EAB

Who Should Read

- Enrollment managers and their teams
- Marketing department
- All campus departments that communicate with admitted students

Post-Deposit Communications Improvement Toolkit

Creating a Centralized Plan for Student Communications from Deposit to Matriculation

4 Ways to Use This Toolkit

- Create a centralized inventory of all student communications sent from various departments from deposit to matriculation
- Streamline student communication timing, methods, and branding by conducting a visual communication audit workshop
- Revise communications for clarity and effectiveness
- Learn more about student texting preferences and best practices

Enrollment Management Forum

Enrollment Management Forum

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EAB

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- Designate three communication audit committees
- Compile a communication inventory with the Communication Inventory Template
- Prepare and conduct a post-deposit communications audit workshop

2 Revising Approved Post-Deposit Communications

3 Finalizing a Post-Deposit Communications Plan

4 Appendix: Guidance for Texting Admitted Students

Create 3 Committees to Guide Communications Audit

Improving communications between deposit and matriculation will require a coordinated effort across many departments. To successfully execute on this endeavor, EAB recommends creating three committees. To ensure practical implementation of the workshop as well as manageable work for all participating members, consider forming and calling upon these committees for different purposes throughout the post-deposit communications audit process.

Before the Workshop

Steering Committee

Purpose
To guide the creation of the other two committees (detailed below) and oversee the implementation of the new post-deposit communication plan written after the workshop.

Composition: Three individuals total.
One each from admissions, financial aid, and another EM office. The VPEM should form the committee, but a director of admissions or marketing should chair it.

At the Workshop

Cross-Functional Communication Planning Committee

Purpose
To conduct the Communication Audit and gather buy-in for the new coordinated communication plan.

Composition: One individual from each department that communicates directly to students
Representatives should be at least assistant or associate director level and typically have a direct role in communications. The committee should include representatives from:

Enrollment Management	Academic Affairs	Student Affairs	Other Offices
• Admissions	• Academic colleges	• Housing	• Marketing
• Registrar	• Academic advising	• Orientation	• IT
• Financial aid	• Academic support	• Dean of students	• Advancement

After the Workshop

Content Enhancement Committee

Purpose
To revise and edit communications that are identified for revision by the audit workshop.

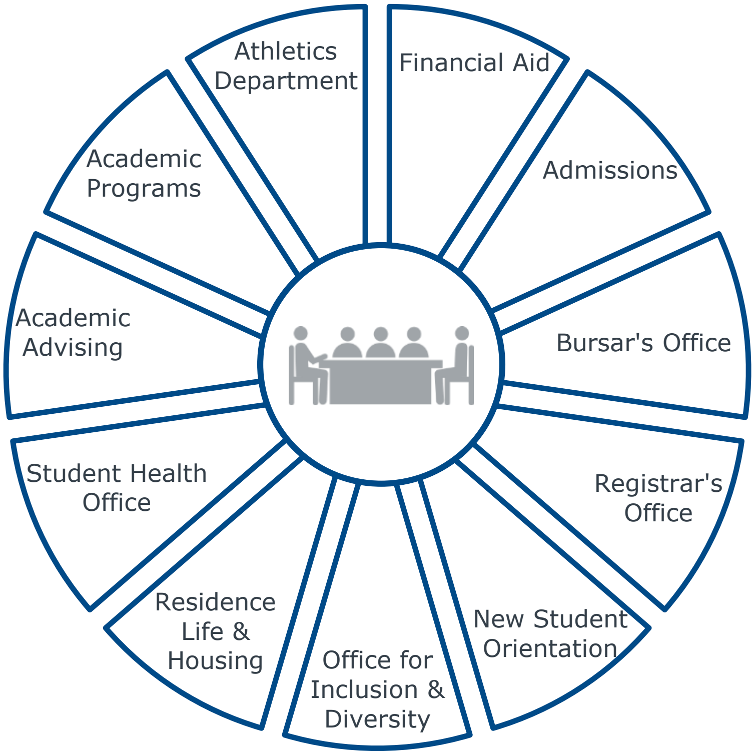
Composition: Minimum two people from marketing/comms department, with copyediting skills
If marketing/comms professionals aren't available, invite admissions counselors who are skilled in copyediting or who administer official institution social media sites.

Compile a Communication Inventory

In advance of an audit workshop, institutions need to inventory all communications sent between deposit and matriculation. The first step is to inventory the cumulative assortment of outgoing emails, letters, or phone calls in order to uncover duplicated or contradictory messages.

Possible Departments to Include in Communication Inventory

Each participating department should complete their designated spreadsheet in the inventory template. Steering Committee members should then copy all communications to a single sheet for a closer look at the student enrollment experience and the stream of post-deposit communications they receive.


Athletics Department
Financial Aid
Academic Programs
Admissions
Academic Advising
Bursar's Office
Student Health Office
Registrar's Office
Residence Life & Housing
Office for Inclusion & Diversity
New Student Orientation

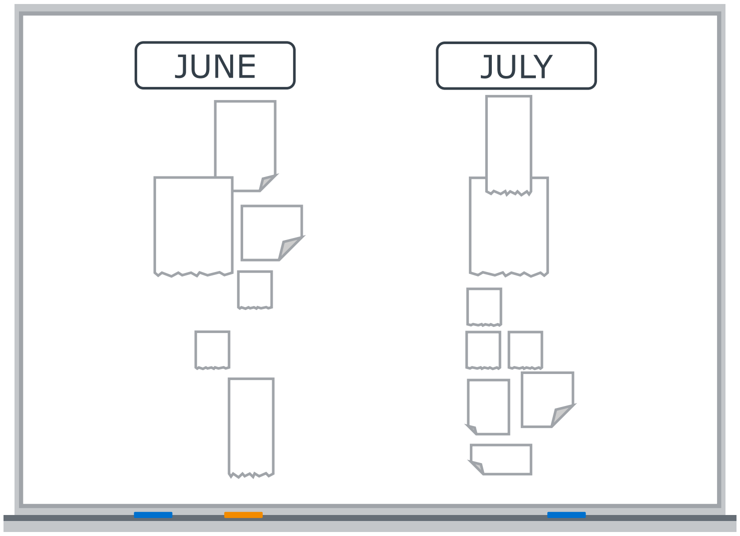
Download the Communication Inventory Template:
a spreadsheet to keep track of every outbound communication by office, date, audience, and method

Department	Month	Subject	Medium	Audience	Goal

Before the Workshop: Logistics & Preparation

Mapping the Post-Deposit Communication Experience

Visually depicting the variety and quantity of post-deposit communications will allow members from all departments to see the content, timing, and relationships of all touchpoints.



Before Leading the Workshop

Set the Stage

- Secure a large room that has plenty of space for representatives from each department to move around and separate into groups.
- Mark off a section of the wall for each month for which communications will be audited. Hang signs that indicate each month and any key student decision moments occurring during the month.

Make the Time

- Invite all members of the Cross-Functional Planning Committee.
- The workshop will take a few hours, perhaps longer, depending on the number of participants.

Gather Supplies

- Designate sticky notes or tags in different colors for each department participating in the workshop
- Be prepared to use a camera to photograph the walls once the existing communications have been placed there. The photos depict for non-attendees what the unintentional enrollment experience created by siloed communications looks like.

Prep Attendees

- Each participant should compile all outbound communications from their department.
    - If the workshop will focus on specific channels or segments of the time period being audited, participants will need to sort out the appropriate communications.
    - Participants should print and bring one copy of each communication to the workshop.

Conducting the Communication Audit Workshop

A Visual Auditing Exercise to Manage Post-Deposit Communications

① Compile the communications

- Ask each participant to pin up the printed copies of each communication (emails, calls, letters, texts, etc.) under the month/time period when it is sent.
- Each department should color-code their communications via a sticky note or tag to easily visualize the sources of each communication.

② Individually review to verify "value-adding" communications

- Participants review each of their own communications to determine if it is valuable, via these criteria:
    - Value-adding: helps students make better decisions and/or progress through the pipeline (see below)
    - Policy/legally mandated: required by institutional policies and controls or state/federal law
- **Eliminate** any communications that don't add value and aren't mandatory.
- When there is disagreement about whether a communication adds value, run the communication through the following checklist. If the communication meets less than three of the following items, consider eliminating it. Any communication that doesn't meet all four items should be flagged for revision.

☐ **Timely**: Is the communication helping students at a moment of need?

☐ **Intelligible**: Is the communication easy to understand?

☐ **Motivating**: Does the communication establish the required action and prompt a response?

☐ **Personalized**: Does the communication address the specific needs of the recipient?

③ Group vetting and verification

- After departmental owners self-eliminate communications, the entire Cross-Functional Communication Planning Committee must assess each remaining communication to ensure it objectively adds value.
- As a group:
    - Justify the value of each communication: Each participant must explain to the committee *the rationale for keeping any communication*. This prevents a siloed or subjective view of "value" retaining unnecessary communications.
    - Eliminate any communication for which the departmental owner cannot provide a rationale.

Communications in need of revision?

Following the audit workshop, members of the Content Enhancement Committee will reconvene to revise any communications with language or formatting issues.

1 Conducting a Post-Deposit Communications Audit Workshop

2 Revising Approved Post-Deposit Communications

- Assess communications for clarity of writing and branding alignment
- Use the Gunning-Fog Index to measure reading level
- Revise communications for clarity, timing, or goal

3 Finalizing a Post-Deposit Communications Plan

4 Appendix: Guidance for Texting Admitted Students

Which Communications Need Revision?

Following the workshop, the Content Enhancement Committee should take the communications flagged for revision and evaluate them for two key criteria: readability and branding.

Unreadable and off-brand communications can create a confusing or subpar enrollment experience for students, and keeping students engaged past deposit day is more important than ever as competition increases. Consider the following examples where the Content Enhancement Committee can revise communications for clarity and brand image.

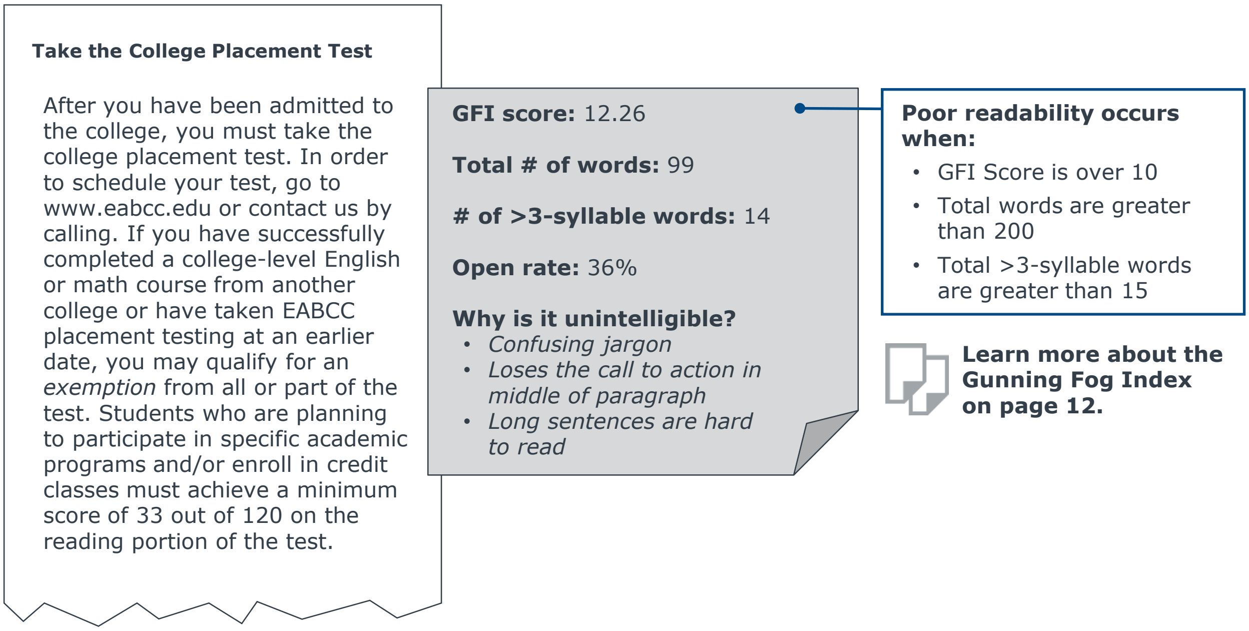
① Edit for Poor Readability

☐ Use your CRM to identify a communication with a low Open Rate and/or Click-Through Rate.

☐ Paste the text from the communication into the online Gunning Fog Index tool (GFI at gunning-fog-index.com). The GFI is detailed later in this toolkit. Record the output:

- Score
- Total number of words
- Number of >3-syllable words

☐ Briefly consider which of these results might make the communication unintelligible.



Take the College Placement Test

After you have been admitted to the college, you must take the college placement test. In order to schedule your test, go to www.eabcc.edu or contact us by calling. If you have successfully completed a college-level English or math course from another college or have taken EABCC placement testing at an earlier date, you may qualify for an *exemption* from all or part of the test. Students who are planning to participate in specific academic programs and/or enroll in credit classes must achieve a minimum score of 33 out of 120 on the reading portion of the test.

GFI score: 12.26

Total # of words: 99

# of >3-syllable words: 14

Open rate: 36%

Why is it unintelligible?

- *Confusing jargon*
- *Loses the call to action in middle of paragraph*
- *Long sentences are hard to read*

Poor readability occurs when:

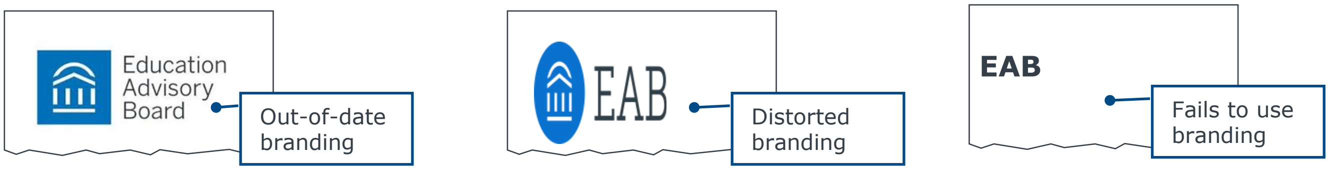
- GFI Score is over 10
- Total words are greater than 200
- Total >3-syllable words are greater than 15

Learn more about the Gunning Fog Index on page 12.

② Edit for Off-Brand Imagery and Content

☐ Choose a communication that misuses or fails to use the institution's branding.

☐ Note why each communication is off-brand.



Out-of-date branding

Distorted branding

Fails to use branding

The Gunning Fog Index

Developed in the 1950s by Robert Gunning, the Gunning Fog Index is a measure of readability that estimates the reading level required to understand a passage. The index uses an algorithm based on the number of words in the passage, the number of words in each sentence, and the number of "complex words"—words that have three or more syllables, not including proper nouns.

The index scores map to reading grade levels. It's best practice to write regulatory and policy documents at an eighth-grade reading level—or a GFI score of 8. **We recommend that all communications to students score no higher than a 10.**

Calculate the GFI

A free tool for calculating GFI can be found at http://gunning-fog-index.com/

GFI	Reading Level
6	Sixth grade
7	Seventh grade
8	Eighth grade
9	High school freshman
10	High school sophomore
11	High school junior
12	High school senior
13	College freshman
14	College sophomore
15	College junior
16	College senior
17	College graduate

Limitations of the Gunning Fog Index

- The GFI uses word and sentence length to calculate complexity. Its efficacy lies in the assumption that most multisyllabic words are more difficult to read and most short sentences are easier to read—which is not always true.
- The purpose of the GFI is to provide a general indicator of a passage's difficulty, which can help prioritize more qualitative editing efforts.

Tips for Clear Writing

Complicated or unfamiliar jargon used in higher education inhibits students' abilities to comprehend and act on emails, letters, handouts, and other written materials. While it isn't necessary to completely avoid all terms (as students will need to familiarize with important words like "bursar" and "registrar" as they move through their college experience), consider providing a convenient glossary or explanation within the communication itself to aid students and parents in their understanding of next steps and important messages.

1 **Prioritize communications to edit** by identifying communications that:

- Contain high levels of jargon (e.g., financial aid award letters)
- Students are most likely to read (e.g., admissions notification)

Starting with those priorities, complete the steps below for each individual communication.

2 **Group related information:** Condense all text that pertains to the same topic in a specific area, and use white space to separate it from information pertaining to another topic.

3 **Revise each sentence for clarity:** Use this revision process to make all sentences clear and active.

Scan Each Sentence	Revise the Sentence
☐ Highlight any words that unnecessarily contain more than two syllables.	☐ Replace as many multisyllabic words as possible with simpler synonyms or phrases.
☐ Highlight any prepositions (at, in, on, to, of, for, etc.).	☐ Rearrange words to eliminate as many prepositions as possible.
☐ Highlight the "actor" of the sentence, if there is one.	☐ Make sure the "actor" appears as close as possible to the beginning of the sentence.
☐ Highlight any instances of "to be" (is, am, are), especially if followed by an -ing verb.	☐ Rearrange words to eliminate passive "to be" verbs, particularly those followed by an –ing verb.

Take the College Placement Test

After you ~~have been admitted~~ **to** the college, **you** must take the college placement test. **In** order **to** schedule your test, go **to** www.eabcc.edu or contact us **by** calling. If you have successfully completed a college-level English or math course **from** another college or have taken EABCC placement testing **at** an earlier date, **you** may qualify **for** an ***exemption*** **from** all or part **of** the test. **Students** who ~~are planning~~ **to** participate **in** specific academic programs and/or enroll **in** credit classes must achieve a minimum score **of** 33 **out of** 120 **on** the reading portion **of** the test.

GFI Score: 12.65

Key:

Multi-syllabic words

Prepositions

Sentence's "actor"

~~**"to be" verbs**~~

Take the College Placement Test

Jumpstart your year by taking your Placement Test! This test measures which regular-credit classes you're ready to take. You will need to score at least 33/120 on the reading section of the test to take classes that count toward your degree.

You may not need to take the test if:

1) You completed and passed an English or math course for college credit at another school
2) You took the test at EABCC in the past

Otherwise, you will need to schedule a time to take the Placement Test. Call XXX-XXXX or go to www.eabcc.edu to schedule your appointment.

GFI Score: 7.697

Phrase requirements in terms of students' goals rather than policies

Sources: Lanham, Richard, *Revising Prose*, 5th ed.; EAB interviews and analysis.

Translating Higher Ed Jargon

4 **Translate or Define Jargon:** Use the charts below to "translate" or provide a definition of university and academic jargon.

Write a 7 to 10-word translation for each term that can be used in student communications or provided in an at-a-glance glossary within the communication itself.

- Use Gunning Fog Index online tool to assess the readability of the translation: www.gunning-fog-index.com. (Learn more about the Gunning Fog Index in the Appendices.)
- Share translations with other members of the Content Enhancement Committee and determine most suitable, concise, and lowest GFI score translation.
- Optional: consider how these translations may vary for a student or parent audience.
- Replace uses of these terms, or find places to insert your translated definitions, in outgoing communications.

Admissions		
Representative Terms	**Translation**	**GFI Score**
Example: Bursar	*The office that deposits financial aid into your account and the office where you can pay your tuition bill*	
High School Transcript		
GED		
ESL		
Credit for Prior Learning		
Certificate		
Degree		
Transfer		
Residency		
Early College Enrollment		
Prospective Student		
Course Load Status		
Class Status		
Certificate		
Tuition and Fees		
Tuition		
Payment Plan		
Tuition Schedule		
Subsidy		
Fee Schedule		
Tuition and Fee Refund		
Withdrawal		
Registration Fee		
Program Eligibility		

Sources: "Glossary: Financial Student Aid," https://studentaid.ed.gov/glossary (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

Translating Higher Ed Jargon

Financial Aid		
Representative Terms	**Translation**	**GFI Score**
Academic Year		
Accreditation		
Additional Eligibility		
Adjusted Gross Income		
Associate Degree		
Attending School		
Award Amount		
Award Letter		
Award Year		
Cancellation		
Collection Agency		
Collection Charges		
Cost of Attendance (COA)		
Data Release Number (DRN)		
Default		
Default Rate		
Deferment		
Delinquent		
Dependency Status		
Direct Loan		
Disbursed Amount		
Disbursement		
Discharge		
Eligible Noncitizen		
Eligible Program		
Enrollment Status		
Entrance Counseling		
Exit Counseling		
Expected Family Contribution (EFC)		
FAFSA		
Federal Pell Grant		

Sources: "Glossary: Financial Student Aid," https://studentaid.ed.gov/glossary (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

Translating Higher Ed Jargon

Financial Aid (cont.)		
Representative Terms	**Translation**	**GFI Score**
Federal Perkins Loan		
Federal School Code		
Federal Student Aid		
Federal Student Aid PIN		
Federal Student Loan		
Federal Work-Study		
Financial Aid Offer		
Financial Aid Package		
GED		
Grace Period		
Grant		
Guaranteed Student Loans		
Income Tax		
Independent Student		
Interest		
Legal Guardianship		
Lender		
Loan Forgiveness		
Loan Holder		
Loan Services		
Master Promissory Note		
Merit-based		
Need-based		
Net Price		
Net Price Calculator		
Overpayment		
PLUS Loan		
Private Loan		
Promissory Note		
Regular Student		
Repayment Date		

Sources: "Glossary: Financial Student Aid," https://studentaid.ed.gov/glossary (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

Translating Higher Ed Jargon

Financial Aid (cont.)

Representative Terms	Translation	GFI Score
Satisfactory Academic Progress		
Scheduled Award		
Scholarship		
Standardized Test		
Student Aid Report		
Subsidized Loan		
TRIO		
Unsubsidized Loan		
Verification		
Work-Study		
Placement Tests		
Evaluation of Prior Coursework		
COMPASS/ACCUPLACER		
ACT		
Remedial		
Developmental		
Cut-off Score		
Accelerated		
Placement		
Registration		
Registrar		
Elective		
Prerequisite		
Course Load		
Credit Hour		
General Degree Requirement		

Sources: “Glossary: Financial Student Aid,” https://studentaid.ed.gov/glossary (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

1 Conducting a Post-Deposit Communications Audit Workshop

2 Revising Approved Post-Deposit Communications

3 Finalizing a Post-Deposit Communications Plan

- Review the Communication Inventor Template completed throughout the audit process
- Create a plan to be distributed to participating departments across campus

4 Appendix: Guidance for Texting Admitted Students

Create the Integrated Communication Plan

Create a Post-Deposit Communication Plan

The Cross-Functional Communication Planning Committee should gather for a final meeting to revise the Inventory Template used during the audit workshop

Once all communications tagged for revision or elimination have been reviewed, committee members should update the Inventory Template to reflect the final versions of each communication.

✓ Following a Communications Audit Workshop, all post-deposit communications designated for revision or elimination should be updated to reflect the final version.

Department	Month	Subject	Medium	Audience	Goal	Outcome of Audit Workshop
Athletics	Aug.	Athlete meeting	email	Student	Notify of first all-athlete meeting	Change timing
College of Liberal Arts	June	Intro to College of Liberal Arts	email	Student & Parent	Provide majors/minors and course offerings	Revise – clarity
College of Sciences	June	Intro to College of Sciences	email	Student & Parent	Provide majors/minors and course offerings	Keep as is
Academic Advising	June	Academic advisor intro	email	Student & Parent	Confirm match of academic advisor	Revise – branding
RL & Housing	May	Roommate questionnaire	text	Student	complete questionnaire	Keep as is
Orientation	May	Registration	text	Student	1st reminder to register for orientation	Keep as is
Financial Aid	May	FA officer intro	email	Student & Parent	Notification of FA officer assignment	Keep as is
Admissions	May	Welcome to EABU	mail	Student	confirmation of commitment	Revise - clarity

Guidelines for Updating the Communication Plan

- The communication plan will inevitably need to change, based either on institutional needs or because certain messages don't work as planned.
- Establish a standing team of three people within EM that will own all future revisions to the plan (e.g. changing the date of an email, revising content, etc.)
- Create a Google form or another easy to use tool with clear instructions on how to request a change to the plan
- Distribute the procedure widely to ensure that all campus stakeholders know how to submit changes
- Host a meeting every semester with the members of the Cross-Functional Communication Planning Committee to evaluate the success of the communication plan

Guidelines for a Post-Deposit Communications Plan

During the final step of the audit, participants should have created a first draft of the Post-Deposit Communication Plan by documenting whether each tracked communication should be kept, revised, or eliminated.

Use the following guidelines to ensure that the final Post-Deposit Communications Plan effectively paths a student through the enrollment cycle.

	Current Communication Plans	Revised Communication Plan
DISTRIBUTION **Spread evenly** Communications should be disbursed equally across days and times	✗ Students receive multiple communications in one day but none for a week	✓ Communications are evenly distributed across the enrollment calendar
SEQUENCE **Support the student's decision cycle** Communications path a student through key decision points	✗ Communications don't align with the student's actual decision cycle	✓ Data-driven approach pinpoints student decision moments
TIMING **Coordinate across campus** There is a right time to send communications	✗ Communication goes out sporadically based on administrative needs	✓ Data-driven approach identifies key moments to send communications
RELATIVE IMPORTANCE **All messages aren't equal** Prioritize critical communications	✗ Uncoordinated messages from different departments bury critical information	✓ Streamline the plan to ensure that key messages are read
CONFLICTING MESSAGES **Coherent communications** Make sure all communications are consistent	✗ Siloed communications conflict and lead to student confusion	✓ Cross-silo communication plan that is cross-checked for accuracy and branding

Distributing the Post-Deposit Communication Plan

Purpose: Drive the adoption of the integrated plan across campus

Advice on Different Approaches to Gather Buy-in

Executive-Driven Change Management

- VPEM (with relevant participants from the steering committee) should present the plan to all the requisite stakeholders on campus (President, Provost, and other VPs) who need to either support the plan or be made aware of it.

When this approach works best:

- Change is needed urgently
- When there is already a strong momentum for change from campus stakeholders

Bottom-up Change Management

- Once there is a finalized plan, each audit workshop participant secures buy-in from the head of their department or other relevant leaders.

When this approach works best:

- When there is strong resistance to the communication plan across campus
- If the campus is more decentralized than other institutions

Announcing the Plan

- VPEM should send an email to key campus stakeholders (deans, department heads, etc.) that need to be informed about the communication audit. Make sure to highlight:
- Need for the communication audit (use examples from the business case)
- Findings from the audit workshop (i.e. students receive 200 emails in March)
- Benefits of the integrated communication plan and how it will be different then current practice
- Timeline for reporting success metrics from the integrated communication plan

Build Plan Awareness

- VPEM and steering committee should arrange at least three trainings following the audit to give campus stakeholders an overview of the integrated communication plan
- The key is to have campus representative understand that the new plan benefits them because the EM office handles all outbound communications

1 Conducting a Post-Deposit Communications Audit Workshop

2 Revising Approved Post-Deposit Communications

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4 Appendix: Guidance for Texting Admitted Students

- What to consider when texting students
- Best message types to send via text
- Text message examples for key decision moments

What to Consider When Thinking About Texting

Students Want to Text, but When?

Why You Should Be Texting Admitted Students

Text Messaging Cuts Through the Noise

A mobile phone is a very personal device—one that many people have on them at all times—and text messaging is an essential element of nearly every device, smartphone or otherwise. This translates to very high engagement rates with text messages versus other modes of communication, such as email, phone calls, or traditional mail.

98% open rate for text messages[1]

90% of text messages are read within three minutes[2]

76% of prospects want to text questions to institutions[3]

Texts Can Increase Matriculation (and Help Boost Retention Down the Line)

For a relatively low cost per student, texts can prevent some summer melt by providing nudges to admitted students who have not yet met all the enrollment requirements. One study found that a ten-message series of texts with timely information about registration requirements increased the likelihood of enrollment by more than seven percentage points.[4]

Appropriate Occasions to Text Students

EAB's Enrollment Services division surveyed 8,515 college-bound high school students to find out how they gathered college information and how they preferred to receive communication. The chart below shows the percentage of surveyed students who felt that each occasion was an appropriate reason for an institution to send them a text message.

Occasions for texting	Full sample	Rising seniors	Rising juniors
To announce a deadline related to students' applications	86.0	89.4	82.0
To respond to specific questions from students	81.5	80.9	82.3
To confirm receipt of a student's test scores or other application materials	79.6	79.9	79.1
To remind students about an event for which they registered	74.6	74.4	74.8
To provide students with information about financial aid award from the school	73.6	75.5	71.2
To send students information about the college	65.3	62.9	68.1
To invite students to campus	55.4	52.1	59.1
To let students know about events on campus	49.9	48.1	52.0

EAB Enrollment Services, Student Communications Preference Study, 2017.

What to Consider When Thinking About Texting (cont.)

Text the Right Content at the Right Time

Many students ignore emails. Text messages present opportunities to engage students but also pose risks: if text messages are not executed properly, students will ignore them, too.

Proceed With Caution, and Respect Texting Limits

Texting Can Be an Intrusive Channel

Even though we just said that texting is a great tool because of how accessible mobile phones are for most prospects, it is important to keep in mind that phones are also very personal devices. Do not invade the trust a prospective student puts in you by inundating his or her inbox with spam-like messages. Effective text communications must be well curated and tailored to fit your institution's brand and voice. Students should also have the power to both opt in and opt out of receiving texts from your institution.

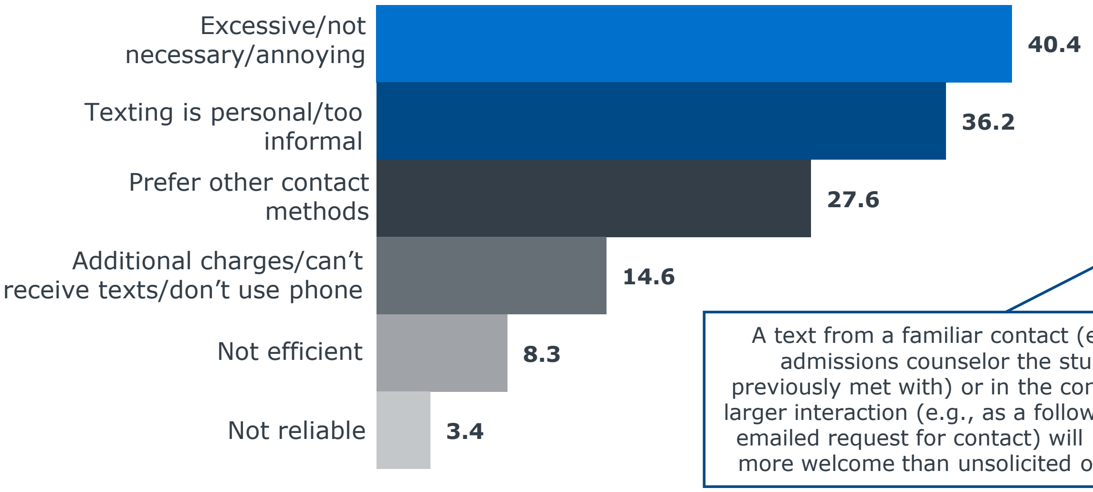
Students Do Not Want All Types of Communication Over Text

Short, transactional messages do well as texts. Our Student Communication Preferences survey showed that students are especially open to texts during the admissions process for important reminders and prompts, such as notifications about events they're already registered for or application deadlines relevant to them.

Texting can also be an effective way to answer quick, discrete questions. If the interaction seems to evolve into something larger, it is time to switch to a medium better suited for the task.

When Texting, Make Sure the Content and Timing Matches the Purpose

Percentage of students who find issue with university texting

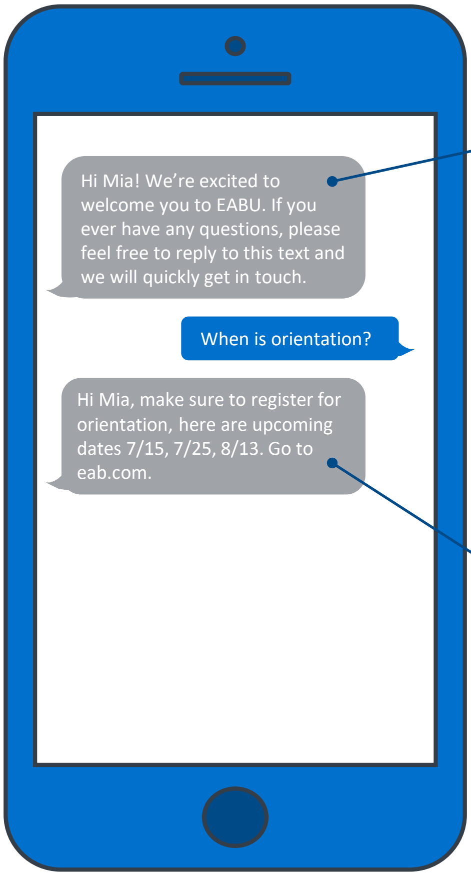


A text from a familiar contact (e.g., an admissions counselor the student previously met with) or in the context of a larger interaction (e.g., as a follow-up to an emailed request for contact) will be much more welcome than unsolicited outreach.

EAB Enrollment Services, Student Communications Preference Study, 2017.

Best Message Types to Send via Text

Three Types of Touchpoints for SMS



Hi Mia! We're excited to welcome you to EABU. If you ever have any questions, please feel free to reply to this text and we will quickly get in touch.

When is orientation?

Hi Mia, make sure to register for orientation, here are upcoming dates 7/15, 7/25, 8/13. Go to eab.com.

Identify Objectives and Corresponding Touchpoints

Objective	Touchpoint
Reduce summer melt	5 summer texts aligned with the general communications plan
Increase FAFSA submission	2-week FAFSA deadline reminder
Drive application completion	Nudge to finish incomplete application at 2 week and 1 week notices

Conversation Openers

It is unlikely that the entire interaction will take place over text, but sending a prospective student a direct message with a question can spark a conversation.

Good conversation openers are those focused on:

- General check-in questions to ensure the prospect is not confused or in need of help
- Proactive outreach from an already-known counselor or admissions staff member
- Inquiry of interest in a specific, relevant event

Action Prompts

To ensure an action takes place, teams often send texts asking prospective students to complete an action or view a specific message.

The best action prompts include ones like:

- Request to submit documentation
- Prompt to check an important email
- Invitation to schedule an appointment

Reminders and Notifications

Not every possible reminder belongs in a text message. Create a curated set of the most critical dates and deadlines—such as a deposit deadline or a confirmation for a scheduled campus visit.

Examples of the best reminders and notifications include ones like:

- Deadline reminders (deposit, financial aid, scholarships, etc.)
- Orientation registration availability
- Appointment confirmations

Text Message Examples for Key Decision Moments

Content Theme	Text Message Content
Introduction	Hey [name]! Thanks for starting an application with EABU. If you ever have any questions, please feel free to reply to this text and we will quickly get in touch
Incomplete Application	We're excited you are considering EABU! Remember to complete your application in time for our priority deadline. Check out our website at www.eabcc.edu
Campus Tour	Come experience what it's like to be a student at EABU. Schedule a tour around your availability; go to the link to register http://EABU.edu/campustour
Application Support	Have questions about the admissions process at EABU? Or just want to make sure you're on the right track? Reply to this message and one of our student application specialists will be in touch with you
Admissions	Be on the lookout for an admissions decision coming to your mailbox in the next two weeks.
Acceptance and Follow-Up	Don't forget to fill out and return the forms in your admissions packet
Deposit Reminder	Don't forget to submit your deposit today. The final deadline is 3/3
Incomplete Financial Aid	Hi [student name]! It looks like you might be missing some financial aid paperwork… give us a call ASAP at 202-555-5555
High School Graduation	Only a few more days until your graduation! EABU is gearing up for commencement too. This will be you in two years! Watch graduation here today: eabu.edu (commencement link)
Portal	Check your MyEABU account and EABU email regularly for updates. Go to http://myeabu.edu Click here to find your user information: http://goo.gl//bsoeri2
Housing Deadline	Want to make sure you have the best roommate? Submit your housing preferences form today. Deadline is 5/22. Access the form through http://myeabu.edu
High School Transcripts	Make sure to request and send all final official transcripts, including those for dual enrollment to EABU Admissions
Orientation	Hi [name] make sure to register for orientation, here are upcoming dates 7/15, 7/25, 8/13. Go to [insert link]
Financial Aid	How are you paying for college? A payment plan may be available (request) at 202-555-5552 or acctsrec@eabcc.edu
Loan Borrowers	First-time loan borrowers must complete their Entrance Counseling and Master Promissory note. Visit www.studentloans.gov. Questions: 202-555-5553
First Day Checklist	First days at EABU. What to do: campus map (http://goo.gl/werns93k), buy books (http://eabcc.bkstr.com)
Advising	Get off to a great start. Introduce yourself to your Advisor. Request a tutor (202-555-5556)

20 Tips for Texting Students

Purpose: The following list of tips for texting students was compiled by experts at Signal Vine, a text-messaging provider that works with many colleges, school districts, and community-based organizations nationwide. These tips are intended to provide additional context for practitioners when devising text-messaging calendars, schedules, and content.

1

Frequency:

The recommended number of prescheduled or programmed messages is 2-5 per month. We discourage more than that but strongly encourage back and forth conversation if a student replies to the message.

2

Personalization:

Make sure that the messages are personalized and include relevant student information (e.g., student's first name, grade, school, etc.) and the counselor/advisor's name, especially in the first message. The more personalized the message, the higher the response rate.

3

Relevancy:

The content of the messages should be relevant to that particular recipient's needs. Colleges often filter messages to only those students who meet certain criteria that would make the message relevant. We strongly discourage mass texting where everyone receives the same message.

4

Action:

Include "calls to action" in the text messages that will nudge students and/or parents to complete their necessary tasks or to take an action that moves forward in the process. For example, you might include a short link (e.g., bit.ly or goo.gl) to a resource or have a student respond back to answer a question about their progress.

5

Urgency:

When possible, create urgency by using dates and sending messages about three days prior to deadlines. Make sure that you send the message on a date that is not too close to the deadline (so recipients aren't overwhelmed) but that also is not too far away from the deadline (so they don't forget about the deadline).

6

Timing:

Timing can impact the rate of student responses to text messages. During the school year, K-12 students reply most frequently before school (7am) or after school (4-7pm). College student messaging should begin between 10am to 11am, the lunch hour is popular and we have found no need for class-day limitations.

7

Interactive:

Ensure that the conversations are two-way and interactive, and that counselors are responding to students' messages by answering questions in a timely manner. Prepare staff to monitor/reply to messages the hour after a programmed message is sent. Most student replies will be sent back within the first 15 minutes.

8

Programmed:

Productivity increases when time is spent up front to design a program of messages around key dates, which reduces the pressure on staff to remember when to engage specific students. We have seen a 4x-10x increase in counselor capacity when they are able to readily respond to student replies from programmed messages.

20 Tips for Texting Students (cont.)

9 **Opt-Out:**

Recipients need to be able to opt out of receiving text messages. In the first message, let students know that they always have the option to text back STOP or CANCEL to stop receiving messages. They can always opt back in at a later time and start receiving text messages again.

10 **Introduction:**

It’s best to begin the engagement with an introduction message that introduces the counselor and solidifies the connection. We also recommend that you suggest students save the number and text anytime they need help.

11 **Prepared Responses:**

To further productivity, prepare responses to common or anticipated questions in advance to avoid duplicative or inconsistent work on behalf of staff.

12 **Prepared Links:**

Often students would be best suited to utilize an online resource, rather than including all of the content in a text. Make these links readily available for counselors to send students to improve productivity and responsiveness.

13 **Link Shortening:**

When including web links, we find use of a link shortener such as bit.ly or goo.gl to be useful in conserving characters in programmed messages.

14 **Less is More:**

The 160 character limit can be challenging for some organizations who want to send two- and three-part messages. Do not exceed the 160 character limit: the process of honing the content of a text message down to its main point ensures students are able to digest the content quickly.

15 **10-Digit Personal Touch:**

Although short codes (3 to 6-digit numbers) are popular for marketing companies and some may consider sending texts via email (from an email address), students are most likely to trust a 10–digit phone number.

16 **Ad-hoc Messages:**

Programmed messages can only cover the expected communications, so counselors should text students with one-off, ad-hoc messages as necessary. This keeps the texting informal and relevancy high.

17 **Ask Questions:**

The best interactions happen when you ask students a question that invites a response. Messages that contain questions have 30-40% higher response rates, and they are a great way to get information from students.

20 Tips for Texting Students (cont.)

18 **Limited Automation:**

There is value in automating some student messages, but students are perceptive and therefore quickly recognize when a “computer” has taken over the conversation. We generally advise no more than 2-3 automated messages in a row if you’re looking to keep the relationship personal.

19 **Group Messaging:**

Messaging students in large groups may save time initially, but it’s important that each message is still sent one-on-one to avoid unintended connections being made between text-message recipients.

20 **Multi-Language for Parents:**

When messaging parents, determining the parents’ language of choice is important when engaging them, or you can give them an option to select their native language.

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