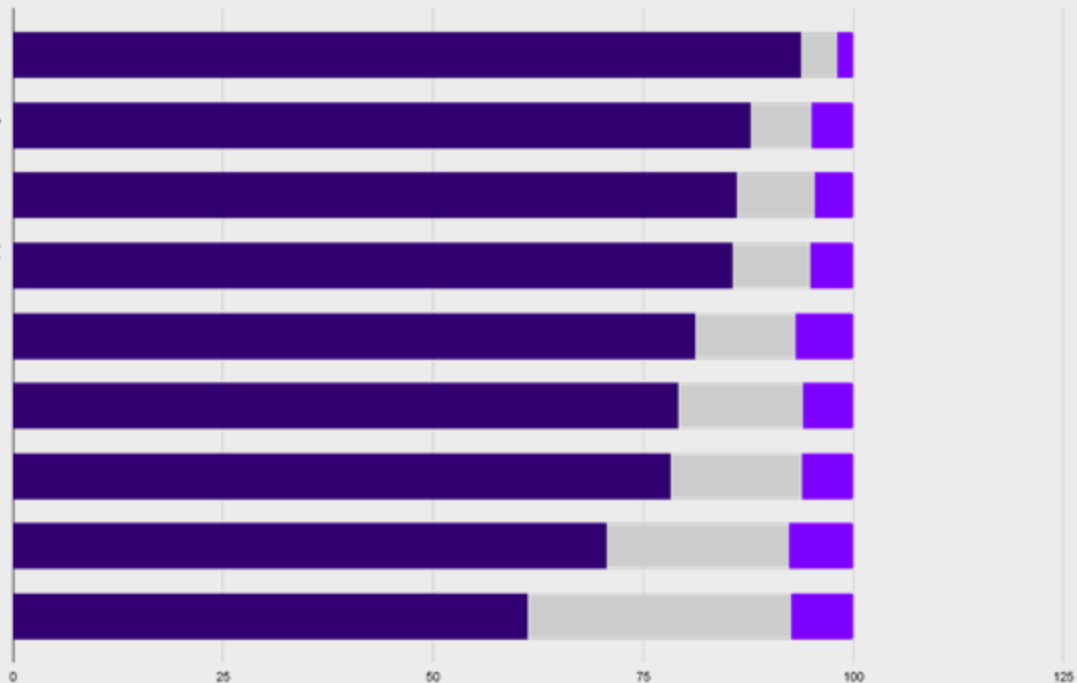
Academics

Financial

General

Technical

Mental Health



Resolution vs. Sentiment: High-resolution topics tend to have positive sentiment

Complex student support conversations have lower resolution rates::

- **Financial Aid (79% resolved, 61% positive sentiment):** Financial aid inquiries often involve multiple steps, leading to more follow-ups and student uncertainty.
- **Technical Issues/Support (70% resolved, 50% positive sentiment):** Logins and account access remain common pain points for students, reflected in lower sentiment and resolution rates.
- **Mental Health (61% resolved, sentiment data not specified):** Mental health conversations require sensitive, ongoing support, leading to lower resolution rates.

Even difficult conversations maintain relatively high sentiment:

- **Withdrawal/Deferred Admissions (66% positive sentiment):** While these conversations deal with major academic transitions, students appreciate clear and supportive communication during these critical moments.
- **Academics (64% positive sentiment):** Students navigating coursework and academic concerns generally express appreciation for guidance but may need further support to resolve their issues fully.

Best Practices for Student Success Teams

Best Practices for Student Success Teams



Optimize messaging timing

Send messages during peak reply windows (mornings, mid-afternoon, early evenings).



Keep it concise

Shorter messages (under 150 characters) drive significantly higher engagement.



Leverage Smart Messages

Interactive, question-driven messages with a clear call to action improve response rates by 4.5x.



Focus on conversations, not just notifications

Engagement is 7.5x higher when students interact in two-way messaging.



Limit links & MMS

Messages without URLs or images consistently perform better.



Prioritize career & graduation conversations

These conversations have the highest resolution rates and the strongest positive sentiment (87% resolved, 75% positive sentiment), reinforcing their role in student success.



Convert neutral conversations into positive ones

Institutions should work to reduce neutral sentiment by responding quickly, using empathetic language, and ensuring staff training focuses on key student concerns.



Address unresolved financial aid & tech support issues

These topics have lower resolution rates, signaling a need for clearer guidance, better staff training, and proactive follow-ups.



Improve mental health support response strategies

Mental health inquiries remain the most unresolved. Institutions should ensure that these messages are met with empathetic, well-informed responses and referrals to the right campus resources.

Advancement / Fundraising

Best Times to Engage: When Alumni and Donors Reply Most

Best Times to Engage: When Alumni & Donors Reply Most

The timing of a message plays a significant role in engagement.

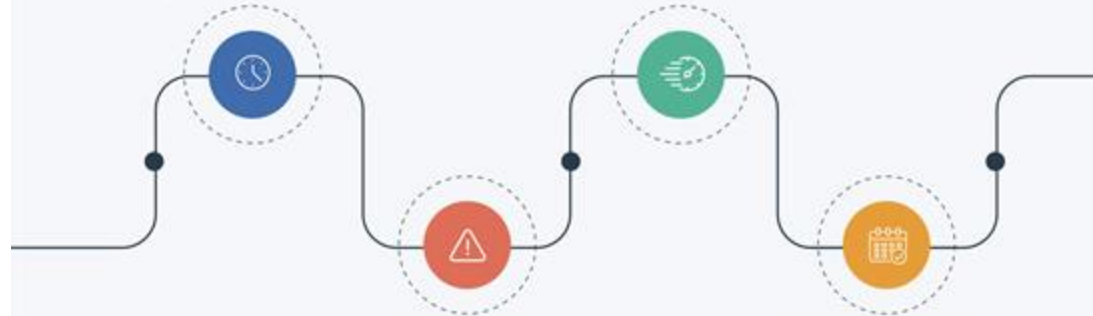
Best Times of Day for Replies:

8-10 PM and 10 AM - 12 PM see the highest reply rates, indicating that alumni and donors are more likely to engage during late morning and evening hours.

Fastest Replies:

Fastest response times occur between 10 AM - 3 PM. The slowest response times happen in the evening, between 7-10 PM.

Earlier in the week sees the fastest replies, with Sunday-Tuesday ranking highest, and Saturday has the worst response times.



Worst Times of Day:

7-8 AM and 6-7 PM show lower engagement, likely due to early morning routines and dinner-time schedules.

Day of the Week Matters less:

A weekdays perform equally well, meaning Advancement teams have flexibility in choosing when to send outreach.

mongoose 

Message Length: Keep it Short!

2x

Higher Reply Rates

*Messages 100-150 characters vs
300+ characters*

Four-Year Institutions - Advancement

The power of Smart Messages, asking direct questions, & no images or URLs

2.5x

Higher Reply
Rates

*Smart Messages
vs Regular
Messages*

1.5x

Higher Reply
Rates

*Messages with
no images*

2.5x

Higher Reply
Rates

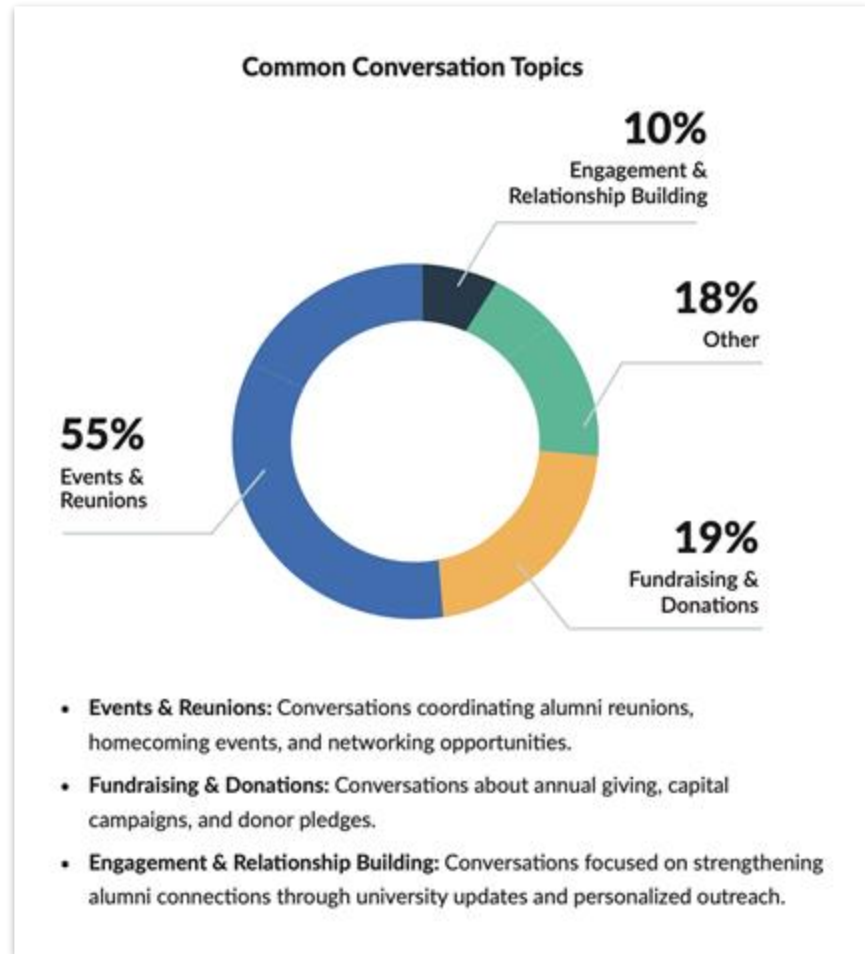
*Messages with
Questions*

2.5x

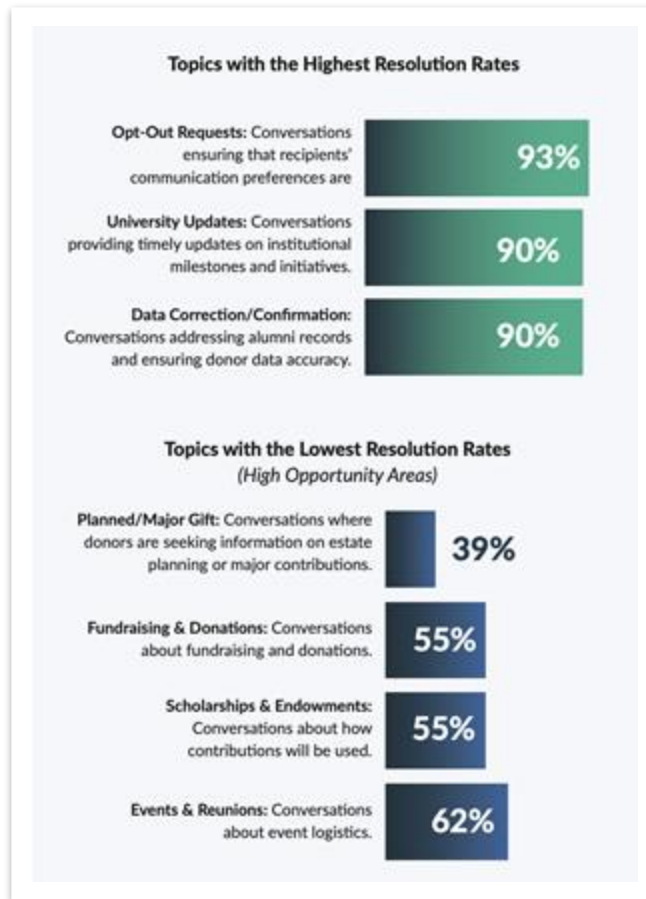
Higher Reply
Rates

*Messages with
no URLs*

What are Alumni and Donors Talking About?



How do different topics get resolved?

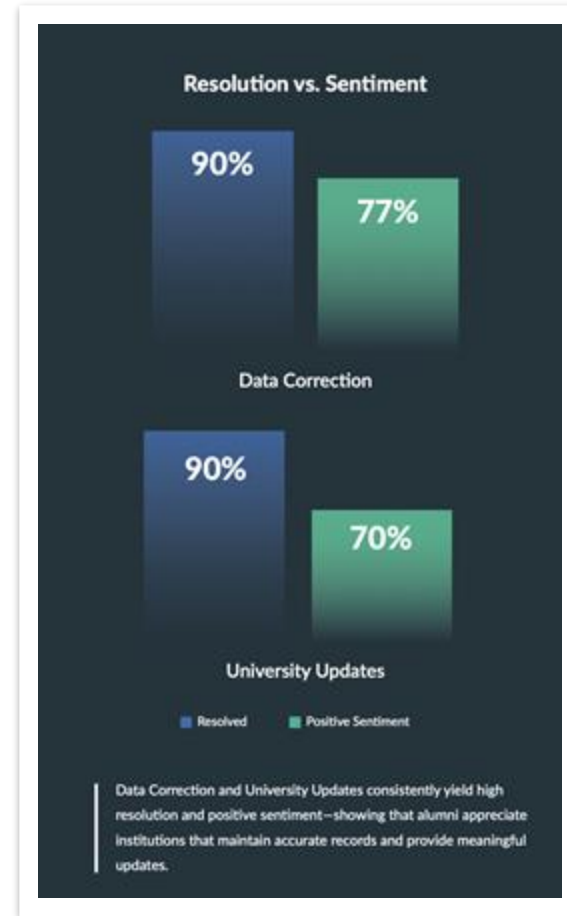


Resolution vs. Sentiment: High- resolution topics tend to have positive sentiment

Sentiment Analysis:

AI-driven analysis of conversation tone:

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(Negative Sentiment), or Neutral.



Best Practices for Advancement Teams

Best Practices for Advancement Teams



Optimize messaging timing

Target outreach during peak reply windows (late mornings, evenings, and weekdays).



Keep it concise

Messages under 150 characters drive significantly higher engagement.



Leverage Smart Messages

Interactive, question-driven messages improve response rates by 2.5x.



Focus on relationship-building, not just donation asks:

Engagement and personalized outreach yield better long-term donor retention.



Limit links & MMS

Messages without URLs or images consistently perform better.



Reframe "resolution" as insight

In Advancement, an unresolved conversation isn't a failure—it's often a signal (e.g., a "no" to a gift or RSVP) that still provides value. Staff should treat clarity and preference discovery as progress.



Grow major gift engagement early

Planned and Major Gift conversations are just 0.05% of total outreach, but represent massive opportunity. Focus on proactive, multi-touch strategies to build these relationships over time.



Refine fundraising follow-up strategies

Fundraising & Donation conversations see moderate resolution and higher frustration. Donor fatigue may stem from generic asks—tailor messaging to donor history and interests.



Enhance event-related messaging

Events & Reunions conversations (62% resolved, 50% positive sentiment) can benefit from clearer logistics, expectations, and timely follow-ups to reduce confusion and increase turnout.



Double down on high-performing categories

University Updates and Data Corrections yield high resolution and sentiment—continue using these to maintain goodwill and reinforce your brand as organized, responsive, and transparent.

Chat

Chat can be a high impact channel



Engagement Rate



Self-service
Success Rate

Chat is a great way to help outside office hours



47%

of chat conversations
occur outside of
normal office hours



98%

of visitors interact
with AI chatbots
during off-hours



30%

of all follow-up
requests originate
from off-hours
conversations



04

Q&A