Aligning Recruitment Strategies with Student Expectations

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Today's Presenters

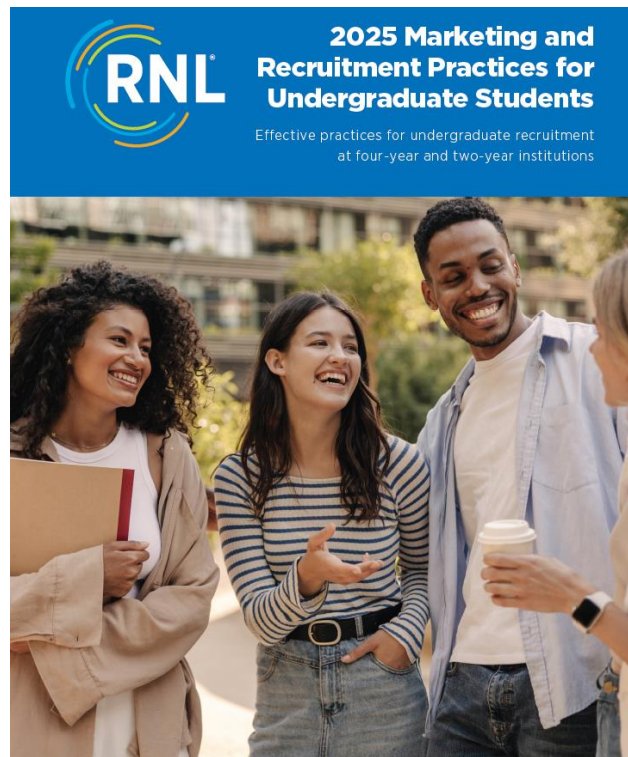**Ken Huus**

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Data Taken From Our Two 2025 Reports

Surveys of college-bound high school students and enrollment managers

6 Key Topics We'll Cover Today

1. Website Experiences

2. Email Use

3. Digital Marketing

4. Social Media

5. Personalized Video

6. Artificial Intelligence

Website Experiences

1

Top 10 Helpful Information Topics on College Websites

1 Academic programs

2 Scholarships and financial aid

3 Cost

4 Admissions process

5 Campus and student life information
Student support programs

6 An online community for students where they can interact

7 Housing information

8 Campus location, city, and community information

9 Student health resources (including mental health counseling)

10 Photos showcasing campus life
Safety information

RNL, Halda, & Modern Campus. (2025). *2025 E-Expectations Trend Report*. Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

Top 10 Frustrations With College Websites

1 Difficult to find program information

2 Confusing admissions process

3 Lack of job opportunity details

4 Unclear admission statistics (such as admit rate, student profile, etc.)

5 Hard-to-use navigation or hard-to-use links

6 Lack of personalized content aimed at students' interests

7 No website search tool to search for more specific information

8 Online forms that request too much information

9 Hard to find contact information (email addresses, phone numbers)

10 Hard to read website pages

RNL, Halda, & Modern Campus. (2025). *2025 E-Expectations Trend Report*. Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

Recommendations for Institutions

Website

➢**Make sure your website is mobile-enabled**

- *96% of institutions rate this communication tactic as effective, but 65% of institutions are utilizing a mobile-responsive website.*

➢**Use video to tell your institutional story—and find ways to incorporate personalized video.**

- *84% of students have used video in their college search, and 98% of institutions that use personalized video rate it effective.*

➢**Guide students directly to your academic program pages–and make sure the content there speaks to prospective student/parent interests.**

- *Two of the top four reasons students find their way to a specific college website are by searching for major/program or career interest/academic area.*

RNL (2025). *2025 Marketing and Recruitment Practices for Undergraduate Students*
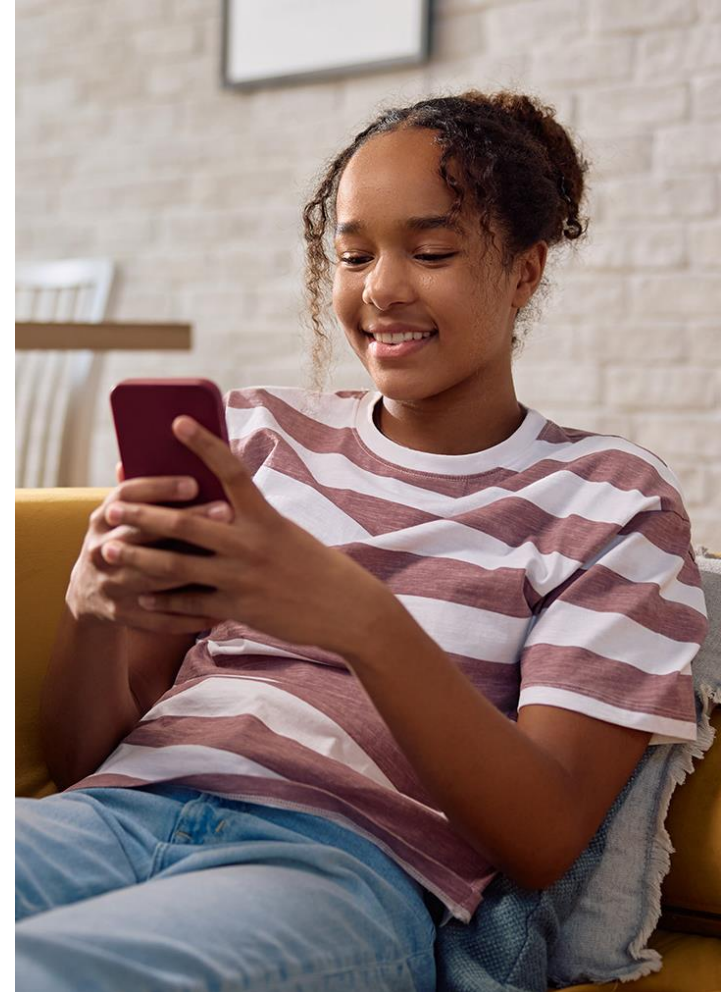
Email Use

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Email: Key Stats From Students

Weekly Email Usage

87% of students use email weekly.

Preferred College Communication

74% of students prefer email for college communications.

College Email Utilization

89% of students have used college emails in their college planning.

Helpfulness of College Emails

88% of students found college emails helpful.

RNL, Halda, & Modern Campus. (2025). *2025 E-Expectations Trend Report*. Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

What Makes Students Click?

Interest Drives Action

54% open when already interested in the school.

50% open out of curiosity to learn more.

What Grabs Their Attention

32% respond to compelling subject lines.

27% open based on positive past experiences.

22% engage with personalized subject lines.

External Influence

18% open due to parental encouragement.

RNL, Halda, & Modern Campus. (2025). *2025 E-Expectations Trend Report*. Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

Email Remains a Foundational Channel

74% of students want to hear from colleges by email.
This rises to 77% for 12th graders.

99% of institutions utilize email as a marketing tactic.
94% rate it as effective.

72% of institutions use email for outreach to search non-responders.
45% send 5 or fewer messages; 40% 6-12 messages; 15% 13 or more.

Recommendations for Institutions

Email

➢ **Use email metrics** to understand who's paying attention to your outreach and what's driving engagement (*which students are opening messages, which headers are driving open rates, which links are driving web traffic*).

➢ **Adjust your communication flow to include ongoing outreach to non-responders**—outreach to most purchased records is allowed for up to 12 months.

➢ **Make sure your email template and individual messages include links to your social media accounts** as well as direct links to academic/program content on your website.
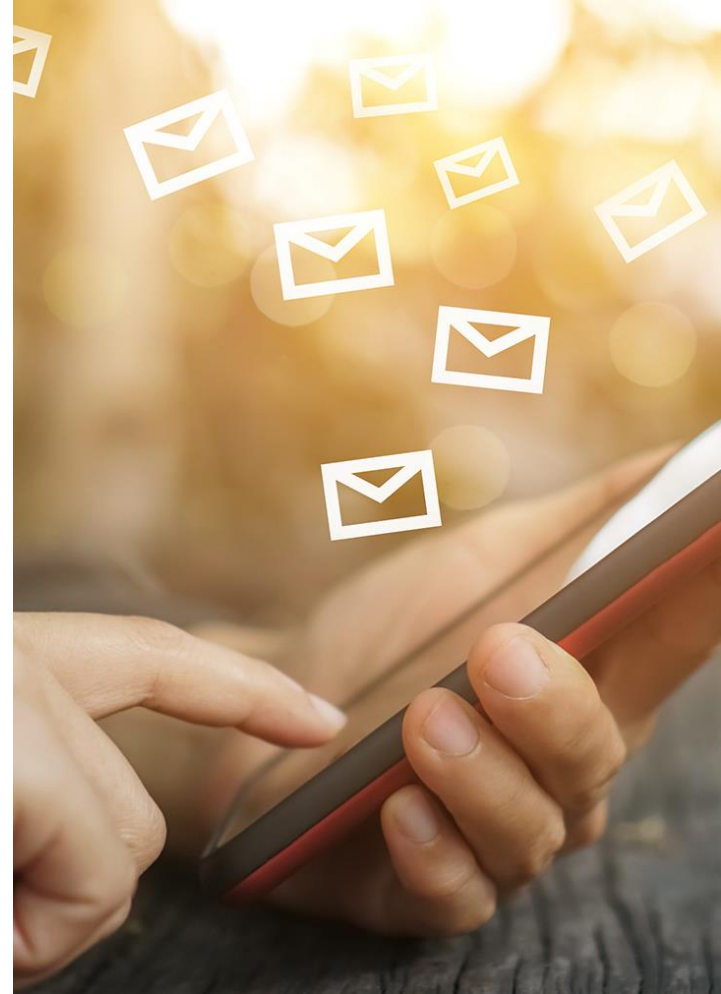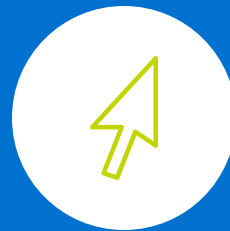
Digital Marketing

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Digital Ads Key Facts

High Click-Through Engagement

70% of students have clicked on college/university ads
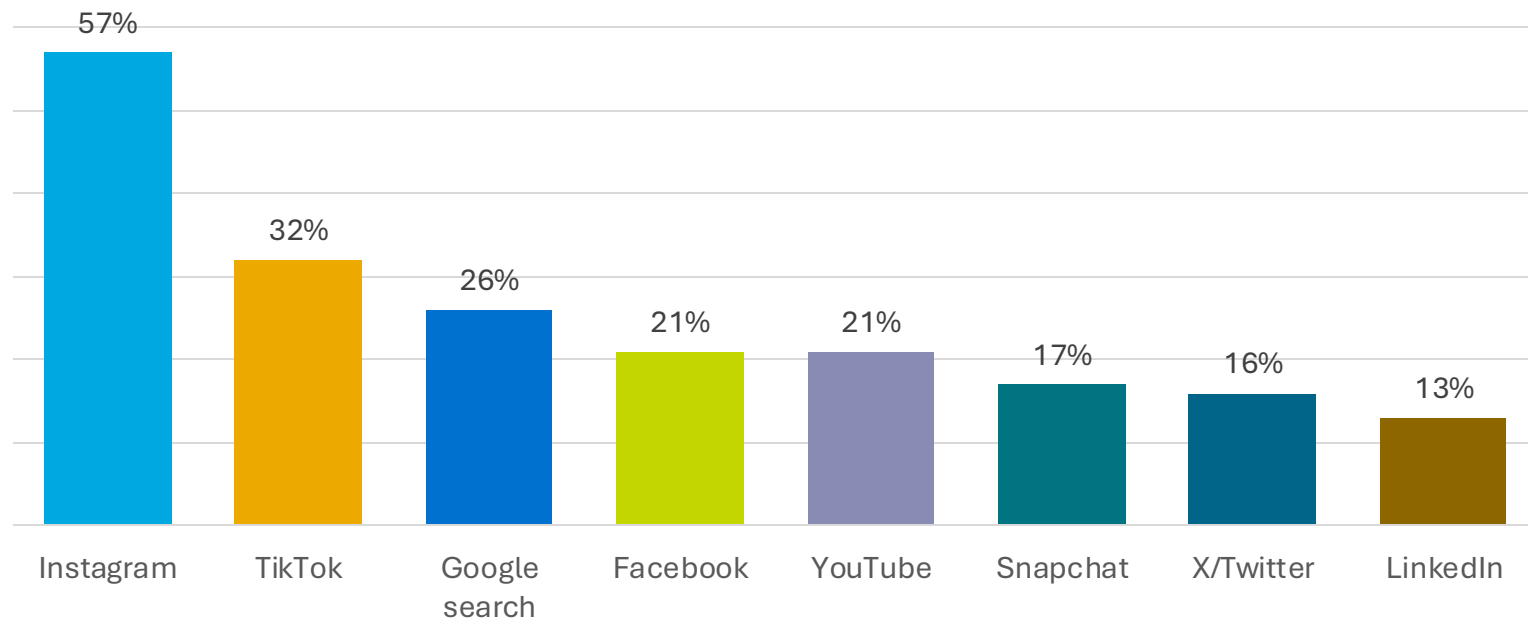

Post-Click Actions

31% email admissions offices
28% explore website information
26% fill out information request forms
20% follow the institution's social media
19% contact financial aid offices

Where Students Click: Digital Platforms Driving College Discovery

Social media dominates discovery

Bar chart showing percentages:
- Instagram: 57%
- TikTok: 32%
- Google search: 26%
- Facebook: 21%
- YouTube: 21%
- Snapchat: 17%
- X/Twitter: 16%
- LinkedIn: 13%

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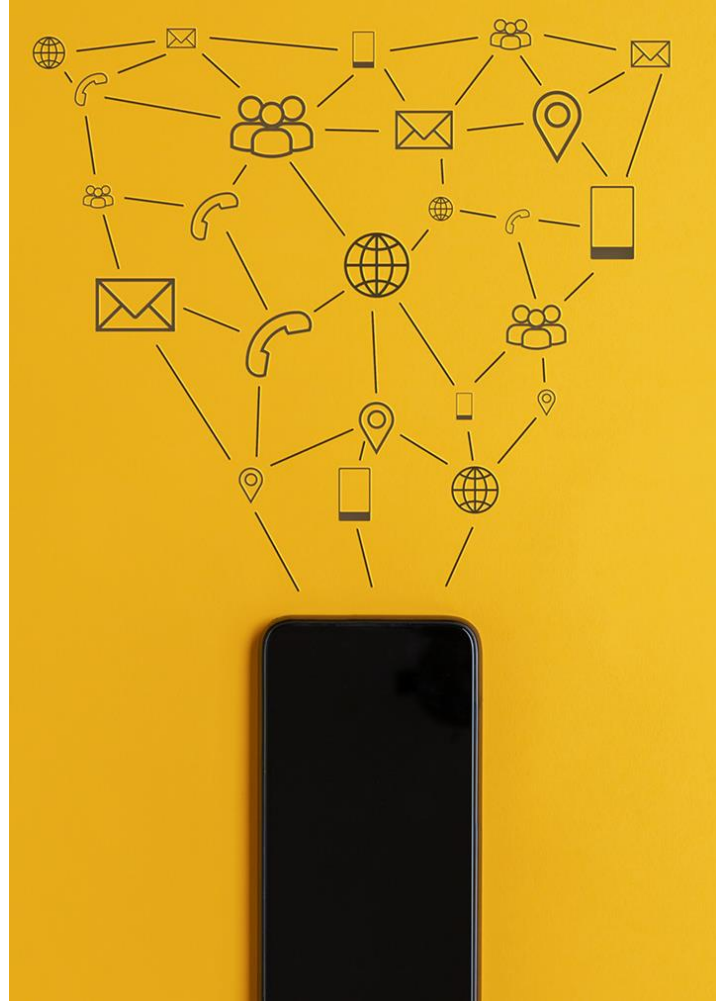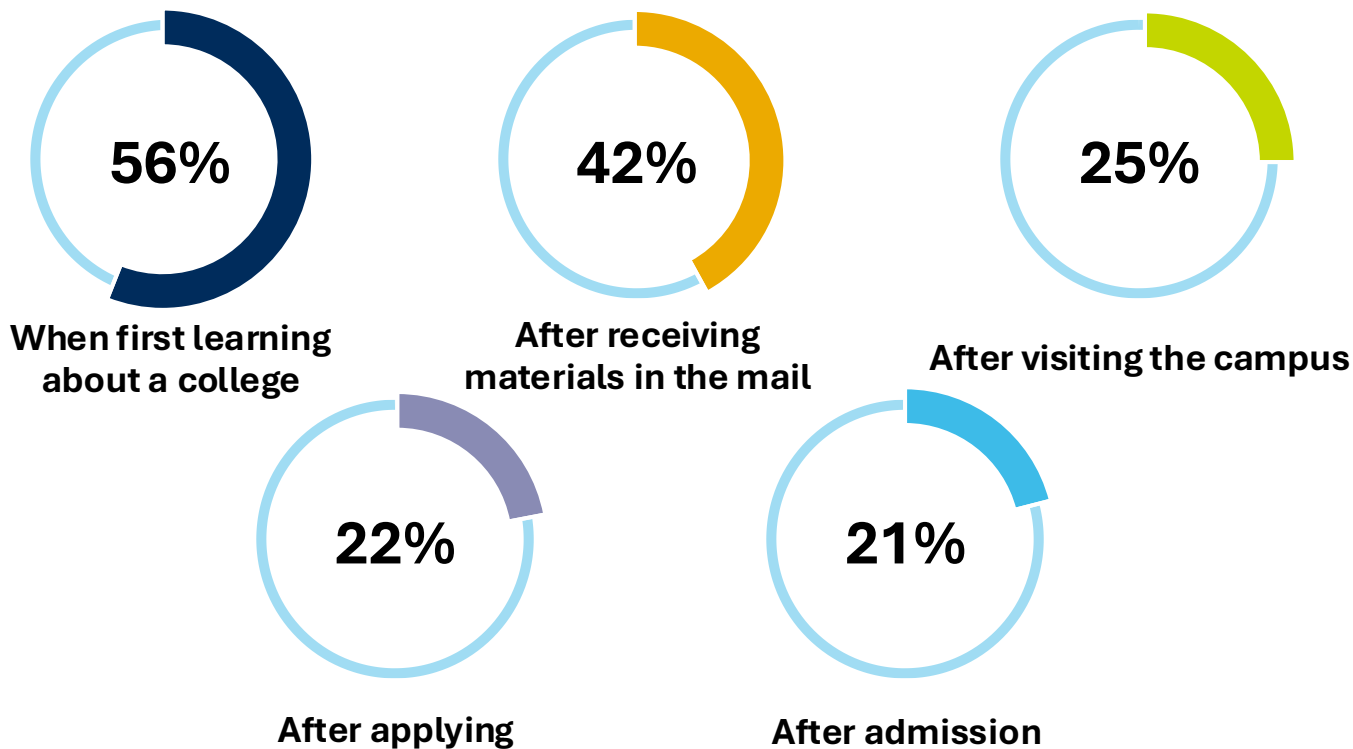
Recommendations for Institutions

Digital Marketing

➤ **Leverage awareness by building digital marketing channels as part of student search** through display, look-alike, geofencing, and other strategies.

➤ **Invest in a mix of channels** that include top-used social media platforms such as Instagram and Google search.

➤ **Curate advertising imagery and social creative** to provide engaging views of campus life, outcomes, and other representations of campus.

➤ **Drive traffic to landing pages** that enable ongoing engagement and exploration.

Social Media

4

When Social Media Matters Most in College Planning

56%

When first learning about a college

42%

After receiving materials in the mail

25%

After visiting the campus

22%

After applying

21%

After admission

RNL, Halda, & Modern Campus. (2025). *2025 E-Expectations Trend Report*. Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

Most Effective Platforms for College Planning

Instagram

53%

TikTok

32%

Facebook

28%

YouTube

26%

RNL, Halda, & Modern Campus. (2025). *2025 E-Expectations Trend Report*. Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

Institutional Social Media Use and Effectiveness

Grouped bar chart comparing Use (blue) and Effectiveness (gold):

Platform	Use	Effectiveness
Instagram	89%	93%
TikTok	52%	79%
Google search	86%	88%
Facebook	85%	81%
YouTube	71%	85%
Snapchat	45%	68%
X/Twitter	50%	66%
Streaming Services	42%	83%

Legend: ■ Use ■ Effectiveness

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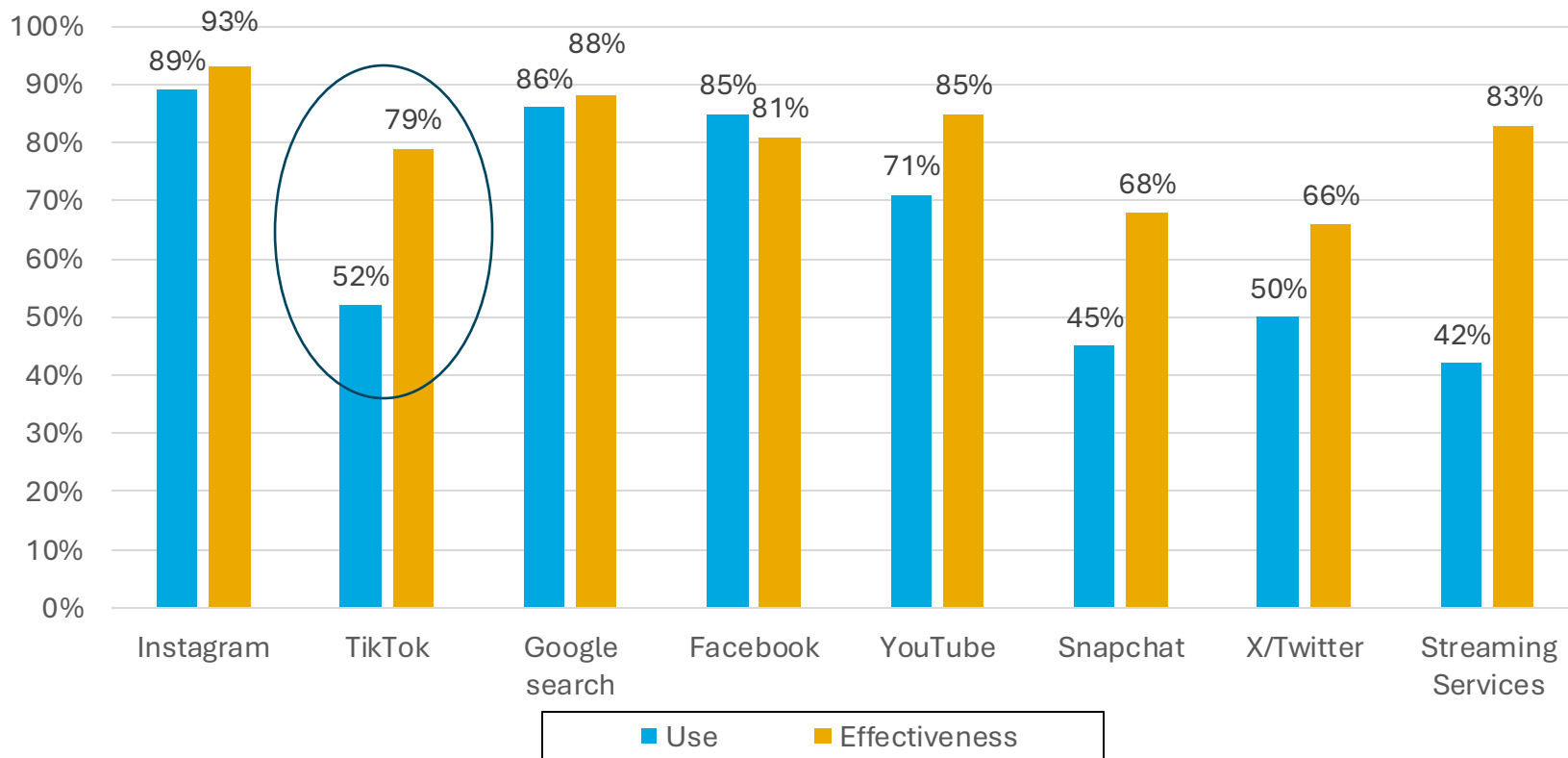
Recommendations for Institutions

Social Media

➢**Promote social media channels early** in the student journey as a means of campus discovery and exploration of student fit.

➢**Make sure your social media content talks about "investment benefits"**—show why should your institution be among a student's consideration set.

➢**Focus your energy on one or two platforms**—don't feel as if you must have content on every platform.

➢**Leverage short-form video in top social channels**, including organic video created by student ambassadors and other curated sources.

Personalized Video

5

Key Findings About Videos in College Planning

Students LOVE videos!

83% of students have used videos in their college planning.

84% find videos helpful when exploring college options.

Lack of videos/photos showcasing campus life on a college website is a frustrating issue for **15%.**

20% will watch a video after watching a virtual tour.

16% want to receive videos as general information.

What Do Students Want in a Video?

Content that connects

Current students sharing experiences **39%**

Personalized program content **30%**

Campus life showcase **33%**

Campus, buildings, and classrooms **30%**

Financial aid tutorials **32%**

Residence halls **28%**

Application process guidance **30%**

Recent graduates talking about their job search, where they found a job, and their salaries **27%**

Recommendations for Institutions

Personalized Video

➢ **Use video on webpages that are critical to the enrollment decision (academics, financial aid, student life).**

- *86% of institutions are using video content embedded on their website; 92% view it as effective.*

➢ **Don't miss the opportunity to use personalized video.**

- *40% of institutions are using personalized video; 98% view it as effective.*

➢ **Prioritize videos with authentic student stories and "day-in-the-life" content.**

- *Students crave authentic videos that feel organic.*

RNL (2025). *2025 Marketing and Recruitment Practices for Undergraduate Students*

Artificial Intelligence

6

Enhancing AI Digital Assistants ("Chatbots")

AI digital assistants drive engagement—45% of students have used AI chatbots, with **83% taking further action.**

**51% use voice search** for college exploration.

9th & 10th graders are the biggest adopters of AI tools, so this will be increasingly important in the next 12-18 months.

Recommendations for Institutions

Artificial Intelligence

➢ Take advantage of the big opportunity you have with AI-powered digital assistants.

- **22%** of institutions use AI-powered chatbots; of those using them, **80%** find them effective.

➢ Engage students with truly conversational digital assistants that can also learn on the fly to keep conversations organic.

➢ Connect AI digital assistants to your CRM to drive even greater engagement using your data.

These are not your parents' chatbots!
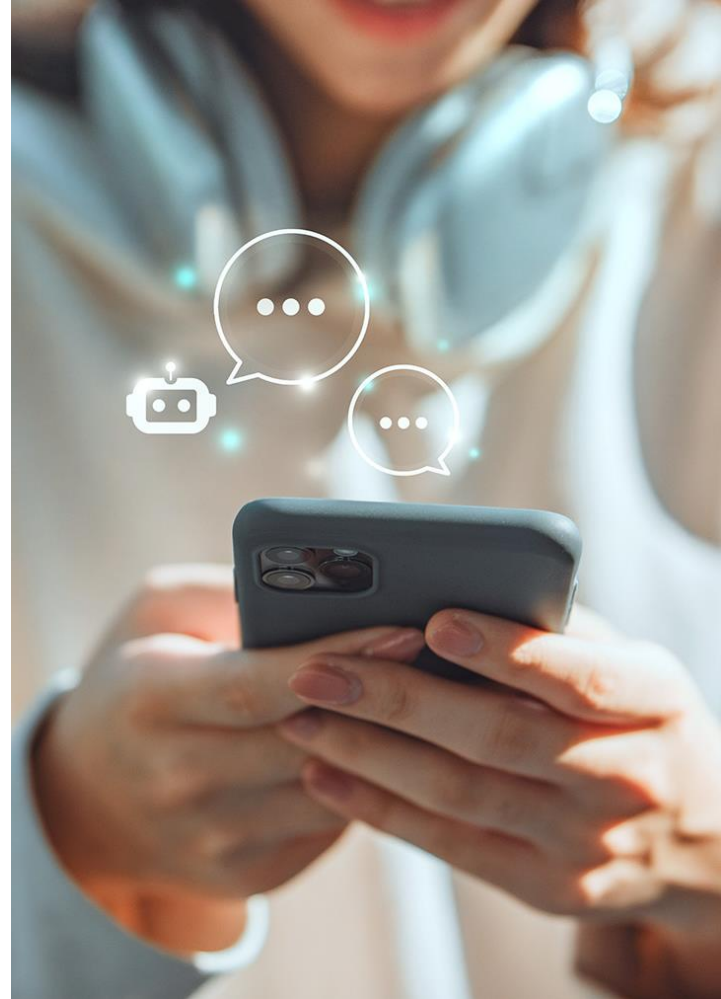
Summary Takeaways

6 key strategies to implement now

➢**Website:** Ensure academic/program web content reflects information of interest to prospective students/parents.

➢**Email:** Understand your email metrics and "watch the watchers."

➢**Digital marketing:** Think full-funnel when considering paid advertising investment—from awareness-generating social channels through program search.

➢**Social media:** Provide investment information via your social media channels (students are using those platforms early in their college search).

➢**Video:** Find ways to insert personalized—or at least personally customized—video content in your recruitment plan.

➢**AI:** Work to ensure your institution is becoming AI-ready: Is your website structured for AI search queries? Can students/parents interact with a high-quality AI digital assistant with real-time connection to your CRM?

Questions?
Comments?

Thank you!

STRATEGY

IMPACT

CONNECTION

INNOVATION

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ALTERING the
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