

# How To Make Student Communications Stick

## #LetsDoThis

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# Today's Agenda



- + The Problem—Noise, Competition
- + The Rule of 7
- + Communication Channels
- + Top 3 Channels to Optimize
- + Group Exercise!



## **Problem:**

Communicating effectively with students is exceedingly difficult.



# Student Attention—Who's Vying For It?

## MARKETING EXPERIENCES

## Mobile Marketing



## Display & Native Ads



## Video Marketing & Ads



## Search & Social Ads



## Communities &amp; Reviews



## Email Marketing



## Influencer Marketing



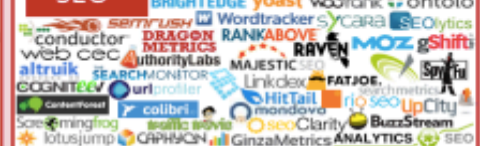
## Social Media Marketing



## Events & Webinars



## SEO



## Customer Experience/VoC



## Loyalty/Referral/Gamification



## Personalization & Chat



## Testing & Optimization



## Interactive Content



## Content Marketing



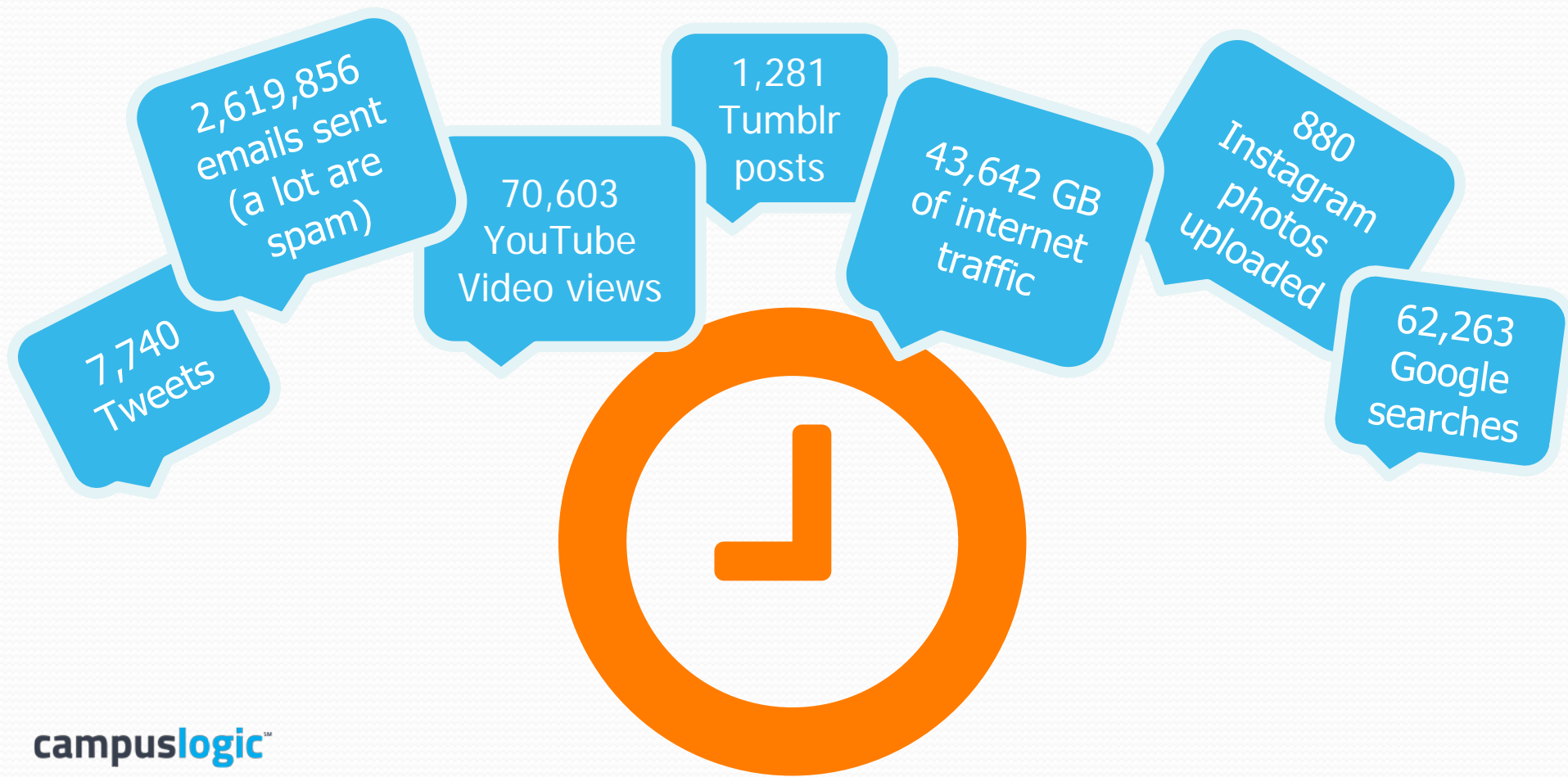
## Creative &amp; Design



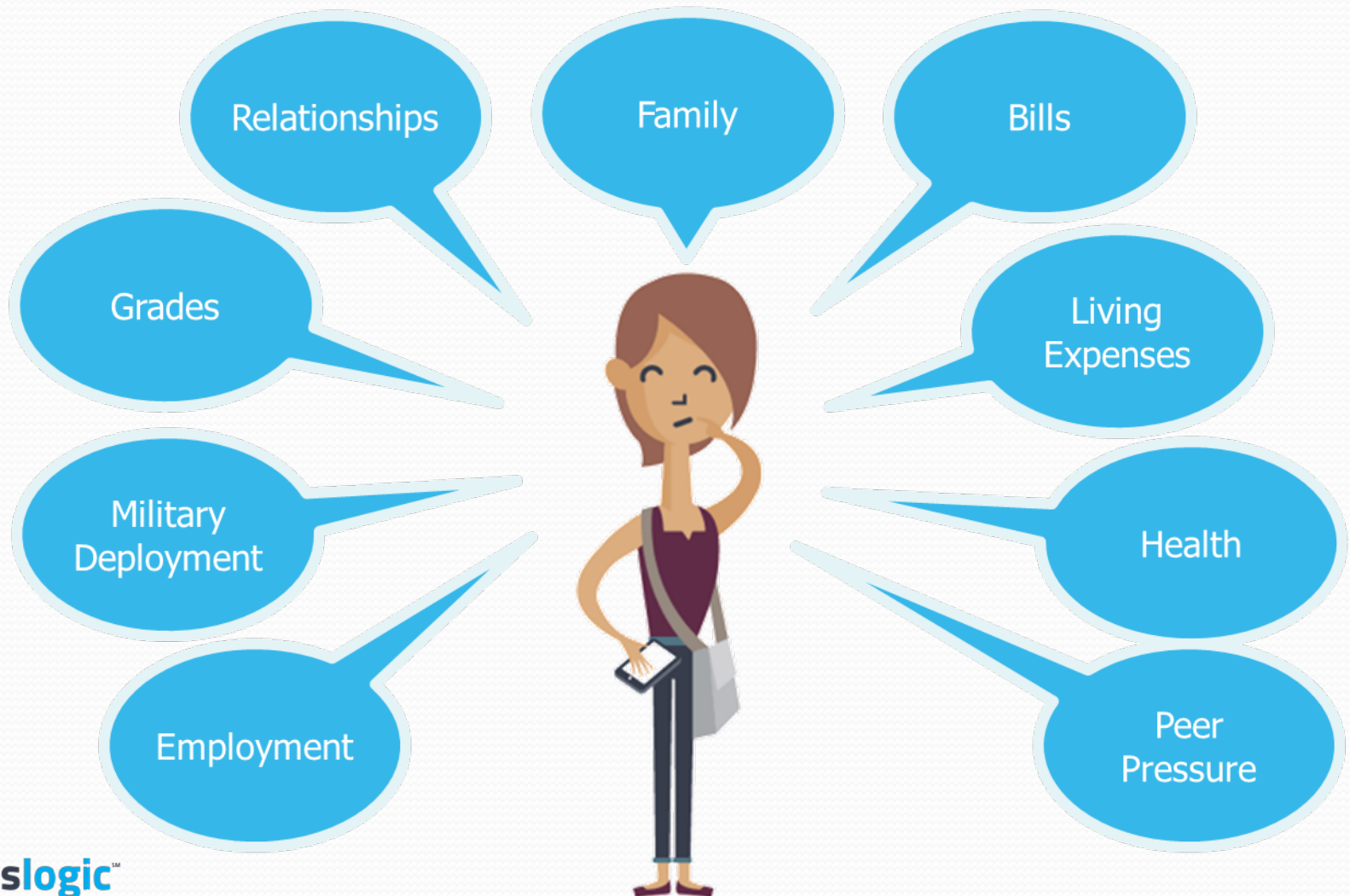
## Sales Enablement



# A Lot Happens In One Second

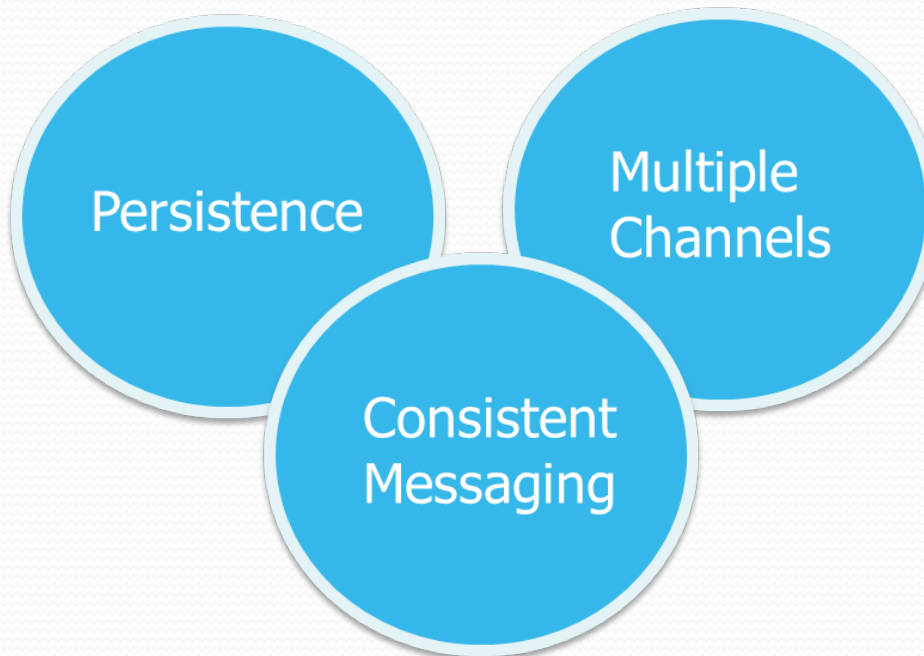



# Students Are Overwhelmed





# How Do You Break Through?

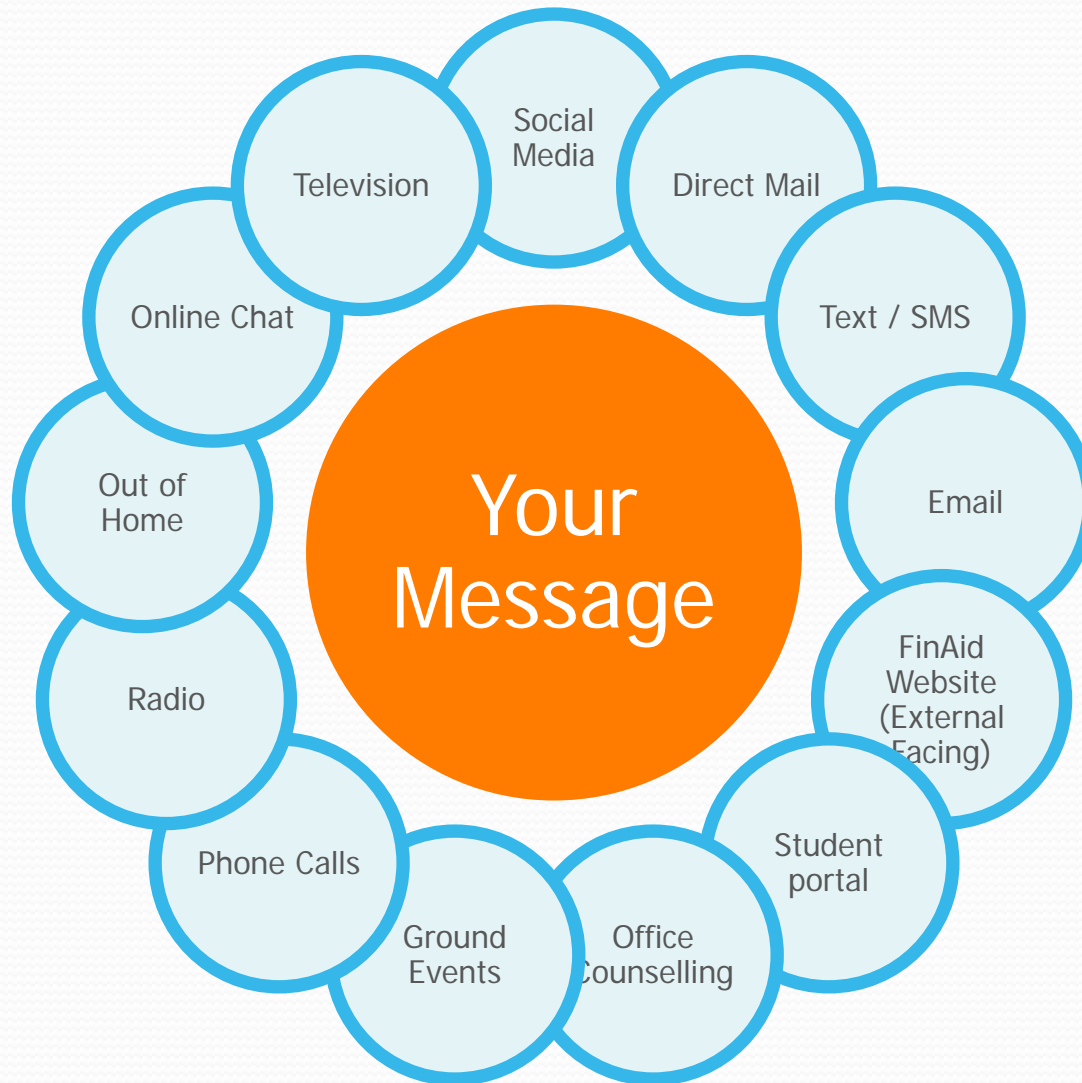




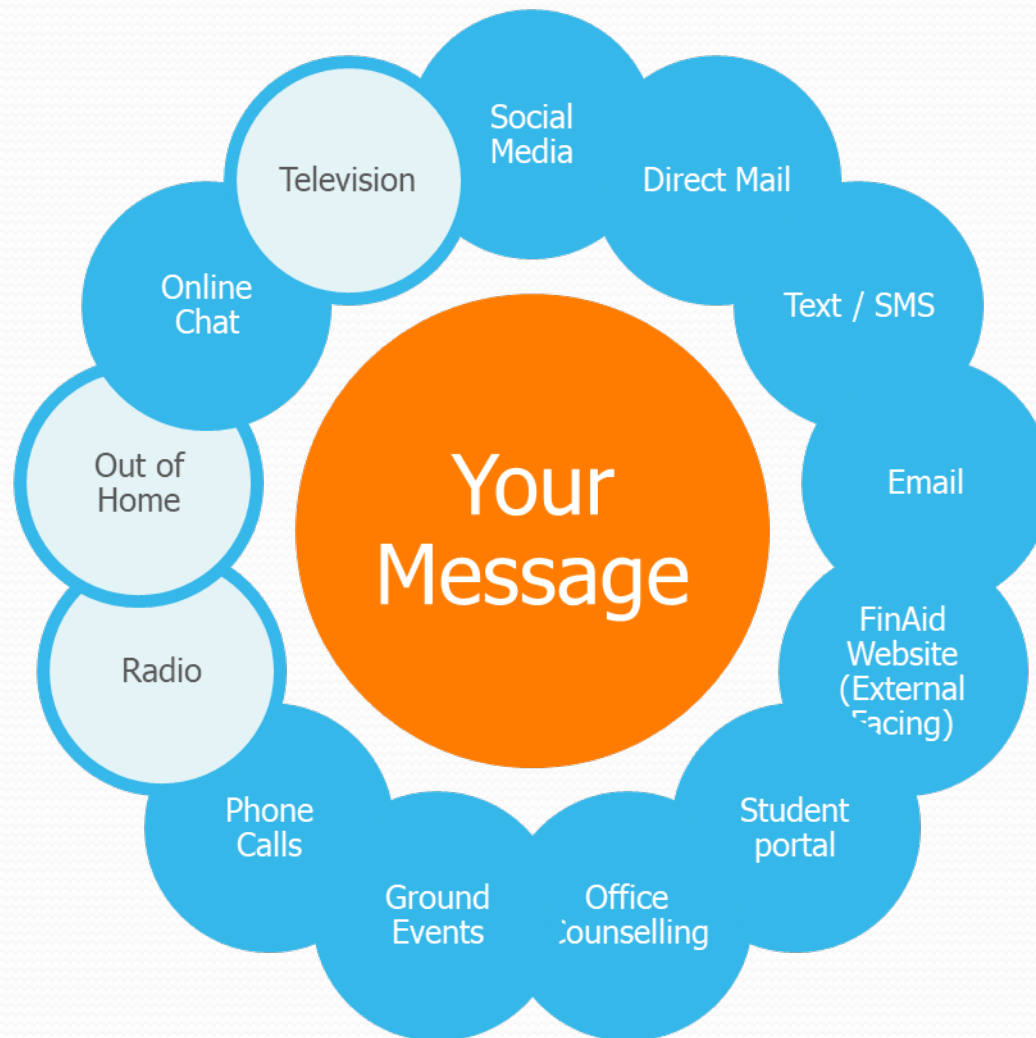
**The Rule of 7:**  
Students Need to See Your  
Message **At Least** 7 Times To  
Take Action



# Available Communication Channels



# Relevant Channels for Student Financial Services



# Optimize Mobile & Online Channels



- + There are **more active mobile devices** than there are **people** on earth
- + **85%** of 18–29 year-olds in the U.S. **own smartphones**—the highest rate of all age groups
- + **60%** of Americans' digital media time is spent on smartphones & tablets
- + The **average college student** brings **7** Internet-connected devices to campus.
- + **More than half** of smartphone users used their devices to look up **health information** or do **online banking** within the last year.

# 3 Important Channels To Optimize

1. Email
2. Text / SMS
3. Social Media

*(Your school website (.edu) and student portal (SIS) are important channels, too—but you may not have much influence over them. We've got some tips there, too.)*

# 1. Email

## Email Trends



**40%**  
of all email  
are spam

**14.5**  
million spam  
messages/day

### Pros


- + Unlimited word count, can explain in-depth
- + School branding adds credibility and familiarity can lead to higher open rates
- + Can be customized and automated
- + Analytics available on open/click rates
- + Can test effectiveness of headlines, time for send, and more

### Cons

- + So. Much. Spam.
- + Unlimited word count leads to long emails no one reads
- + Inboxes are crowded
- + Students have multiple email accounts



# Email At Rivier University (NH)



Michael Macias'S Financial Aid Offer Letter and Cost Outline

**– Cost of Attendance**

Direct Costs

Tuition And Fees	\$10,000
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Indirect Costs





Room And Meals	\$5,000
Books And Supplies	\$1,000
Transportation	\$1,000
Loan Fees	\$100
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$0
<b>Total Cost Of Attendance</b>	<b>\$17,100</b>

**–Financial Aid Eligibility**

Total Cost Of Attendance	\$17,100
Parent Contribution (federally determined)	\$0
Student Contribution (federally determined)	\$0
<b>Total Financial Need</b>	<b>\$17,100</b>

**Your Financial Aid Award**

<b>Total</b>	
Rivier University Funding	
Rivier Grant	\$1,000



[Click here for more video answers](#)

- + Use emails sparingly—so students know it's important information
- + Use compelling subject lines
- + Keep your messages short and sweet
- + AwardLetter is a BIG WIN for Rivier. It's the email that gets opened, read, and acted on the most

## 2. Text / SMS

### Student Text Trends

**80%**

report sleeping with  
their phone

**4,000**

texts a month

#### Pros

- + Instantly & directly delivered to students
- + Students can communicate with you, anytime, anywhere
- + People tend to read all their texts; they don't read all their emails
- + 2/3rds of students say it's ok for schools to contact them via text

#### Cons

- + Must keep message short
- + Some students may be wary of receiving unsolicited text messages—get buy in
- + Regulations exist around communicating in this format—be informed

# Texting At Mineral Area College (MO)

- + Texts pushed fast adoption of new financial services processes
- + Text alerts saved all but 8 of the 250 students at risk of getting dropped
- + MAC experienced so much success, it's looking into using this channel for other school initiatives
- + **Warning:** Students expect your immediate response; they don't care about office hours

**MAC saved  
242/250  
students**

at risk for dropping  
due to  
non-payment

# 3. Social Media

## Student Social Habits



88%



56%



59%



36%

### Pros

- + Students already use these channels
- + 75% of students use social the during college search
- + Students will engage w/ schools on social, but they want to initiate
- + Many channels are free and easy to set up
- + In-channel analytics refine strategy

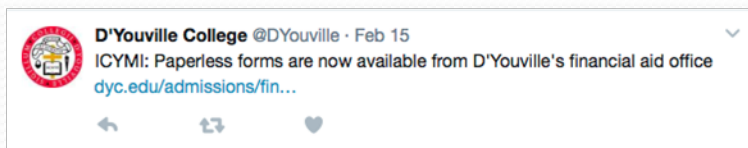
### Cons

- + Many platforms to consider
- + Highly public, channels, must be monitored
- + Students expect immediate answers on social media
- + Responding & monitoring takes staff time

# Social Media at D'Youville (NY)



- + Works with the social media team on strategies and goals for social channels
- + Posts consistent communications across social channels, all timed together
- + Uses strong visuals to create eye-catching posts
- + Best practice: Plan out by month, or quarter, for at least one post per week







# **Putting It All Together:**

## Missing Paperwork Exercise

# Missing Paperwork

Social

Text

Email

Website

Portal

# Missing Paperwork

## Social

Don't get dropped from class! Is all your paperwork in? #FinAid  
Scarier than zombies? Verification paperwork. We can help. [Learn more >](#)

## Text

Psssst, we need paperwork from you. Check your email / login for more info. Your FinAid Dept. [\[link\]](#)

## Email

Subject Line: [First Name] Missing paperwork may keep you from class

## Website

Callout Box on FinAid page: Owe Us Paperwork? Next Steps Here [>](#)

## Portal

Please file your missing paperwork immediately! [More info >](#)

# Optimize Around How Students Are Communicating & You'll Win





# Questions?





## **APPENDIX – TIPS!**

# Social Media Tips

## Facebook

- ✓ Tell a story, show faces, people, outcomes.
- ✓ Be conversational
- ✓ Focus on providing info, not on generating likes or shares
- ✓ Link back to relevant FinAid resources
- ✓ Provide your social media team with talking points and guidelines on who to direct questions to

## Twitter

- ✓ Say something worth listening to in 140 characters
- ✓ Visuals help you stand out
- ✓ GIFs are eye-catching and give your feed variety
- ✓ Use for immediate information dissemination: systems down, office closures, deadlines approaching
- ✓ Include relevant hashtags #FinancialAid #FinLitMonth #FinAidFail

# Texting Tips



- Keep things short and sweet
- Identify yourself and your reason for texting clearly
- Include a CTA (call to action), a reason for the text
- Provide an opt-out process
- Text during hours your students will consider 'normal' but know they'll likely respond at all hours
- If you need to use shorthand, start with most obvious words

# Email Tips

- **Content Counts**
  - Keep things short and sweet
  - Use subheads to guide readers
  - Avoid embedding forms-link to them instead
  - Don't overdo it on fonts, styles, colors
- **Optimize your email for mobile devices**
- **Use Analytics**
  - A/B test where possible (subject line, time of day)
  - Monitor analytics and refine
- **Avoid spam filters**
  - Use recognizable sender name
  - Keep email send list clean
  - Stay up to date with ISP practices and anti-spam laws
- **Subject Lines Matter**
  - Try to stay around 30-45 characters max
  - Questions get higher open rates
  - Avoid all caps, exclamation marks in headlines

# School Website (.edu) Tips

- In the USA, [94% of people with smartphones search for local information on their phones.](#)
- Make sure your site is mobile optimized here: <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>
- Use other channels to drive traffic to your website: email, social
- Website visitors will usually stick around for 59 seconds max—but the first 10 seconds matter most. Make info easy to find, scan, navigate.
- Meet ADA Standards for Accessibility design



# Student Portal (SIS) Tips

- Target messaging by student ID, driving engagement
- Request high-visibility portal spaces to pass along timely information: landing pages, right rails, banner ads
- Mobile optimize your portal <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>
- Request analytics on student usage: high traffic times, most visited pages, most clicked links
- Pay attention to least-visited pages, links that are not clicked on, high bounce pages, and rethink their use / strategy
- Many portals include community building initiatives, monitor FinAid streams and groups and provide information