

# Using Artificial Intelligence and Chatbots for Enrollment Success

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**Aiken** U of SC



Member of UofSC public system

Independent and separately accredited

3726 students (all-time record – Fall)

Highly ranked by US News

Freshman enrollment challenged



# Agenda

Homeroom: About Generation Z

Class: Personalization through AI

Study Hall: How does it work?

Test: How did ACE do?

Recess: Playtime with ACE

What problem(s) are we trying to solve?

Could we use AI/new tech for students?

For whom?

Who could help?

We selected an external partner:

AdmitHub

**Z**



Wilson

TKE

Wilson  
Wilson  
Wilson







# Competition for Student Attention

20+

In 1987 there were  
2 ways to communicate:  
phone and letter.

*Today there are more than 20.*

TEXT MESSAGES CHECKED:

150  
times a day

*98% open rate*

Email: 6% daily | 23% open



# What We Know

## Students Expect Instant Answers

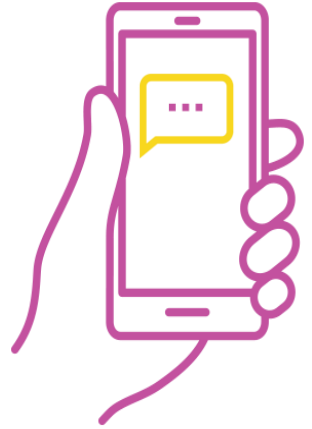
24/7 | Website | Social Media | Texting

## Interactive Conversations Change Student Behavior

Student Response 4X Higher | Behavioral Nudges vs. Blast Messages

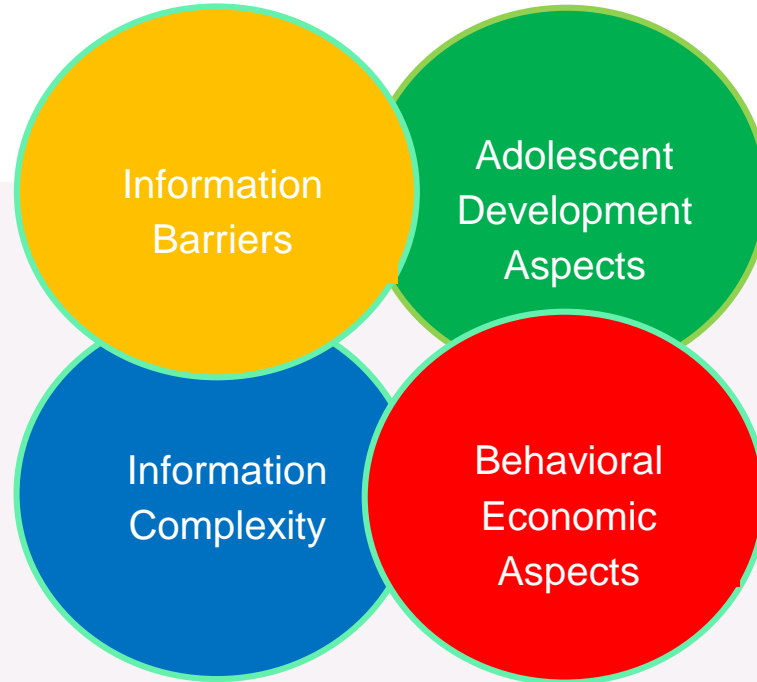
## College Staff Can't Do It All

60-80% Routine Questions | Evenings & Weekends | 1-1 VERY Time-Intensive  
| Listen For Trends @ Scale



# What Causes Students to Falter?

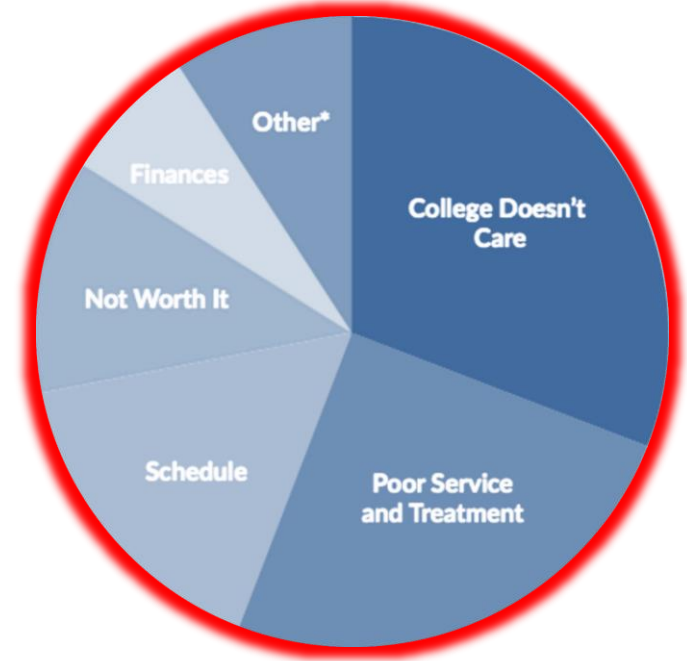
Research found 4 common reasons:



# Driving Impact

- Campuses with personalized support achieve their goals.
- The medium of communication is as important as the message.
- But there are barriers to treating students as individuals.

Reasons Student Disengage



Source: **Neal Raisman, *Customer Service Factors and the Power of Attrition***: Revised and Updated, 2010; The Administrator's Bookshelf.

# Engaging Generation Z

Meeting students where they are to get them where they're going



Personalization



Relationship  
Building



Instant  
Fulfillment



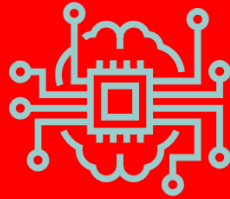
Anytime,  
Anywhere

# Behavioral Science meets Artificial Intelligence



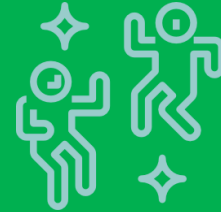
## Nudges

Text nudges have been shown to increase matriculation rates by up to 11% points



## Artificial Intelligence

Automate 99% of all conversations with AI



## Joy

Emoji, GIFs, and encouragement drive engagement

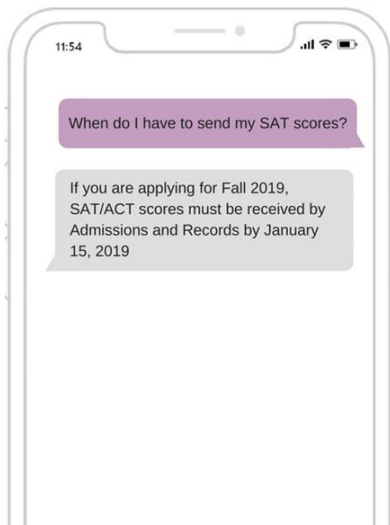


# Transforming the Student Experience with AI



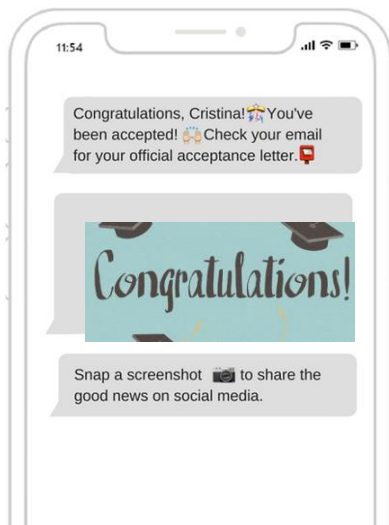
## On-Demand Assistance

*Students can ask any question and receive a response.*



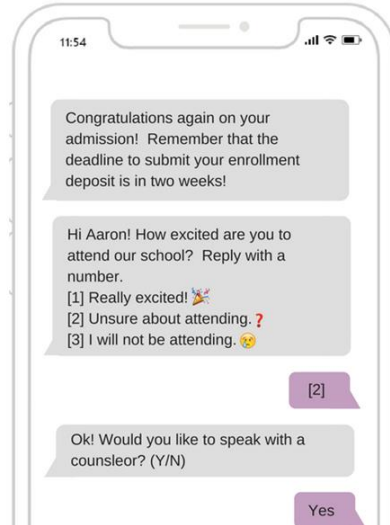
## Joy

*The bot makes interactions fun through graphics and wit.*

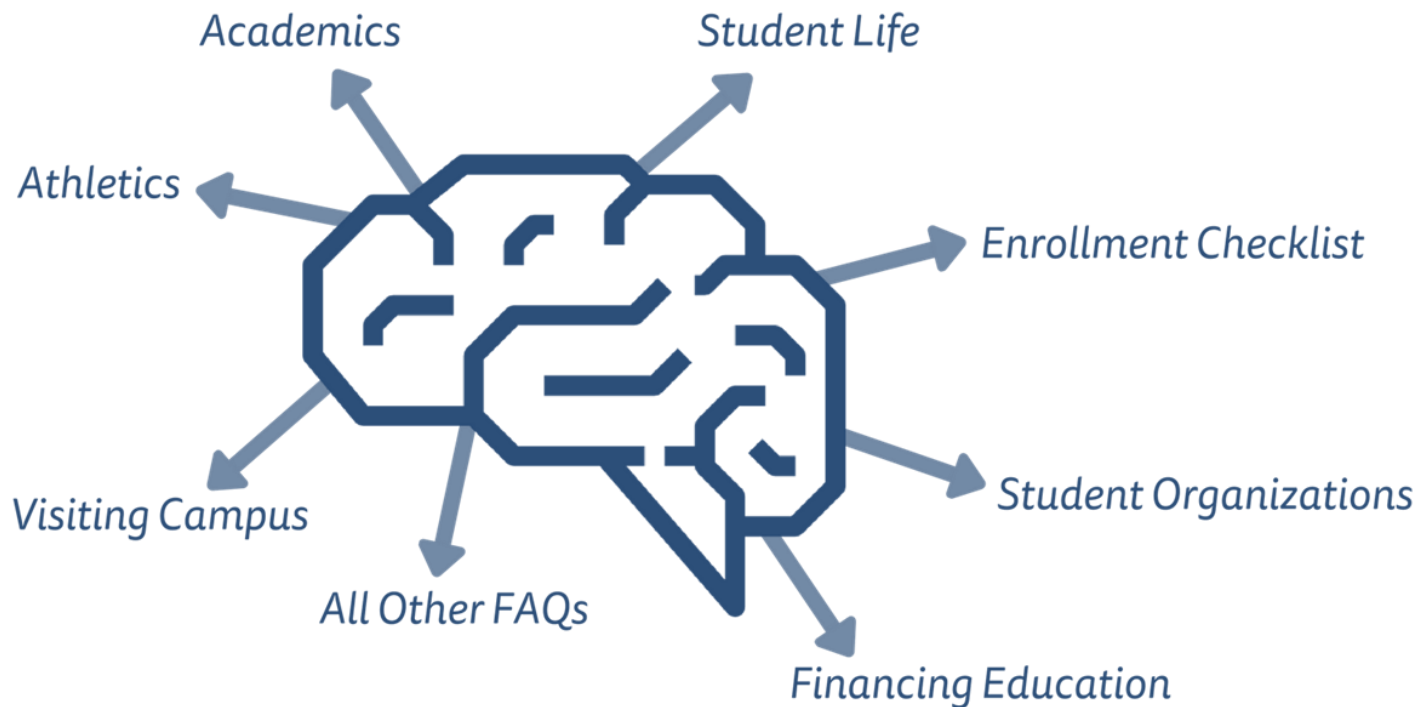


## Proactive Outreach

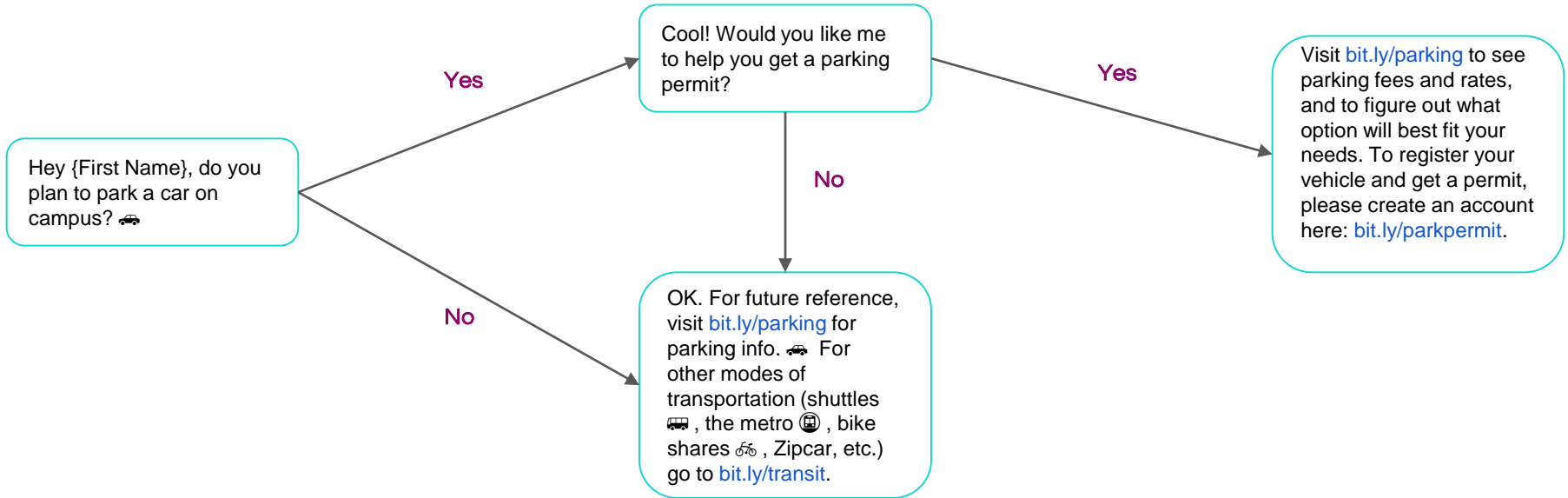
*The bot can send information to students and get some in return.*

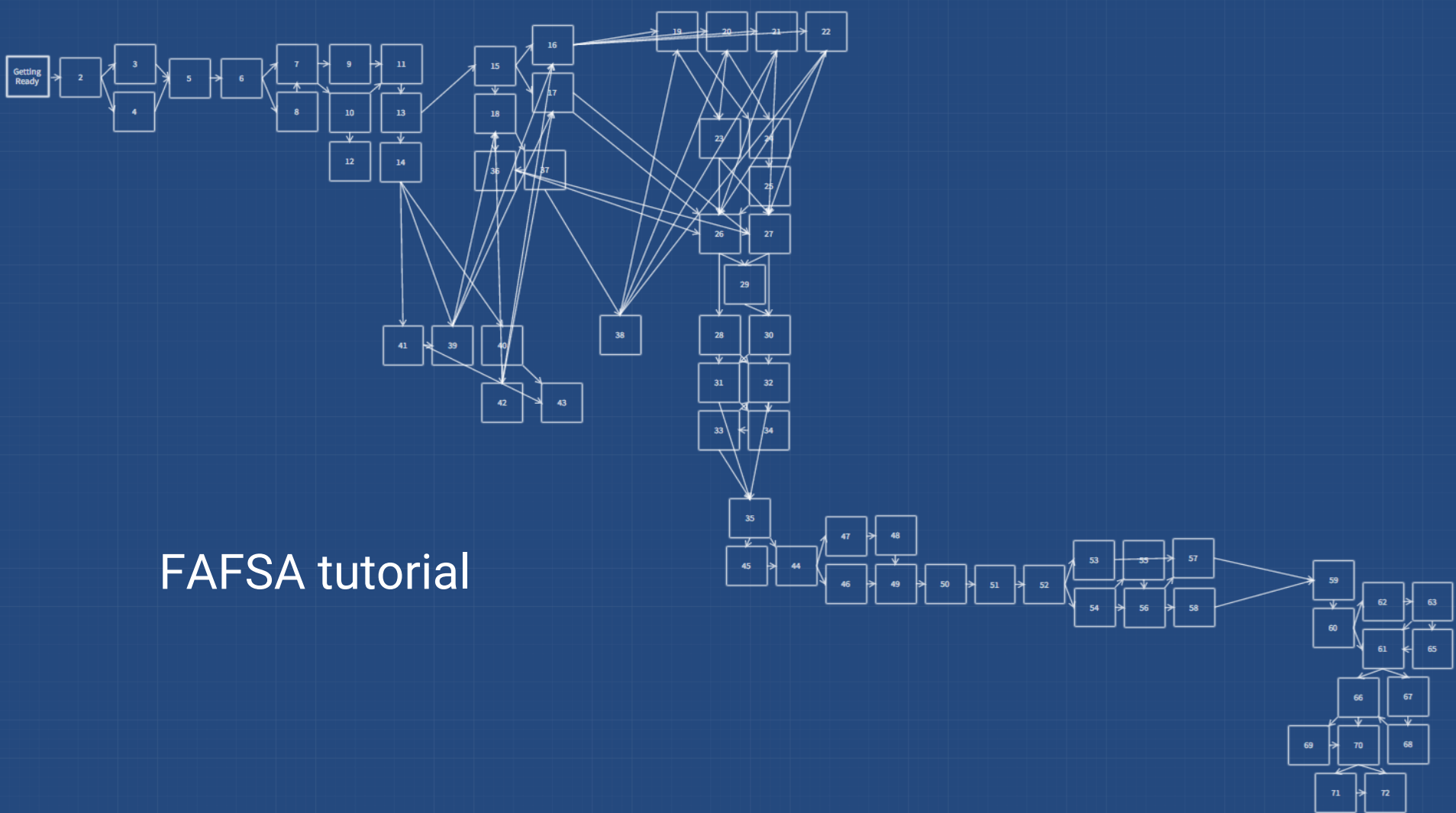


# Inside Enrollment Bot's Brain (AdmitHub)



# “Simple” Guided Conversations and ...





# FAFSA tutorial

# Conversations Change Behavior



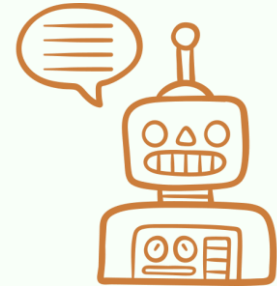
Move students  
to action



Deliver a  
personalized  
experience



Collect important  
student data



Encourage bot  
interaction

# SUCCESS STORY



## ABOUT

**LOCATION**  
Aiken, South Carolina

**STUDENT POPULATION**  
3,726 students

**SEGMENT**  
Regional public, small

**CHALLENGES**  
Yield, Brand

## SUMMARY

USC Aiken found that admitted students were not taking timely action on their enrollment steps. Additionally, USC Aiken wanted to find a way to delineate themselves from flagship campus (and other competitors), to better engage students, and increase brand awareness/enrollment.

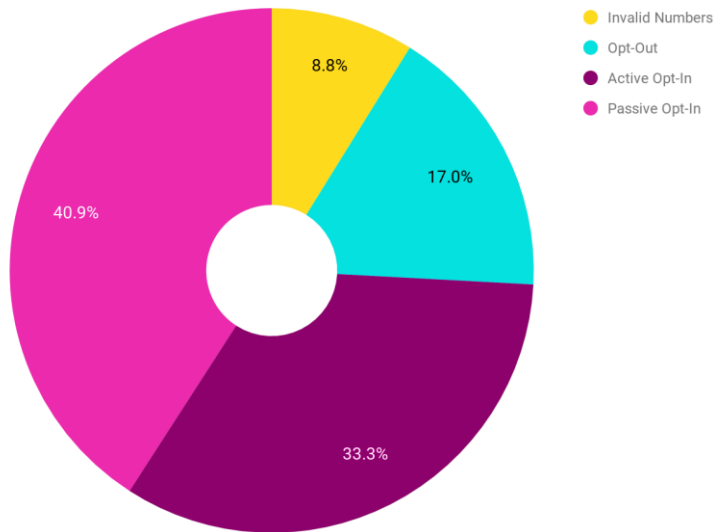
## GOALS

- Increase **enrollment**, with a focus on out-of-state students
- Get students to take action on enrollment steps **sooner**
- Build the USC Aiken **brand & student engagement**

## IMPACT Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 (as of May1)

- ↑ **13%** INCREASED FIRST-YEAR **applications**
- ↑ **55%** INCREASED ENROLLMENT **deposits**
- ↑ **63%** INCREASED SIGN-UPS **orientation**
- ↑ **13%** INCREASED SIGN-UPS **housing**

# Student Activity



\*Students Texted: **8,505**

\*\*Messages Sent by Bot: **361,545**

Messages sent  
to Ace:

**20,027**

Messages  
forwarded  
to staff:

**80**

**99.6%**  
Messages  
handled by  
Ace and  
AdmitHub

332+ Hours of Staff Time  
Saved

(given a minute per response)



## Knowledge Base

76.8%

AI Automation

1,231

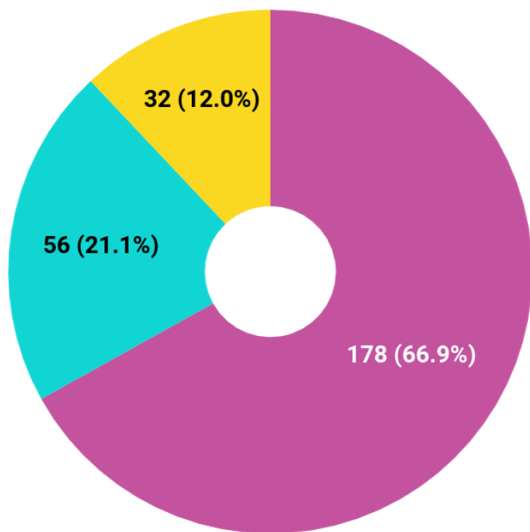
Understandings Available

33

Things Learned Since  
Launch



# Campaign Analytics and Highlights



● Nudges ● Intros ● Interactive Campaigns

17.3% of incomplete applicants responded to questions about needing help finishing their application.

24.8% of accepted students responded to questions about what would help them commit to USC Aiken.

15% of students selected for FAFSA Verification responded to a campaign offering assistance with the process.



266 campaigns sent

# Chat With Ace!

**TEXT Ace at: 803-590-9236**

## **Financial Aid**

What is the FAFSA? When is the FAFSA due?

What are the hours of the financial aid office?

Do I qualify for financial aid? How expensive is USC Aiken?

## **Application Process**

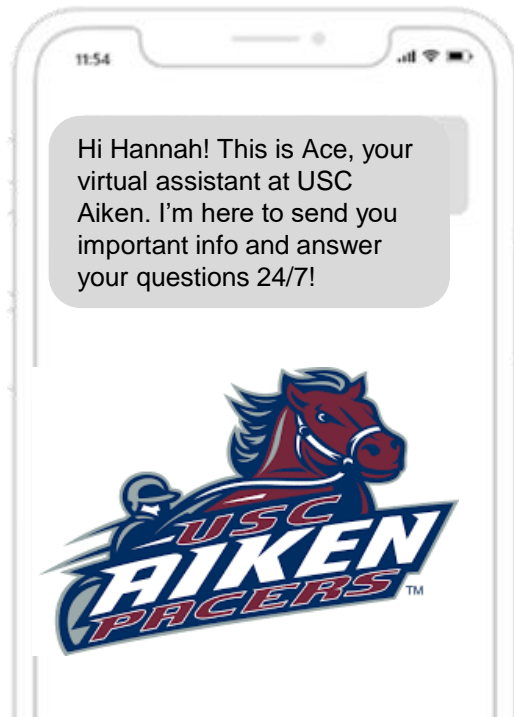
How can I apply? What's my application status?

What are the admission requirements? Will I get in?

## **Enrollment Steps**

When can I register for orientation? Where do I send transcripts?

Is orientation mandatory?





## SURVEY SAYS ...

96%

Found ACE Helpful

97%

Recommend ACE to Fall  
2020 Students

87%

Thought the Amount of  
Communication was “just  
about right”

# Thoughts and Questions?

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