



EAB

Student Success Collaborative™

Breaking Through the Student Communications Barrier

How University-Level Coordination Can Improve Email Strategy

Navigating GoToWebinar



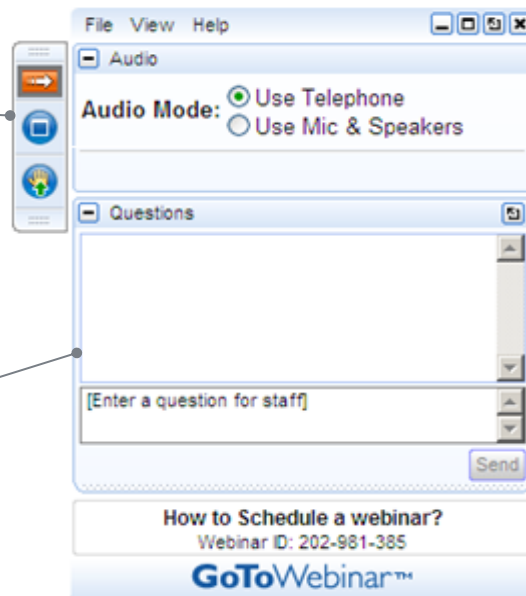
Basic Logistics

Click the orange button to hide or show the control panel.

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To Participate

Enter other questions or comments in the question box and click "Send."



Today's Presenter



Lindsay Miars
Director

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When Did We Become Spam?

Universities Rely Heavily on Email, but Students Think It's Noise

Students Hold a Less-Than-Esteemed View of University Messages

72% Treat emails from student organizations as spam

54% Don't always read emails from their university or academic department

35% Don't always read emails from their advisor

”

“When I ask students if they read my email, they say, ‘I never got an email from you’—but that can’t be true, I sent seven!”

*Director of Advising
Public Regional University*

The Downward Spiral of an Unread Email

Missed Communications Can Result in Dire Consequences

One Student's Story

Student **ready to withdraw** because they couldn't afford tuition bill



Student asks to borrow money from faculty advisor as last measure to pay fees

Faculty reports the case to the Student Financial Services office (SFS)



SFS determines that student **never accepted their awarded financial aid package, despite multiple emails**



In the National News

"Though Emory sent weekly e-mails—17 of them, along with an invitation to a program for minority students—they went to a school account Angelica had not learned to check. From the start, the wires were crossed."

*Jason DeParle
The New York Times*

Student never saw the email because, in his words:
"Students here never read their university email"

Are Students Just Bad at This?

Students Completed Equally Critical Tasks to Get Here in the First Place

By ignoring critical messages, students across campus fail to:

- ☐ Register for courses on time
- ☐ Declare their major by deadline
- ☐ Pay tuition and fees
- ☐ Submit crucial administrative paperwork



To enroll, these same students successfully:

- ☒ Wrote personal statement essays
- ☒ Submitted their application by deadline
- ☒ Paid their deposit to confirm spot
- ☒ Arrived on campus for freshman orientation

One Department on Campus Does It Differently

Enrollment Management's Recruitment Strategy as a Communication Model

Enrollment Management

Sophistication of outreach



Centrally coordinated



Driven by quantifiable objectives (ROI)



Evidence-based and precise



Reflective of student behavior and psychology

The Rest of the University



Siloed and uncoordinated



Missing link between communications and outcomes



Based on limited data and hunches



Written with administrator jargon and mindset

Student Lifecycle

Pre-enrollment

Point of Deposit

Post-enrollment

In Defense of Email

Other Communication Channels Plagued with Greater Limitations

<i>Characteristics</i>	 Text	 Social Media	 Websites	 Email
Broad adoption	✓	✓	✓	✓
Robust information			✓	✓
Ability to target	✓			✓
Comprehensive “paper trail”				✓
<i>Recommendations</i>				
	• Use sparingly for urgent messages or reminders • Students must be able to opt out	• Use to announce programming and social events • Reserve for affinity groups and building university brand	• Promote as a self-service resource • Use as a repository of information	Evolve email strategy to more effectively reach students

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Exploring Apps as a Channel for Student Support

Guide Is EAB's First Direct-to-Student Platform

*A student-centered channel
free of unwelcome noise*

*Hardwired with message
best practices*

*Designed to help students
complete critical tasks with
timely, student-tested nudges*



1

University-Level Coordination to Reduce Inbox Noise

2

Scaling Email Best Practices to Your Staff

3

Applying 'Nudging' Principles to Message Architecture

What the Student Experiences

Well-Meaning but Siloed Success Efforts Create Inbox Clutter, Confusion



Who are these people?

How much of this is relevant to me?

What do I need to do first?

I'll get to these later.

The First Step Is Admitting You Have a Problem

Michigan State Confirmed Over-Contact with Process Mapping Exercise

What MSU Did



IT convened representatives from 12 divisions to discuss over-contact of at-risk students

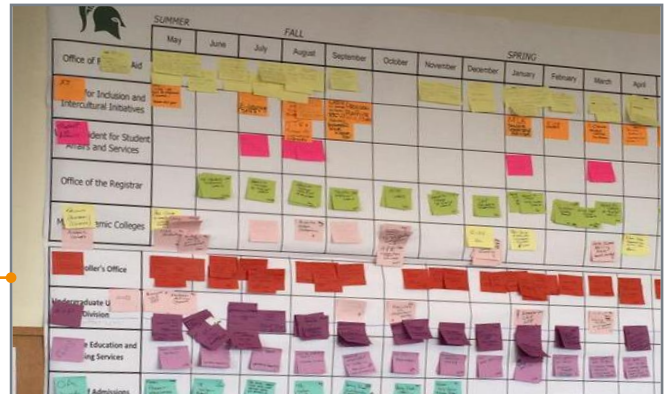


Participants posted sticky notes for all messaging tied to specific risk behaviors month by month



Live discussion and correction of duplicative and contradictory student messages

A Low-Tech Visualization of Student Over-Contact



What They Discovered

50

Online portals to navigate

90⁺

Different types of registration holds

400⁺

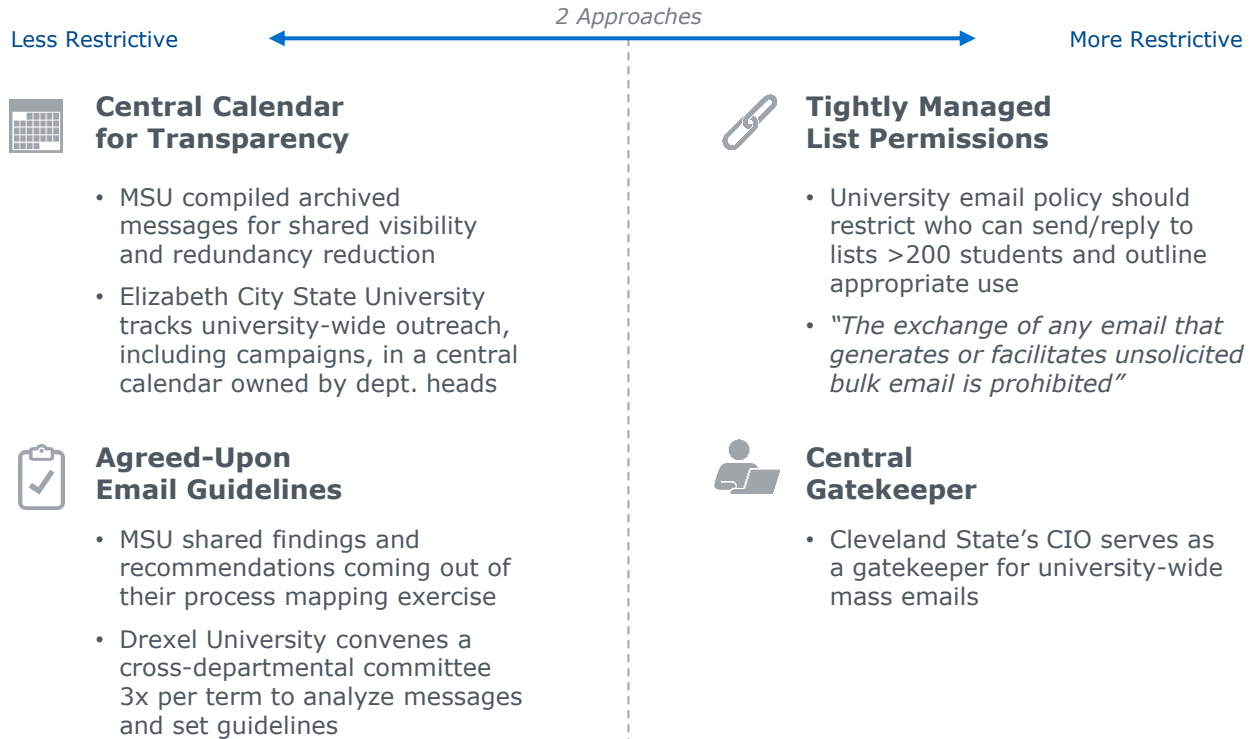
Email messages within one year

“Welcome new Spartans.
Please check MSU email
Many times each day.”

A **haiku** inspired by MSU's process map

Coordination at the University and Dept. Level

Mitigating the Tragedy of the (Inbox) Commons



Elevating Critical Messages with Signal Value

Admin and CIOs Leading the Charge to Cut Through Noise

1 Decide which messages count as “critical” at your university

- Academic standing or status
- Academic progress updates requiring action
- Advising or registration holds
- Financial deadlines

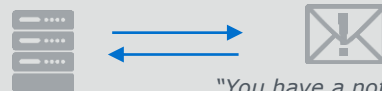
2 Designate an “elevated sender” with an aura of authority

- Office of the Registrar
- Main point of contact in advising
- Portal or external channel

3 Teach students to recognize emails from this sender as critical

- Set expectations with an initial email
- Introduce concept to incoming students at orientation

Case in Brief: Secure External Server at a Public University in the Midwest



“You have a notification waiting for you.”

Why It Works

- Students taught that messages sent through this server are important
- Different “look and feel” of the message draws attention
- Typically reserved for important actions related to academic progress (positive or negative), deans list, academic suspension, confirming graduation status, etc.
- Institution gathers data on usage stats, including read rates, time of day message was viewed, etc.

New Resource

Replicating MSU's Process Mapping Exercise on Your Campus

 **EAB** | Student Success Collaborative

Process Mapping Student Communications
Tools for Breaking Through the Student Communications Barrier

New



Download from the
Handouts section of
your Control Panel

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Frontline Staff Sending Lengthy, Formal Emails...



...to Students Accustomed to Tweets

Information Regarding Your Academic Progress

Dear Laura:

University policy requires that all students declare a major prior to completing 60 units. Records indicate that you are currently undeclared and have completed at least 45 credits. Records also indicate that your GPA is below a 2.5, which is the minimum required threshold for many majors at the University.

There are many resources here at the University that can help you in selecting your major and improving your GPA. There is still time to adjust your skills and work to make some necessary improvements. A success coach can help you set goals and develop skills necessary to achieve success. With the help of the success coach, you can work on a variety of topics such as study skills, organizational techniques, and time management, among many other items. Additionally the career center on campus is staffed with career counselors who can administer an interest inventory and help you explore the connection between careers and majors. I hope you will reach out to one of these offices to support your progress.

Sincerely,

John Smith
Office of Student Success

(202) 555.5555

Frontline Staff Sending Lengthy, Formal Emails...



19

...to Students Accustomed to Tweets

Information Regarding Your Academic Progress

Dear Laura: *Impersonal*

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Sincerely,

John Smith
Office of Student Success
(202) 555.5555

Subject line too vague

Greeting and closing too formal

Does the student know this office?

Jargon

Extraneous information

This paragraph too long. What is the important info?

Next steps and timeline not clear

F

Make Your Subject Line Do More Work

A Good First Impression Drives Higher Open Rates

Insights from Out-of-Industry

Mixpanel Analysis of 85,637 Subject Lines

13.5% Benchmark open rate for 1.7 billion emails

Change in Open Rate

+1.5%

Subject line less than 30 characters

-0.6%

Subject line more than 30 characters

+1.7%

Subject line includes a "?"

+7.5%

Subject line includes "How to..."



Nine Effective Approaches

Adapted from Advisory Board's Internal Guidelines

Catchy	Oops—you missed your registration deadline!
Direct	Concerned about your midterm grades
Urgent	URGENT: Your academic plan
Authoritative	Next steps to get you back on track
Conversational	Let's chat about Chemistry
Mysterious	You qualify for a new program!
Guiding	How to improve your GPA at the Tutoring Center
Action-oriented	Schedule some time with me this week
Questioning	Is there a reason you haven't registered yet?

Write for Your Audience

Effective Messages Are Student-Centered and Student-Friendly

Tone Should Focus on Students and Their Goals, Not Rules or Policies

Impersonal Copy

"Whitehouse University cares about your success and offers a number of resources for students in need of additional support. Students have found the tutoring center to be critical in improving their GPA for admission into certain selective programs."

Student-Centered Copy

"I care about your success and noticed that your math midterm grade is not up to standards for the Business School, which you want to apply for next semester. You should schedule an appointment with the tutoring center."

50% Increase in response rate
(Royall recruitment campaign)

Language Should Be Clear to All Students (Including ESL)

▶ Reduce multisyllabic words

"Exempted" → "Do not need to"

▶ Remove passive voice

"If you are contacted by your advisor" → "If your advisor contacts you"

▶ Translate jargon

"Non-credit-bearing" → "Does not count for credit"

▶ Ensure readability

The Gunning Fog Index is an online tool to assess the grade-level of a given text



Tool: "Higher Ed Jargon Reduction Exercise" on eab.com

Don't Ignore Your CTA

The Call to Action Is Critical, but Often the Hardest Part to Get Right

Out-of-Industry Best Practices

Include Only One CTA When Possible



increase in clicks when the number of CTAs are reduced from 4 to 1

Make Your CTA Stand Out

Register Now

Offset CTAs with bold, different colored text, or buttons



Lead with a CTA in the Subject Line



Include the CTA in the subject line so students immediately know what they need to do

Convey a Sense of Urgency

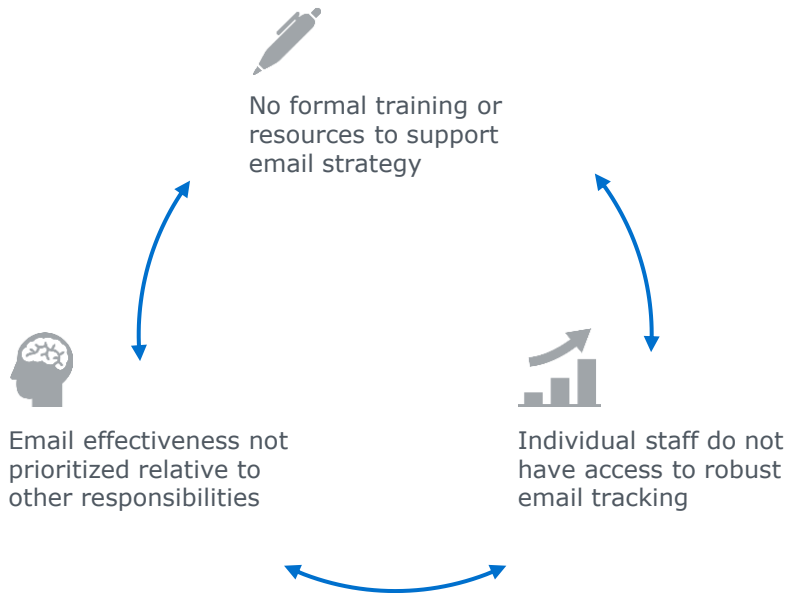


Use action verbs that convey a sense of urgency, such as "sign up," "schedule," or "pay"

Scaling Email Best Practices to Your Staff

What Good Are Best Practices if No One Uses Them?

Current Barriers Exacerbate and Reinforce One Another



No Need to Reinvent the Wheel

Existing EAB Resources and Recommendations



On-demand webinar
and upcoming live
webinars



New resource with
email tips, templates,
and a worksheet

Encourage staff to attend our February webinar:

Breaking Through the Student Communications Barrier

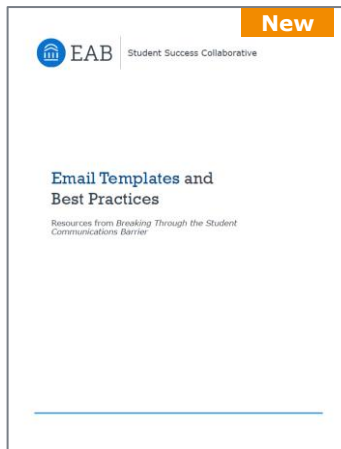
*Email and In-Person Strategies to
Promote Better Student Decision-
Making*

Wednesday, February 15
2-3PM ET

During this session, our experts
will share strategies, scripting,
and email templates that advisors
in the Collaborative have found to
be highly effective in promoting
desired student actions.

Register

Share this new resource with staff or integrate into upcoming staff trainings:



Download from the
Handouts section of
your Control Panel

Greater Visibility Improves Staff Practices

A Little Friendly Competition Jump-Starts Email Innovation



CMU's Success Coaches track outreach in Google Doc visible to peers and leadership



Use data to identify which outreach strategies were the most successful



Visibility encourages staff to test new approaches and continuously improve

Student email	Student Outreach Attempts				Notes
	Outreach Method	Date	Student Response	Outcome	
sjohn@c	Email	9/19	Replied	Positive	Appt. sch.
rmenj@c	Email	9/19	Replied	Positive	GPA impr.
adela@c	Phone	9/23	None	Neutral	Left VM



Outcome tracked as **positive** if the student responds and makes progress; used as a proxy for outreach effectiveness

Limited Options Beyond Manual Tracking



Most student success offices lack the ability to automatically track email metrics (incl. open rates)



Gmail, Outlook, and CRMs¹ are common, but do not track email metrics without significant workarounds or add-ons



Marketing automation software like Eloqua can track email metrics but are not pervasive in higher education

1) Customer Relationship Management software. Approx. 66% of surveyed universities have some form of CRM, however they are most commonly used by Enrollment Management and Advancement.

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Message Architecture

You've Reduced Inbox Noise, Now What?

Examining the Breakdown Between Reading and Taking Action

The Communications Funnel

Student opens and reads message

Student takes desired action

Psychological and Structural Barriers to Action



Don't understand higher education jargon



Misconceptions about what is expected or what is important



Next steps not immediate or clear, with few reminders



Don't know where to find resources, or links broken



Feel overwhelmed or helpless



"What's a 'disbursement'?"

"Priority deadline—that seems optional."

"That was due already?!"

"I didn't even see this portal until my 4th year."

"Maybe I'm just not cut out for college."

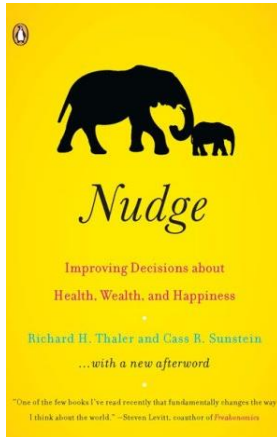
Borrowing from Behavioral Economics

'Nudging' Can Be a Powerful Way to Overcome Motivational Barriers

What Do We Mean by Nudging?

Nudging (n.):

Lowering barriers to making good decisions without limiting choice



Four Types of Choice Architecture in Daily Life

Framing:

"Medium" is most popular coffee size, even when actual size manipulated

The Default Option:

Retirement plan enrollment climbs after "opt in" changed to "opt out"

Convenience:

Consumers more likely to purchase food within easy reach, at eye level

Burdening Bad Choice:

Motorcyclists must pass extra test and prove insurance to forgo helmet

Going Straight to the Source

ASU Identifies Student Pain Points to Design Effective Interventions



Before Intervention



Of eligible continuing students reapplied for FAFSA by the priority deadline



Students prompted by one email four weeks before the deadline

Student Focus Group Pinpointed FAFSA Refiling Barriers



What students said:

1. Thought they needed to fill out FAFSA only for their first year
2. Forgot about the deadline
3. Felt that “priority deadline” sounded like a “nice-to-do,” not “need-to-do”
4. Were deterred by the multiple steps involved
5. Failed to communicate with their parents

The Anatomy of a Nudging Intervention

Behavior-Centered Messages Lower the Barriers to Refiling FAFSA

Sample Email: FAFSA Myths Debunked

Hi Alissa,

The FAFSA is now available. With FAFSA Mythbusters, we debunk three common myths and help you stay on track for the March 1 priority deadline. It could mean thousands more dollars in your financial aid package.



**8 messages
across 8 weeks**

Myth #1:

Most students don't qualify for financial aid.

Fact #1:

Over 80% of students at ASU receive financial aid.

Dispel **common misconceptions**

Myth #2:

You only have to file the FAFSA once for college.

Fact #2:

You must refile the FAFSA every year to continue receiving aid.

Myth #3:

Your financial aid is always available to you, regardless of when you apply for it.

Fact #3:

Apply by the priority deadline to get all the money you're eligible for. On average, students who apply before then get twice the amount of aid!

Drill in on the **task** at hand

Submit your application by the Sunday March 1 priority deadline.

Here's what you need to do now:

[✓] Get ASU's college code—it's 001081

[] [Retrieve your PIN](#)

[] [Figure out](#) if you need your parents' financial information

Break process into **component steps**

Link to relevant resources so students don't have to hunt for them

Connect students with **parents** if necessary

Sincerely,

Melissa Pizzo

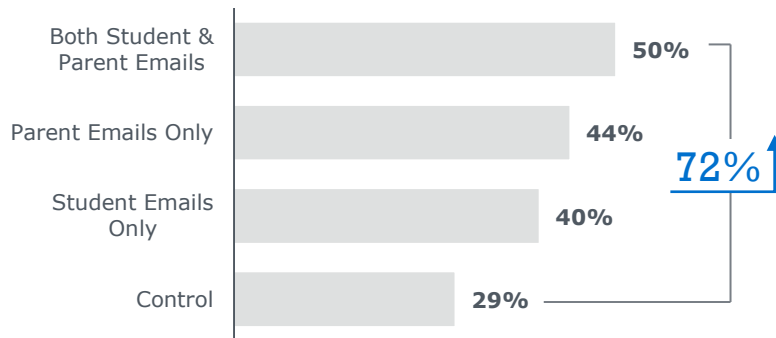
Executive Director, Financial Aid and Scholarship Service

Send from a **specific person** so students feel comfortable responding

Nudging Practices Yield Powerful Results

Results from ASU and Ideas42 Intervention

Percentage of Recipients Who Filed FAFSA by the Priority Deadline



Students who received Ideas42 emails were awarded between **\$236 and \$643 more in scholarships or grants**

Other Nudging Applications Around the Industry

Clearing Bursar Holds

50% ↓



Decrease in registration-barring bursar holds by the beginning of the registration period

Maintaining Financial Aid Eligibility

30% ↓



Decrease in minority students with academic standing violations

Reducing Summer Melt

6% ↑

Increase in on-time enrollment of Boston area high school graduates

Texting and Nudging: A Natural Pair?

A Closer Examination of the Power and Limitations of Texting

Students Respond Often and Quickly

15%

Response rate to pre-enrollment texts, with 80% of respondents texting back within the first two hours

Powerful Predictor of Student Behavior

3x

Students who responded to text messages saying “yes” to matriculation were 3x more likely to make a deposit

Unprecedented Reach to Minority Students

2.5x

Minority students’ mobile dependency for Internet vs. non-minorities

Why a Text-Only Strategy Doesn’t Work

✗ Must be opt-in

- Students distrust sender’s intentions if they don’t know about the service in advance

✗ Must be used sparingly

- Disruptive form of communication
- Institutions must take care to not crowd this channel like email

✗ Cannot convey lengthy content

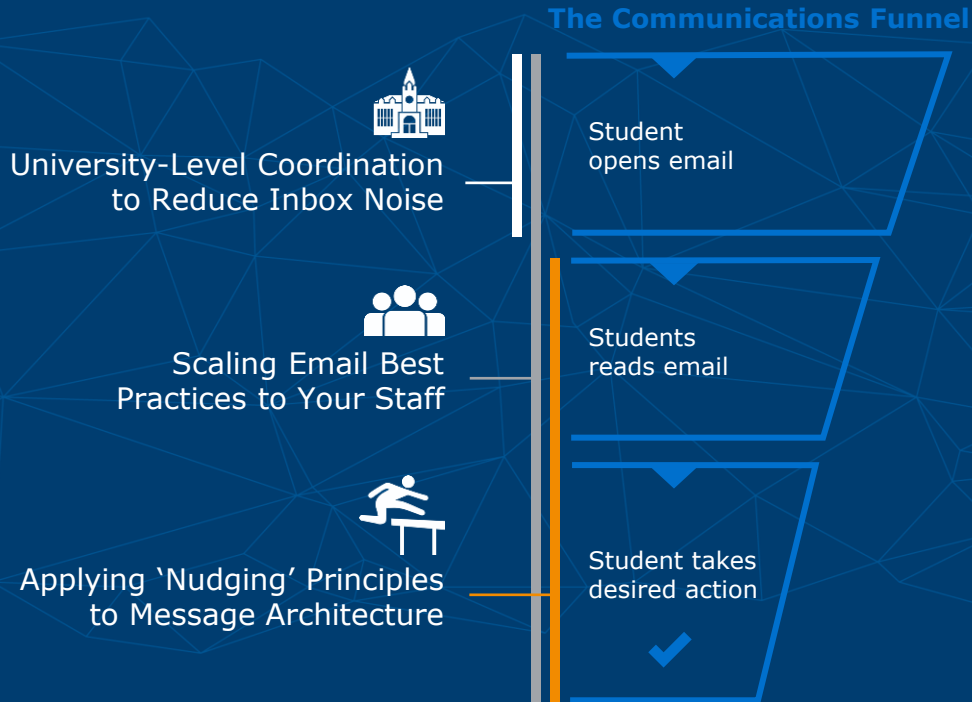
- Message length limited to 160 characters
- Multi-step processes must be established elsewhere first

✗ Requires adequate staff for follow-up

- Students expect quick responses to text messages
- Channel must be sufficiently staffed to respond within hours

In Summary

Breaking Through the Student Communications Barrier



Please Fill Out the Exit Survey!



- As you exit the webinar, you will be directed to an evaluation that will automatically load in your web browser.
- Please take a minute to provide your thoughts on the presentation.

THANK YOU!

Please note that the survey does not apply to webconferences viewed on demand.



EAB

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