International Student Recruitment: Revamping Your Email Communications | 05.23.2016
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Please find a list below of additional resources from the *"International Student Recruitment: Revamping Your Email Communications"* webcast. If you wish to print only certain resources, you may click their respective links to jump directly to them in the packet.

Pre-Webcast Resources

1. **Email Communication Worksheet**– *Page 2* – This worksheet, which focuses on the essential elements of a strong email, will be referred to throughout the webcast. Use the worksheet after the fact to help you draft a single email in your workflow.

2. **Chegg Whitepaper: "Mythbusting Admissions"**– *Pages 3-19* –This whitepaper provides insights into the marketing, messages, and channels that are preferred by teens when engaging in the college search process. Use this as a reference/data source to reinforce your claim that email is indeed a very important factor in student recruitment.

Email Communication Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help you draft a single email in your workflow. It focuses on the essential elements of a strong email, and you should refer back to this frequently during the email design and review process.

Consider one message you would like to send to your audience and answer the questions below:

- **Stage this email will target (Circle One):**

    Suspects   Prospects   Applicants   Admissions

- **What segment of this population will be targeted?**

    _____

- **What personal information about the recipient will be included?**

    _____

- **What action taken by the targeted recipients will trigger the email?**

    _____ _____

- **How much time should pass after trigger before email is sent?**

    _____

- **What key points will the content reinforce?**

    _____ _____

    _____ _____

- **What is the call to action?**

    _____ _____

- **How will you follow up with the recipients after this email?**

    _____ _____

- **Social media will invite the reader to (Circle One):**

    Follow Page   Share/Comment   Join Group

Mythbusting Admissions:

Where Prospects and Professionals Agree—and Disagree—on Enrollment Marketing, Messages, and Channels

By Gil Rogers and Michael Stoner

Chegg® Enrollment Services   **m**Stoner

Mythbusting Admissions:
Where Prospects and Professionals Agree—and Disagree—on Enrollment Marketing, Messages, and Channels

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For the past 30 years or so, college and university marketers have experimented with a dizzying variety of techniques to reach and influence teenagers as they conduct their college searches and make crucial decisions about where to enroll. The current marketing tool kit includes videos; direct mail; overstuffed envelopes with fancy six-color viewbooks, posters, magazines, and other clever print pieces; websites; mobile apps; chat rooms; and an ever-expanding array of social media.

So many ways to reach out. Yet, there has never been more competition for college-going teens' attention than in the past five years. And there have never been so many stealth applicants flooding colleges with applications. In part, teens fly under the radar because they don't want to be marketed to by colleges, or worse, they're reaching out in new ways that institutions haven't yet adapted to.

During this same period, questions about the value of a college education and concern about its costs and the amount of debt that students accumulate arose in the midst of an economic downturn and an anemic recovery. All of this coincided with an unprecedented flood of technology … including the introduction of the smartphone and tablet computers and the rise of social networking.

Consider:

- Apple released its first iPhone in 2007 and introduced the iPad in 2010. Now, four in five students report visiting a college website on a mobile device.

- Facebook opened up its network to anyone in 2006. Nearly 10 years later, two-thirds of teens report that social media influences their decision about where to enroll in college.

- As recently as 2012, Pew reported that 94 percent of teens had Facebook profiles. Now, many teens have shifted their own use of social media to private messaging apps such as Snapchat, WhatsApp, or GroupMe.

As a result of these and similar developments, the world of marketing, admission, and enrollment management underwent a transformation in the past few years. Seasoned professionals have had to adapt how they communicate value to students and their families and have had to shift the methods they use to get their message across as the pressure to achieve ever-higher enrollment targets continues to mount.

It's hard to identify and market to applicants who are so difficult to find, reluctant to engage with institutional representatives, and adept at locating college information on their own using digital sources and the social web. And it can be expensive, too. Identifying more efficient methods for marketing to students can save money, or at least ensure that the money devoted to marketing is spent on the methods that are most likely to succeed.

This all requires that admission officers stay in touch with changes in the way teens use technology and consume the content that colleges develop to inform them about admission, financial aid, and the benefits a particular institution offers.

On the other side of the desk, students are struggling to figure out how to succeed in their college search. They're bombarded with messages regarding applying early. They're told they are identified as a "good fit"—and then deferred or denied. They choose to submit multiple enrollment deposits to hedge their bets, negotiate financial aid packages, and much more.

This all makes misunderstandings more frustrating—and costly—for admission offices. Thus, this white paper. It's the result of research with admission officers at colleges and universities in North America and with teens who are investigating colleges.

We started with data from surveys conducted by Chegg exploring how teens use online and social media, various devices, and other sources of information in their college search and choice. Then we developed a survey for admission officers with parallel questions so we could compare the earlier findings about teens' behavior and preferences with what admission professionals knew—or thought they knew.

I.
Myths, Busted

One of our main objectives in doing this research was to illuminate and address some of the myths we encounter in conversation, blog posts, tweets, and the well-meaning advice we hear people offer based on a limited view of data mismatched with actual behavior.

For example: the fact that teens text their friends doesn't mean they want spammy text messages from an admission office or even want to be contacted that way at all. Some older practices continue despite evidence that they don't work that well. Finally, the fact that there's data about teens migrating away from Facebook doesn't mean that they don't use it for *some* purposes. We have a lot more to say about these topics below.

As we analyzed the results of our surveys, we identified a number of myths that, based on the evidence before us, are so busted.

**Myth 1: Prospects hang on an admission officer's every word.**
Admission professionals consistently think they are much more important sources of information than teens do. For example, 71 percent of admission officers believe that conversations with them are important sources of information for teens before they decide to apply—but only 37 percent of the teens themselves agree. It's not that teens totally discount what admission officers say, but there are other information sources that are much more important to them.

Myth 2: The higher your institution's ranking, the more impressed teens are. This is one of those "it's complicated" issues. When they are researching colleges and deciding where to apply, they don't care that much—only 16 percent of teens say it's very important to them. But when they are making the decision about where to enroll, they pay attention—77 percent say it's important then. In contrast, admission staff believe that a ranking is more important to teens when they're researching colleges, not when they're deciding which to attend. On top of it all, the most prevalent rankings that teens, their parents, and admission officers focus on are predominantly not reflective of criteria that directly influence students themselves.

Myth 3: Social media is an awesome channel for engaging teens who don't know your institution. Knowing that teens are immersed in social media, admission officers believe it's a good way to reach them initially. Not so, teens say: only 4 percent say it's a good way to contact them initially.
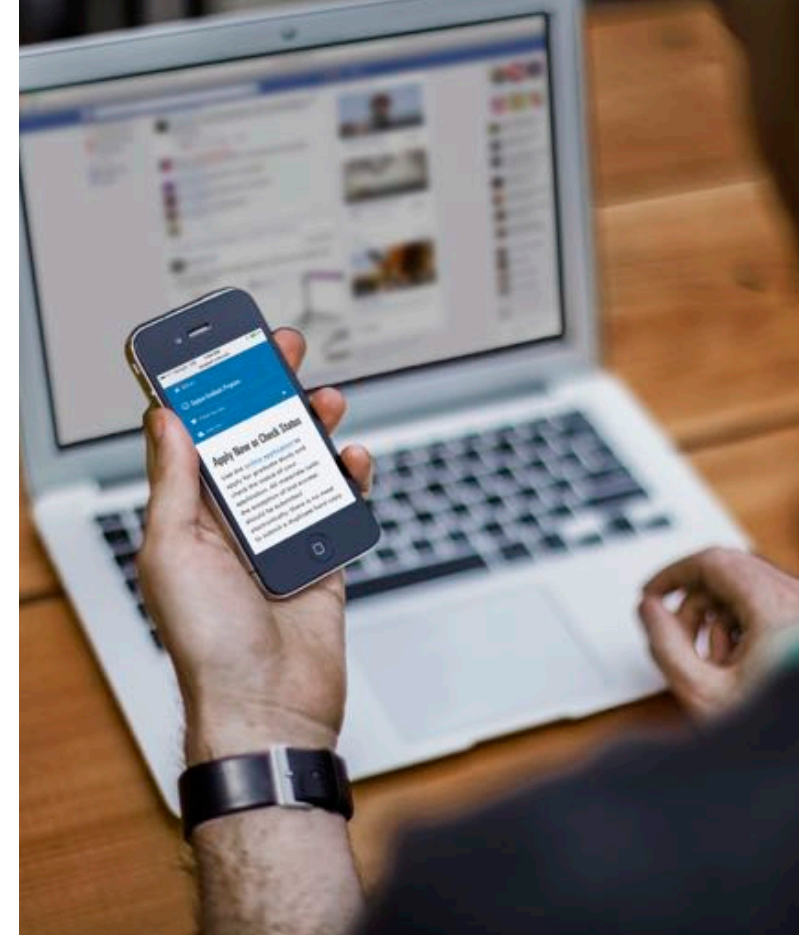
Myth 4: Admission officers don't understand how teens use their phones. Actually, we've learned that professionals really do understand the key role that mobile devices play in teens' college research: 87 percent of our respondents said they thought teens visited college websites using a mobile browser, and 81 percent of teens said that they did so. But there's more misalignment around some of the things admission officers think teens are willing to do on their phones when it comes to relating to them and to their college search. For example, 65 percent are open to reading email from colleges on their phones.

Myth 5: Search works. Really. Despite the fact that 73 percent of admission officers believe that communications from a college a teen hasn't heard about will have some influence on their decision to apply, only 21 percent of students say that it made a difference to them.

Myths, Busted

Myth 6: Print is an important source of information about colleges for teens. Again, the answer is complicated. Teens don't completely ignore print: in fact, printed brochures or pamphlets are the most effective form of outreach for getting teens to pay attention to an institution they have never heard of or have heard of but not considered. But more than half of teens said they threw away half or more of the unsolicited mail they received.

Myth 7: Facebook is dead to teens. This myth has been promulgated by media reports touting results of aggregate national surveys reporting a steep decline in teen interest in Facebook, and a third of admission officers believe it to be true. The facts are more complicated: basically, teens do use Facebook when researching colleges—67 percent say that it was the most valuable of the many social channels they used.

Myth 8: Teens love it when you contact them through a social channel. It seems intuitive that teens would want to be contacted this way, because everyone knows that teens use their phones all the time and are always logged in to social media. Accordingly, 72 percent of admission professionals believe students are open to being contacted through Facebook, 71 percent through Twitter, and 50 percent through Instagram. In fact, students are open to being contacted through a social channel—as long as they reach out through that channel first.

Of course, the data show that communication with teens today is complicated. To be effective and get results, admission officers had best understand the nuances of how teens research colleges, how they communicate with each other and college staff, and what channels are especially significant to them.

Information Sources Teens Use When Learning About and Choosing a College

We know that teens use an array of tools to learn about colleges and universities, from college guide websites, over which colleges have little influence, to college websites and Facebook pages, which institutions design and manage. What's most important when teens are researching colleges and adding them to their list of institutions to which they will apply, and then when they're deciding which institution to attend?

In "The 2015 Social Admissions Report," Chegg noted that teens, referred to as the "Generation Z," use digital tools to explore questions like how to get into college, what majors an institution offers, and whether students like it there. They use social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr to learn about life at institutions they're interested in, seeking to find out what other students think about a college and whether they'll fit in.

There's interesting convergence and divergence between the views of admission professionals and teens about what the most valuable sources of information are at different stages of the college research and decision process. We've summed these up in Figures 1 and 2, which depict non-digital and digital sources of information and compare their use at different stages.

FIGURE 1

NON-DIGITAL RESOURCES TEENS USE IN THE COLLEGE RESEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS— AND WHAT ADMISSION OFFICERS THINK THEY USE

	Before deciding to apply	After deciding to apply	After applying	After being accepted
CAMPUS TOUR				
Admission officers	79%	78%	72%	69%
Teens	60%	34%	25%	33%
PRINT MATERIALS FROM THE COLLEGE MAILED BUT NOT REQUESTED				
Admission officers	80%	35%	25%	26%
Teens	77%	33%	18%	12%
PRINT MATERIALS FROM THE COLLEGE MAILED ON REQUEST				
Admission officers	82%	71%	51%	47%
Teens	59%	40%	24%	14%
PRINT MATERIALS RECEIVED AT A COLLEGE FAIR				
Admission officers	91%	36%	15%	10%
Teens	68%	27%	13%	7%
CONVERSATIONS WITH FACULTY AT THE COLLEGE				
Admission officers	26%	40%	66%	82%
Teens	38%	34%	29%	24%
CONVERSATIONS WITH ADMISSION OFFICERS AT THE COLLEGE				
Admission officers	71%	79%	77%	72%
Teens	37%	41%	33%	25%
CONVERSATION WITH COLLEGE COUNSELOR				
Admission officers	73%	70%	60%	53%
Teens	39%	33%	28%	27%
INTERVIEW WITH ALUMNI				
Admission officers	18%	26%	47%	46%
Teens	24%	22%	20%	19%

Number of respondents: admission officers = 186; teens = 681
Admission officers were asked: "Match the non-digital resources you believe teens use (or would use) during each phase of the college research and application process."
Teens were asked: "Which non-digital resources did you or would you use during each phase of the college application process? (Select all that apply.)"

FIGURE 2

**DIGITAL RESOURCES TEENS USE IN THE COLLEGE RESEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS—
AND WHAT ADMISSION OFFICERS THINK THEY USE**

	Before deciding to apply	After deciding to apply	After applying	After being accepted
OFFICIAL COLLEGE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS				
Admission officers	46%	52%	64%	72%
Teens	35%	21%	18%	17%
SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS OF STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE (NON-OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS)				
Admission officers	54%	52%	66%	72%
Teens	31%	18%	14%	13%
COLLEGE BOARD WEBSITE				
Admission officers	72%	32%	14%	7%
Teens	61%	34%	21%	14%
OTHER COLLEGE SEARCH WEBSITES				
Admission officers	77%	36%	16%	12%
Teens*	44%	18%	12%	9%
ONLINE SEARCH ENGINES (E.G., GOOGLE, BING, ETC.)				
Admission officers	88%	51%	34%	29%
Teens	70%	37%	27%	20%
ZINCH/CHEGG				
Admission officers	68%	27%	10%	9%
Teens	56%	25%	18%	12%
COLLEGE PROWLER				
Admission officers	65%	29%	15%	16%
Teens	36%	15%	8%	7%
COLLEGE'S WEBSITE				
Admission officers	81%	75%	69%	70%
Teens	70%	50%	39%	33%
U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT COLLEGE RANKINGS				
Admission officers	72%	20%	14%	11%
Teens	44%	18%	12%	9%

Number of respondents: admission officers = 186; teens = 681

Admission officers were asked: "Match the digital resources you believe teens use (or would use) during each phase of the college research and application process."

Teens were asked: "Which digital resource(s) did you or would you use during each phase of the college application process? (Select all that apply.)"

* Teens were also asked about specific college search sites that were eliminated from the choices offered to admission officers.

Key Findings

Note, for example, that admission professionals overvalue the campus tour at every stage of the process as compared to teens: it's most important to teens when considering where to apply (60 percent say it's valuable then). Admission officers also believe that conversations with *them* are a lot more important to teens at every stage of the process than they actually are in the view of teenagers. And note that teens value these conversations *least* after they've been accepted to a college. At that point, other sources of information are a lot more important to them.

There's also a disconnect around the college's social media and website: 64 percent of admission officers believe that teens value the college's official social media accounts after applying, though only 18 percent of teens find them valuable. But the college website is highly valued by teens both before and after deciding to apply—and still valued, though not as much, after being accepted, when college admission officers believe that it's still important to their admitted students.

Teens have various ways of identifying colleges that they want to apply to. But how do colleges reach *them*? How do they attract the attention of teenage prospects who may find their institution a best-fit? One tried-and-true tactic that many colleges use is direct mail—either paper mail or email. In fact, there's a hashtag on Instagram and Twitter (#CollegeMail) dedicated to student photographs of the mail they receive from colleges.

The onslaught of mail from colleges has a mixed effect on teens: a quarter throw out the majority of it unopened, while another quarter of respondents say they read some of it before making a decision. Reading the comments on #CollegeMail indicates mixed feelings, at best: some teens are elated at being noticed, and many are overwhelmed by the flood of paper.

So what works best?

We asked admission officers and teens what they viewed as the most effective form of communication from institutions they had never heard of, and also from those that they had heard of but not previously considered. Figure 3 provides a comparison of their responses. Note that of all these communications, teens rate print as the most effective way to get their attention, with email second—with those options cited by far larger proportions of teens than admission officers.

FIGURE 3

WHAT TEENS AND ADMISSION OFFICERS THINK IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE FORM OF COMMUNICATION FROM COLLEGES TEENS NEVER HEARD OF, OR HEARD OF BUT NOT PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED

	From colleges teens had never heard of		From colleges teens had heard of but not considered	
	Admission officers	Teens	Admission officers	Teens
● Email	18%	35%	29%	36%
● Phone call	12%	4%	23%	6%
● Social media	30%	4%	26%	4%
● Brochures / pamphlets sent through the mail*	33%	55%	12%	51%
● Text messages	4%	1%	5%	1%
● Virtual event / online chat	4%	1%	5%	1%

From colleges teens had never heard of

Admission officers
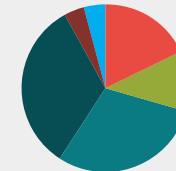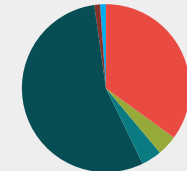
Teens

From colleges teens had heard of but not considered

Admission officers
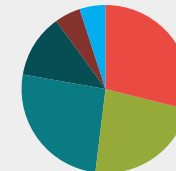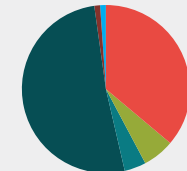
Teens

Number of respondents: admission officers = 170–171; teens = 641
*Admission officers were asked about "brochures" and "pamphlets sent through the mail" as two separate choices; students were asked about "brochures/pamphlets sent through the mail" as one choice. We combined those two options in the table for a clear comparison.

Key Findings

FIGURE 4

HOW MUCH THESE COMMUNICATIONS INFLUENCE TEENS' DECISION TO APPLY TO THESE COLLEGES

	Definitely made me apply to one or more of these colleges	Definitely made me NOT apply to one or more of these colleges	Had no effect on my decision to apply to one or more of these colleges
Colleges I heard of but to which I had not considered applying	24%	11%	65%
Colleges I had heard of and to which I was planning on applying	52%	7%	41%
Colleges I had not heard of on my own	21%	15%	64%

Number of respondents: 1,600

While teens may view print as more effective than other channels, there's a question about how influential it is in encouraging them to apply or enroll. Figure 4 depicts what students say about this.

Teens, Social Media—and Us

We all know—at least most adults and most admission professionals believe—that teens are very active on social media. But many adults don't have a firm grasp of how teens use social media for college search and choice.

Teens use a variety of social media to research colleges and determine whether an institution is a best-fit for them. They use a range of channels depending on the stage of their search and what they want to learn. And to people who follow the details of national surveys about teen use of social media, some of what they do may seem surprising.

For example, many national surveys indicate that teens are no longer interested in Facebook—to the point that many adults believe that teens no longer use Facebook. Chegg's own data confirm that the use of Facebook by teens has declined: in 2012, 89 percent of teens used it, compared to 82 percent in the fourth quarter of 2014; at the same time, use of Instagram has grown from 29 percent to 64 percent. And it's true that teens are now directing the majority of their attention to apps other than Facebook: more than half of teens reported to Chegg

that they use the private messaging apps WhatsApp or GroupMe. The consulting firm Ruffalo Noel Levitz reports in its 2015 E-Expectations survey of college-bound teens that more than 50 percent of respondents use Snapchat. All these apps allow teens to control who sees their messages—and Snapchat messages disappear.

But that doesn't mean that teens have discarded Facebook completely. They spend less time there now than the previous teen generation did—because, in general, Facebook is no longer the main way that teens connect with their friends. These connections have moved to the private messaging apps and Instagram.

Facebook and email are essentially legacy media for teens. They use them for specific purposes, to communicate with specific people or institutions in their lives. Teens have an email address because their high school coaches and teachers, parents, and—yes—colleges will use it to reach them. In a similar way, they post occasional images to Facebook so grandparents and extended family can see them. Their real friends, of course, have already seen these images—and many more, some of which aren't the kind they'd share with family—on Instagram.

So when teens are exploring colleges, they do use Facebook—and other social channels, too, including YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. But of all these and more, Facebook is by far the most used and most valued, as Figure 5 indicates.

II.
Key Findings

FIGURE 5

HOW OFTEN TEENS USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COLLEGE RESEARCH

● Multiple times a day ● Once a day ● Once a week ● Once a month ● Every once in a while ● Never

Facebook	11%	13%	17%	9%	17%	33%
YouTube	9%	8%	15%	10%	20%	11%
Google+	18%	9%	8%	4%	10%	51%
Instagram	12%	9%	9%	5%	12%	53%
Twitter	7%	9%	12%	6%	12%	53%
Snapchat	6%	3%	4%	1%	7%	79%
Pinterest	2%	2%	4%	4%	8%	80%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Number of respondents: 1,611

FIGURE 6

ADMISSION OFFICERS' VIEW OF HOW OFTEN TEENS USE SOCIAL SITES IN DECIDING WHERE TO ENROLL

● Multiple times a day   ● Once a day   ● Once a week   ● Once a month   ● Every once in a while   ● Never

Facebook	8%	20%	29%	23%	17%	3%
YouTube	3%	13%	23%	27%	28%	6%
Google+	5% 3%	11%	17%	31%	32%	
Instagram	16%	24%	24%	17%	15%	3%
Twitter	16%	18%	24%	21%	19%	3%
Snapchat	11%	16%	10%	16%	31%	16%
Pinterest	3% 2%	11%	18%	34%	32%	
Tumblr	3% 5%	16%	16%	37%	23%	
Vine	3%	10%	10%	14%	39%	26%
LinkedIn	1% 1% 3%	13%	38%	43%		

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Number of respondents: 145–154

Admission staff are well aware of how important social media is to teens in general: 45 percent rate it as very or extremely influential, and another 39 percent believe it's moderately influential. And 35 percent believe that the content posted on official college social media sites is "very" or "extremely" relevant to teens—not far off from the 30 percent of teens who say that it's "extremely" or "very" useful to them.

It's a simple fact that teens value the university website more than they do official university social media accounts. In fact, 87 percent of teens find college and university websites "extremely" or "very" useful in their college research, and they also use independent external websites, ranking them lower in value. (But only 48 percent identified college ranking sites, such as U.S. News & World Report's, as "extremely" or "very" useful.)

It's also important to note that teens do follow the official social media accounts of colleges they are considering, but not to the extent that admission officers think they do, as Figure 7 shows.

FIGURE 7

DO TEENS FOLLOW OR "LIKE" A COLLEGE THEY'RE CONSIDERING ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Admission officers

17% NO
83% YES

Teens

48% NO   52% YES

Number of respondents: admission officers = 168; teens = 1,611
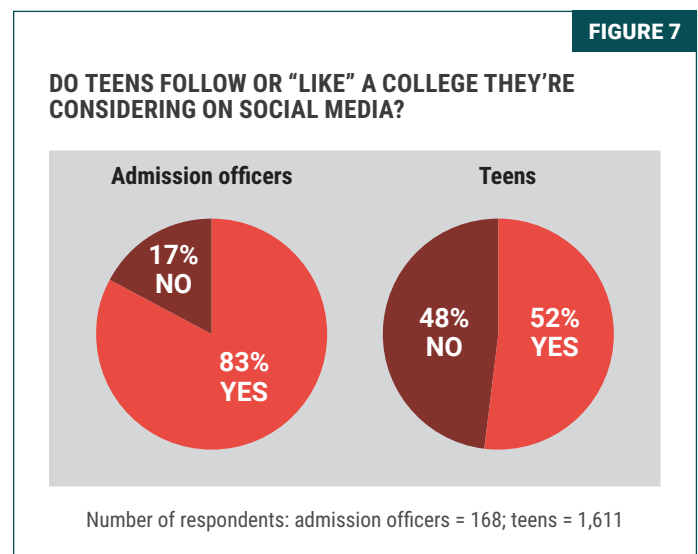
Key Findings

Yet, half of teens use social media to research colleges they've already applied to, and two-thirds say that social media influences their decision about where to enroll. What are some of the things they do online, and how often do they do them in their search? Figure 8 offers some insights into what admission officers think teens 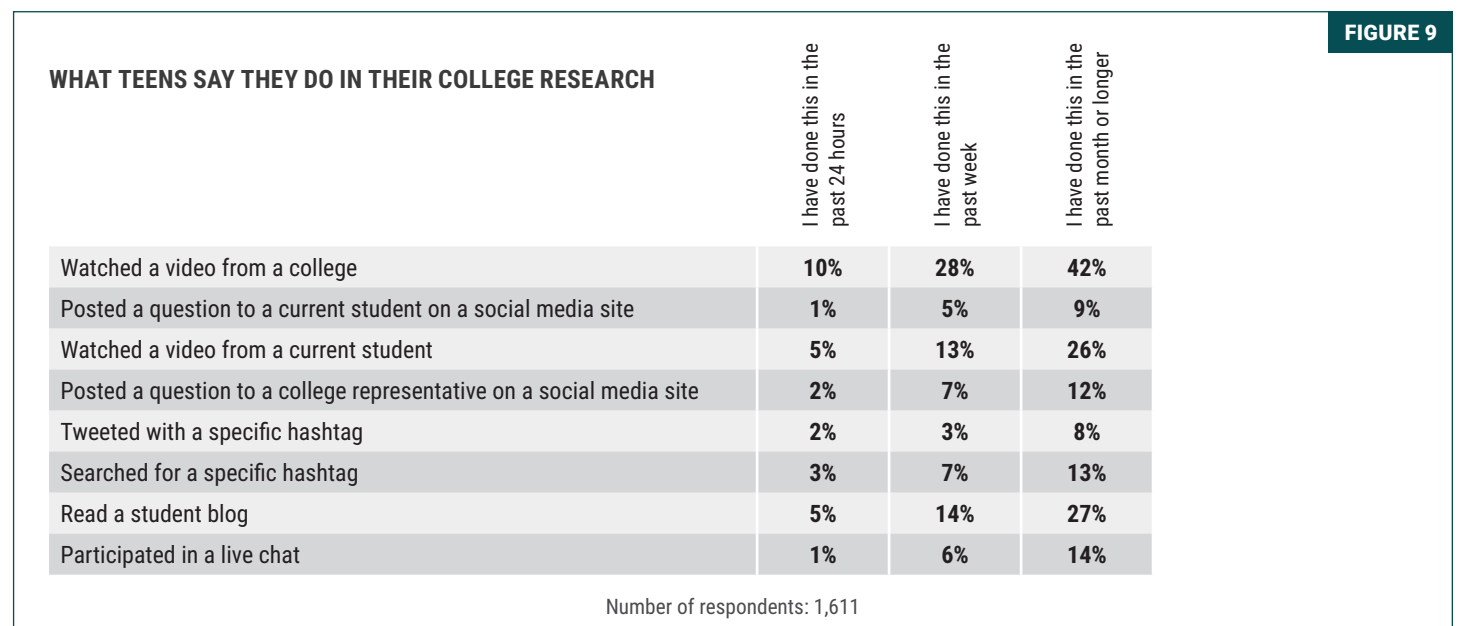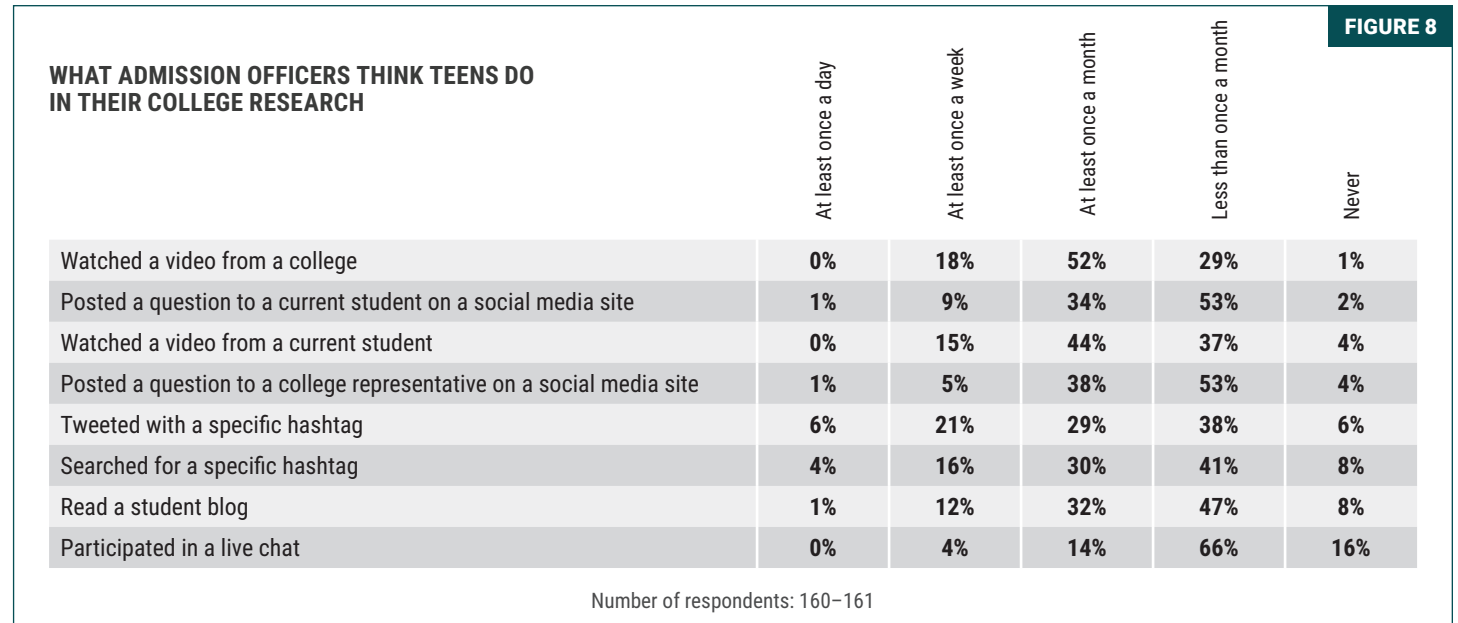do, and Figure 9 shows what they say they actually do. (Note that the two groups were asked similar questions, but offered slightly different choices for their responses.)

FIGURE 8

WHAT ADMISSION OFFICERS THINK TEENS DO IN THEIR COLLEGE RESEARCH	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	Less than once a month	Never
Watched a video from a college	0%	18%	52%	29%	1%
Posted a question to a current student on a social media site	1%	9%	34%	53%	2%
Watched a video from a current student	0%	15%	44%	37%	4%
Posted a question to a college representative on a social media site	1%	5%	38%	53%	4%
Tweeted with a specific hashtag	6%	21%	29%	38%	6%
Searched for a specific hashtag	4%	16%	30%	41%	8%
Read a student blog	1%	12%	32%	47%	8%
Participated in a live chat	0%	4%	14%	66%	16%

Number of respondents: 160–161

FIGURE 9

WHAT TEENS SAY THEY DO IN THEIR COLLEGE RESEARCH	I have done this in the past 24 hours	I have done this in the past week	I have done this in the past month or longer
Watched a video from a college	10%	28%	42%
Posted a question to a current student on a social media site	1%	5%	9%
Watched a video from a current student	5%	13%	26%
Posted a question to a college representative on a social media site	2%	7%	12%
Tweeted with a specific hashtag	2%	3%	8%
Searched for a specific hashtag	3%	7%	13%
Read a student blog	5%	14%	27%
Participated in a live chat	1%	6%	14%

Number of respondents: 1,611

Key Findings

Teens and Their Devices

Spend any time with a teen, and you know that they love their phones. Because a smartphone is always in reach and always turned on, it becomes a multipurpose information device.

Perhaps the most important use teens make of their phone is to connect with their friends. But they also use their phone to visit websites and gather information, and they download and use apps.

You can post to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social networks by going to a website, logging in, and posting. But if you're going to post regularly from your phone, it's much easier to use an app. So Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and many other networks offer specialized apps—regular users download the app to their smartphone and post from there, which makes posting much easier and faster.
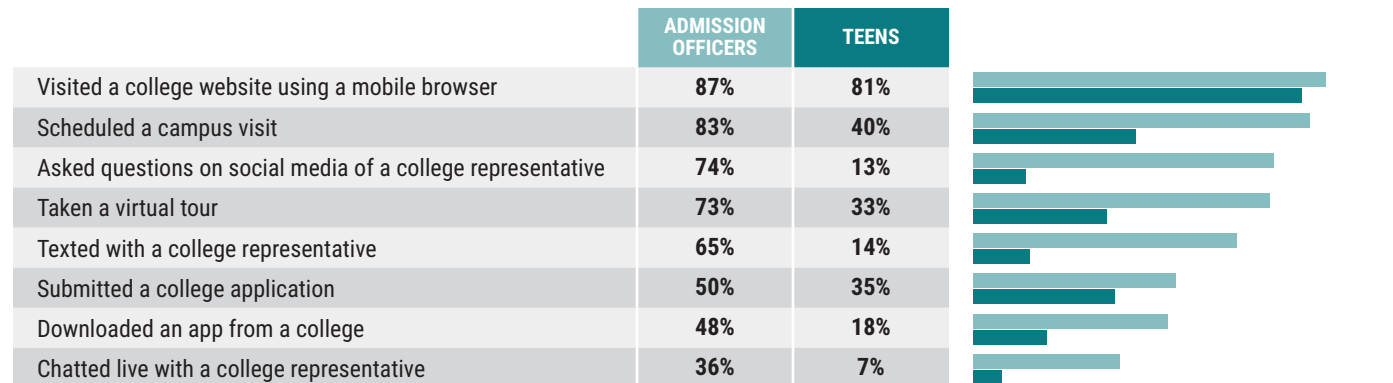
It's important to understand that mobile browsing of college websites is very important to teens: four out of five teen prospects (81 percent) have visited a college website on their smartphone. And, in fact,

admission officers have a good sense that teens use their mobiles in this way: 87 percent think that teens use mobile devices to view their websites. That's a key reason why so many university website redesigns emphasize a robust mobile view of the site.

Admission officers seek to maximize their institution's connection with teens by developing and deploying a variety of apps targeted to prospective students. A well-designed app can improve the student experience, provide faster access to targeted information, make it easier and more direct for app users to pose questions and get answers, and, from the institution's point of view, enable staff to target prospects more effectively.

But, when you consider what teens might have done on their phones when they are considering or applying to a college, they're a lot less active than admission officers think, as Figure 10 shows. For example, nearly three-quarters thought teens have taken a virtual tour on their phones; only a third of teens have actually done so. And, while nearly half of admission staff believe teens have downloaded an app from a college, few actually did.

FIGURE 10

ACTIONS TEENS HAVE TAKEN ON MOBILES WHEN CONSIDERING A COLLEGE—AND WHAT ADMISSION OFFICERS THINK THEY HAVE DONE

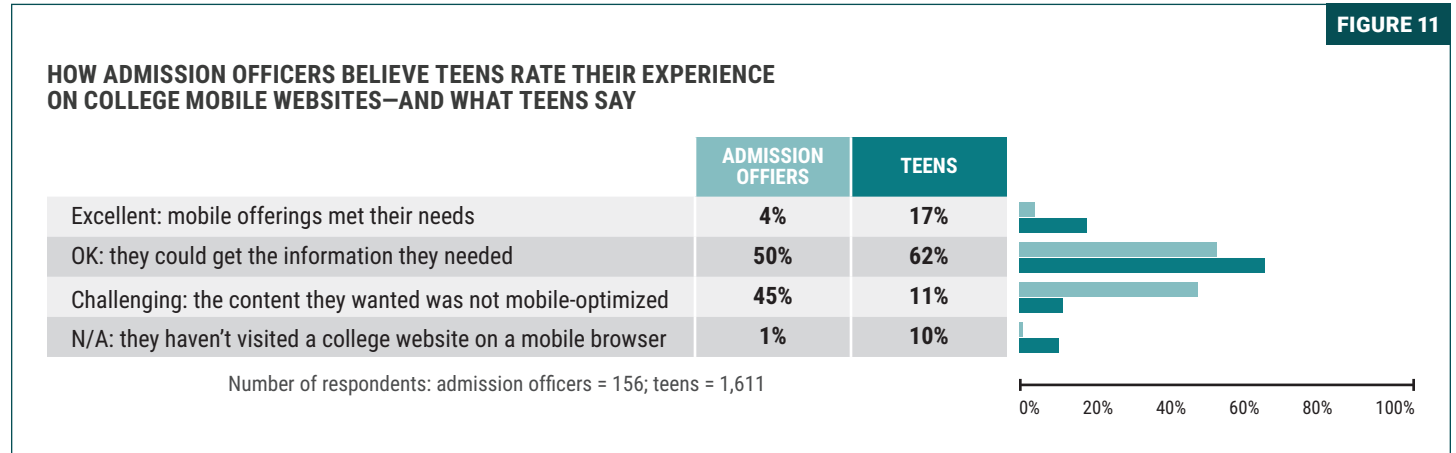|	ADMISSION OFFICERS	TEENS	
Visited a college website using a mobile browser	87%	81%	
Scheduled a campus visit	83%	40%	
Asked questions on social media of a college representative	74%	13%	
Taken a virtual tour	73%	33%	
Texted with a college representative	65%	14%	
Submitted a college application	50%	35%	
Downloaded an app from a college	48%	18%	
Chatted live with a college representative	36%	7%	

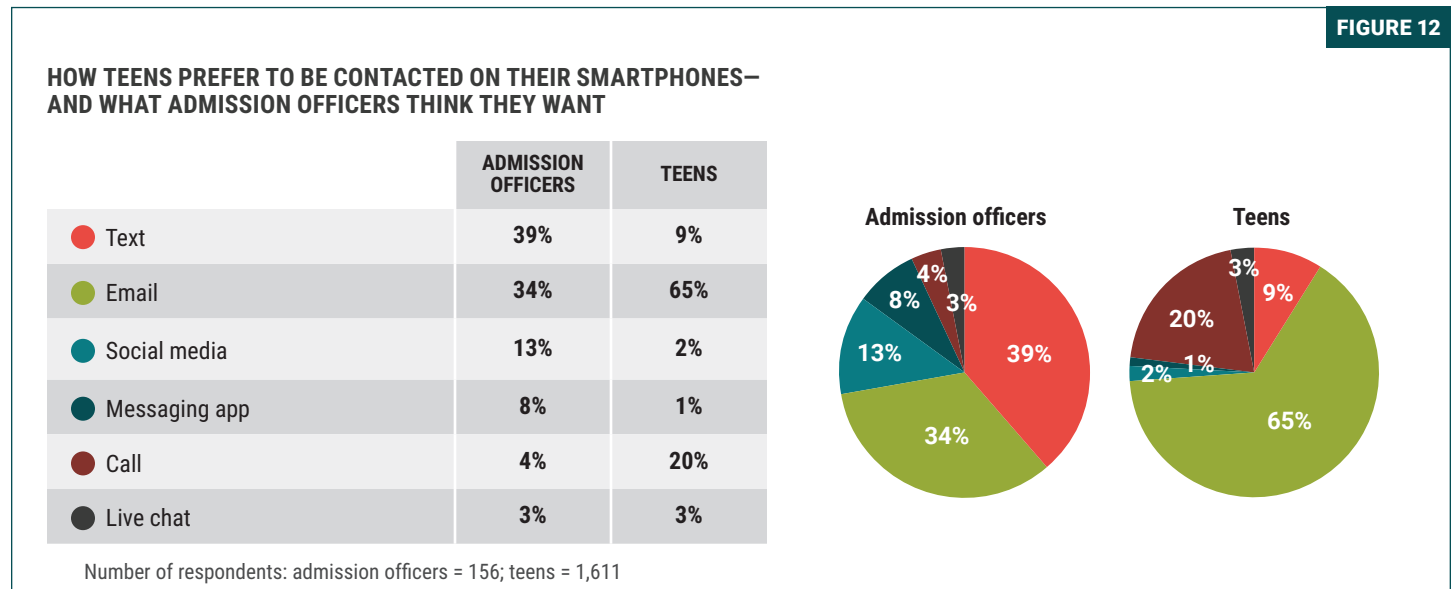Number of respondents: admission officers = 157; teens = 1,611

As far as how often teens visit college websites using their mobile, 52 percent of admission officers believe they do it weekly; 39 percent of teens report doing so that often.

And what's their experience when they get there? Teens are actually happier with their experience than admission officers believe they are. Let the numbers in Figure 11 speak for themselves.

FIGURE 11

HOW ADMISSION OFFICERS BELIEVE TEENS RATE THEIR EXPERIENCE ON COLLEGE MOBILE WEBSITES—AND WHAT TEENS SAY

	ADMISSION OFFIERS	TEENS
Excellent: mobile offerings met their needs	4%	17%
OK: they could get the information they needed	50%	62%
Challenging: the content they wanted was not mobile-optimized	45%	11%
N/A: they haven't visited a college website on a mobile browser	1%	10%

Number of respondents: admission officers = 156; teens = 1,611

Getting in Touch With Teens

Not surprisingly, although teens use their smartphones to keep in touch with friends, that doesn't necessarily mean that they want an admission rep texting them. Here's how they say they'd like to be communicated with—and what admission staff think they want.

FIGURE 12

HOW TEENS PREFER TO BE CONTACTED ON THEIR SMARTPHONES— AND WHAT ADMISSION OFFICERS THINK THEY WANT

		ADMISSION OFFICERS	TEENS
🔴	Text	39%	9%
🟢	Email	34%	65%
🟦	Social media	13%	2%
🟦	Messaging app	8%	1%
🔴	Call	4%	20%
⚫	Live chat	3%	3%

Admission officers

4%
3%
8%
13%
39%
34%

Teens

3%
9%
20%
1%
2%
65%

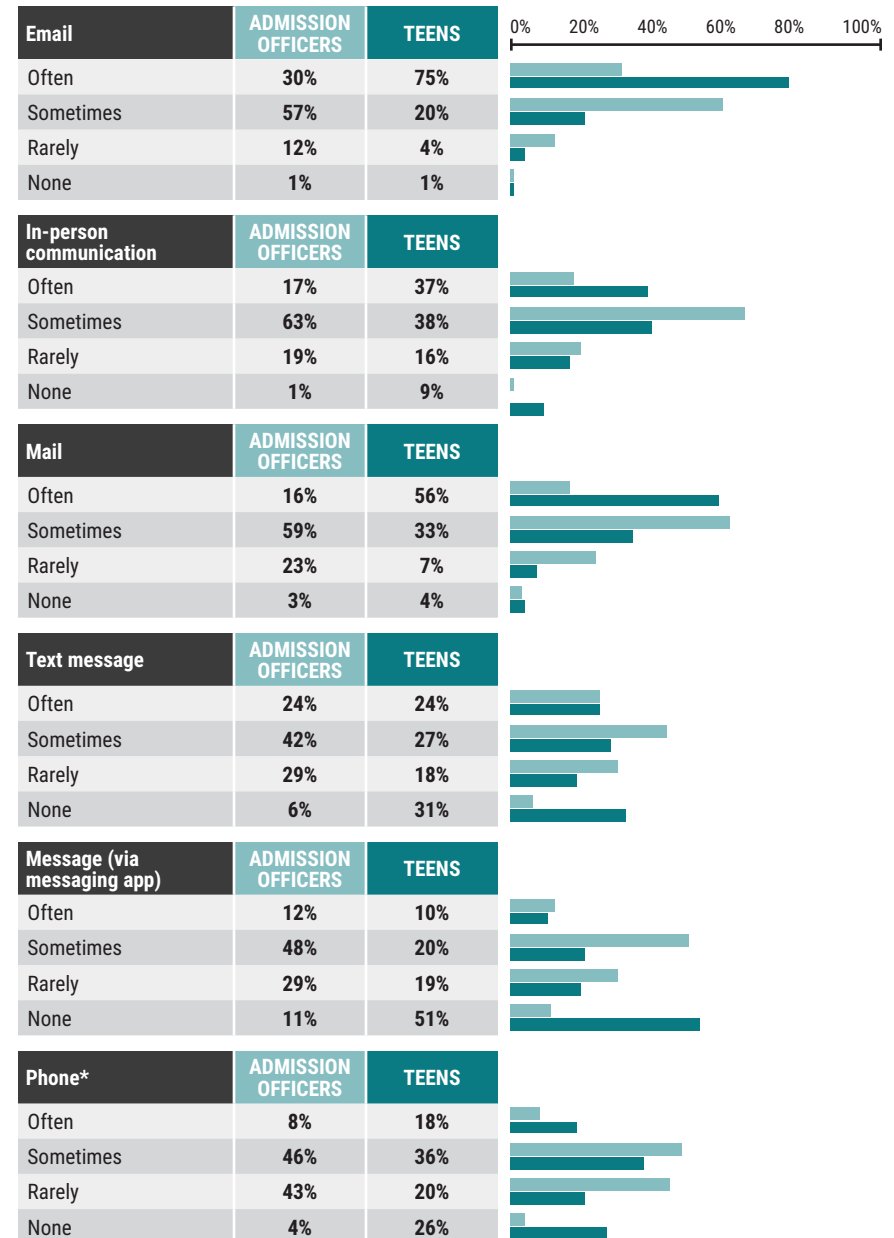Number of respondents: admission officers = 156; teens = 1,611

Note that teens still use and value email—another legacy tool that has found new utility in 2015 as they have become untethered from their laptops and desktops. Teens' preference for email is easier to understand when one considers that their smartphones make email easier to use and accessible wherever they are. It also makes information that they receive searchable and retrievable, which is why teens prefer it for "transactional" communications. In fact, 92 percent say that they would prefer to receive notices about an admission decision, financial aid, or application confirmation by email.

That's not to say that teens won't text with an admission staff member or use a social channel like Facebook to stay in touch. The most important rule of etiquette to remember is to use the channel they use to reach out: if they text you, you can feel free to text them back (but remember—this is a channel for personal communication, not for marketing spam!). If they contact you on Facebook, you can use Facebook to reach out.

One thing is clear, though: teens expect a fairly fast response to their contact. Sixty-one percent said they expected a response from a college representative within a day of contacting him or her. And admission officers understand the need for immediacy: 36 percent think that teens who reach out expect to hear a response "immediately"; 27 percent believe teens expect a response within an hour and another 12 percent within 24 hours. All told, 97 percent assume teens expect a response within a day or less.

FIGURE 13

HOW OFTEN ADMISSION OFFICERS BELIEVE TEENS PREFER TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF COMMUNICATION FROM COLLEGE ADMISSIONS--AND WHAT TEENS SAY THEY PREFER

Email	ADMISSION OFFICERS	TEENS
Often	30%	75%
Sometimes	57%	20%
Rarely	12%	4%
None	1%	1%

In-person communication	ADMISSION OFFICERS	TEENS
Often	17%	37%
Sometimes	63%	38%
Rarely	19%	16%
None	1%	9%

Mail	ADMISSION OFFICERS	TEENS
Often	16%	56%
Sometimes	59%	33%
Rarely	23%	7%
None	3%	4%

Text message	ADMISSION OFFICERS	TEENS
Often	24%	24%
Sometimes	42%	27%
Rarely	29%	18%
None	6%	31%

Message (via messaging app)	ADMISSION OFFICERS	TEENS
Often	12%	10%
Sometimes	48%	20%
Rarely	29%	19%
None	11%	51%

Phone*	ADMISSION OFFICERS	TEENS
Often	8%	18%
Sometimes	46%	36%
Rarely	43%	20%
None	4%	26%

Number of respondents: admission officers = 153–156; teens = 1,600
*Admission officers were asked about "phone call"; teens were asked about "cell."

III.
Conclusions

There's good reason why Microsoft researcher and ethnographer Danah Boyd titled her book about teenage life in the era of social media and smartphones *It's Complicated*. Because today, communicating with teens is more complicated than ever.

Our research reinforces two important understandings about today's teens. First: they're savvy consumers who are keenly attuned to marketing messages aimed at them, so it's hard to get their attention. Second: while they are adept at using their smartphones and social media to communicate with their friends, they don't necessarily want those who aren't friends communicating with them through these channels and devices. So if they reach out to you, follow their lead—if they text you, you can text them back; if they contact to you on instant messaging, you can IM them back.

An additional point to emphasize: teens do use, and value, "legacy" media. The fact that they often don't open direct mail or pay attention to print doesn't necessarily mean it's not important to them—just that they're being overwhelmed by the #CollegeMail they're receiving, especially if they're good students.

What that means for admission officers is that it's more important than ever to question assumptions about what teens do and don't do, prefer and dislike, when it comes to their college search and choice process. You can trust that money invested in a responsive website will be well spent, as will budgets allocated to developing and managing the official college Facebook page, Twitter feeds, and Instagram accounts. But jumping on the hottest new social network just because teens are using it is usually a waste of time (and, therefore, money). Don't take the hype about new technology at face value, but consider carefully why teens have taken it up and whether or not it's something that your institution can legitimately use to reach them. This isn't to say that experimenting is bad, but understanding what new apps and social networks actually do for the teens who've adopted them will help you to avoid wasting time that could be better spent managing other channels that teens actually do value as sources of information or ways to connect with adults.

Finally, just because teens use social media, don't get caught up in a social media channel arms race. The landscape is shifting rapidly, with new channels emerging and a dizzying array of choices for everyone to use. You're better off focusing on email and personal outreach to admitted students—via the channel of their choice, of course.

IV.
Demographics & Sources

Admission Professionals

We sent an invitation to complete the survey to 5,416 admission professionals in the United States and also shared the survey link on Twitter. We received 218 responses, with a gender breakdown of 60 percent female, 39 percent male, and 1 percent "prefer not to answer."

Here's a demographic breakdown of the respondents.

TYPE OF INSTITUTION

Private university	45%
Public university	21%
Liberal arts college	19%
Community college	11%
Professional school	1%
Other	4%

Number of respondents = 218

AGE

Under 25	2%
25–34	33%
35–44	26%
45–54	22%
55 or older	15%
Prefer not to answer	3%

Number of respondents = 218

APPROXIMATE YEARS OF SERVICE IN ADMISSION

Fewer than 5 years	15%
5–10 years	26%
11–15 years	22%
16–20 years	15%
21–25 years	11%
More than 25 years	12%

Number of respondents = 212

AMOUNT OF DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

No direct contact	2%
Some direct contact, but it is not a primary part of my role	37%
A great deal of direct contact	38%
All the time — my primary role is direct contact with prospective students	23%

Number of respondents = 211

IV.
Demographics & Sources

Teens

Chegg is in constant communication with students at each phase of their college search through preparing for their first career. These interactions include direct surveys, focus groups, student panels and observations of student behavior across the Chegg Network.

Most of the data from students used in this white paper is from Chegg's Social Admissions studies. Its objective is to gain greater insights into high school students' use of social media, in general, and in selecting a college or university. The survey was conducted from 27 October to 17 November 2014. Survey invitations were emailed to Chegg high school seniors; 1,611 surveys were completed. Data was weighted to 42 percent male, 58 percent female.

FIGURE 18

TOP STATES OF RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS TO CHEGG SOCIAL ADMISSIONS SURVEY
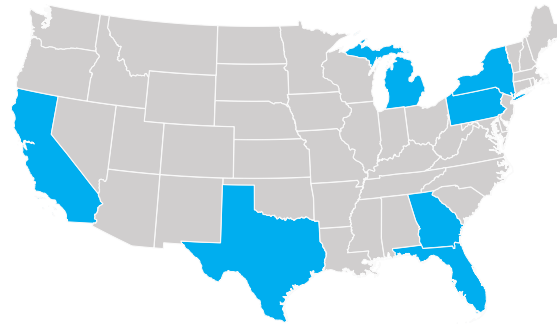
California	13%
Texas	10%
Michigan	5%
New York	5%
Florida	5%
Pennsylvania	4%
Georgia	4%

FIGURE 19

ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS TO CHEGG SOCIAL ADMISSIONS SURVEY

Asian	7%
Other/Prefer not to answer	9%
White	56%
Hispanic	19%
African American	18%
Two or more races	9%

Sources

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