



Best Practices for Conversational Text Messaging in Higher Education

Overview

Competition for students is fierce. The last few years have seen declining enrollment rates and reduced government funding, making it even more crucial that universities and colleges become more effective at attracting and engaging new students.

Conversational text messaging gives student admissions officers and directors of alumni relations the advantage because it's a channel your students embrace and use naturally. When you consider that smartphones are used more for texting and browsing than talking, it only makes sense to incorporate conversational text messaging for your recruitment initiatives, admissions process, and fundraising drives.



Text messaging can be used in higher education to:

- Recruit students – many of whom are digital natives who have been texting for years.
- Simplify application and enrollment by automating the admissions process.
- Keep students' attention and engagement on campus strong.
- Continue personalized conversations with alumni for more successful fundraising programs.

The reality is that messaging is the new conversation, especially for your students. They live and breathe with their smart phones.

Let's start by looking at how you can use conversational text messaging to win the competition for student recruitment.

Go Digital to Recruit Students with Text Messaging

Text messaging will help your university win the competition for top high school students. In fact, a recent study by Cappex found that 77% of students want to receive relevant information from universities via text messaging.

Text messaging will help you get and keep their attention on you, your curriculum and your opportunities for their futures.

One of the biggest challenges every university recruiter faces is getting potential students to pay attention to the information you send them. After all, there are so many options, especially for the students you want. Everyone else wants them too.

Text messaging gives you the advantage, especially with the younger generations of digital natives who already use messaging as their primary form of communication. Why?

- **Digital natives read and act on messages.** You can send them class information, videos, links to web pages and more and they will pay attention. Try that with email and they probably won't.
- **Texting is a natural conversation.** You can interact immediately, answer questions, send relevant information and learn more about your prospective students. Texting is so natural that 50% of students say text conversations are just as meaningful as a phone call.
- **Your students will appreciate you.** Today's incoming students are digital natives. They'll like you and your university/institution better because you're communicating with them the way they want to communicate. That helps you stand out from the crowd.



How Can You Use Text Messaging to Recruit Your Students?

When it comes to recruiting, our education clients use conversational text messaging to:

- Share information about your programs and curriculum.
- Invite students and schedule campus tours or calls with staff.
- Respond immediately to questions or requests.
- Connect prospects with other students in their school of interest program to have personal conversations via messaging and more.

Reach Out With Conversational Text Messaging

Let's look at how easy it is to reach out and share information with prospective students. Say you're a university recruiter for the business school. You've met a number of high school students you want to entice to your university's programs.



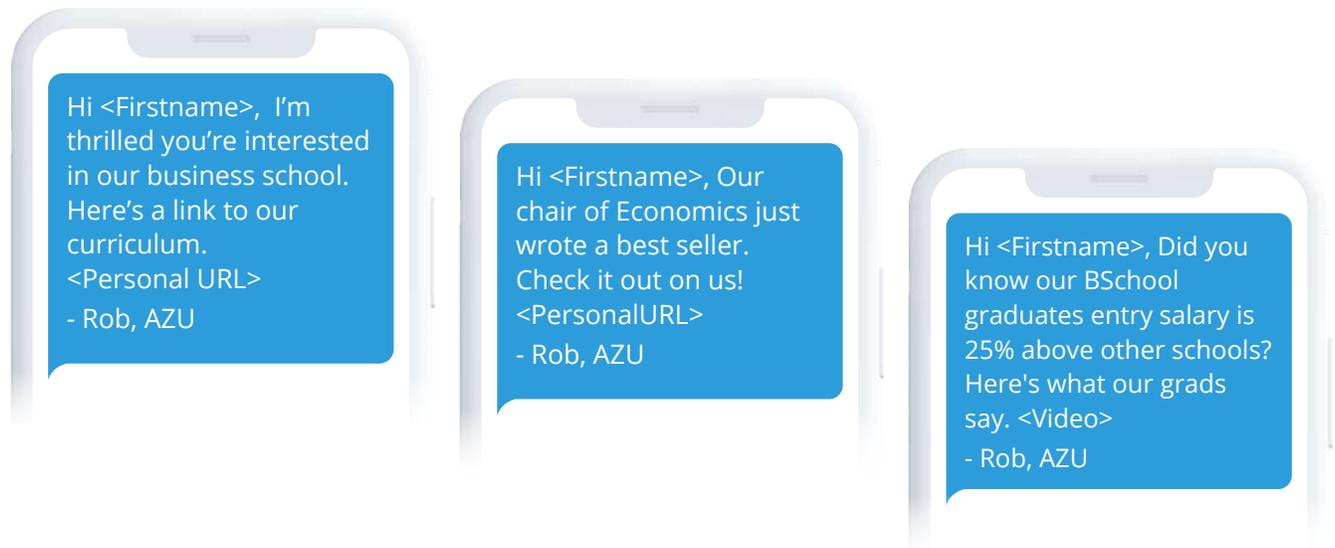
First, you'd send a message to all of the students you've met that you'd like to recruit. The initial message is designed to remind them you've met before and ask if they're interested in knowing more about your university's degrees for business. It also serves as an opt-in confirmation for your messaging campaign.

When a student replies YES to the first message, they are automatically sent a series of recruiting messages for the business school. (FYI, for students who don't respond, you can also send a slightly different message to learn what compels them to respond.)

For YES responses, you can send a variety of information in a multi-touch message campaign. For example, you can send:

- A personal URL to information on the business school, so you can track when they click to do research.
- A video of business school students talking about how amazing your school is and how much they learn, and have fun too.
- A link to a well-known professor's latest book.
- Whatever else you think will be relevant and enticing to them.

If the student doesn't respond to your initial information flows, you can send more messages with different content to see what attracts them to take action. All of these sends can be automated by your advanced conversational text messaging solution. You can learn what content compels them to take action, and then focus your campaign on that content.



Schedule Visits and More with Text Messaging

When the student takes action and clicks on a link, watches a video etc., the system automatically triggers a 2nd message a week later, asking if they'd like a personal tour of the campus, or if they have questions they'd like answered.



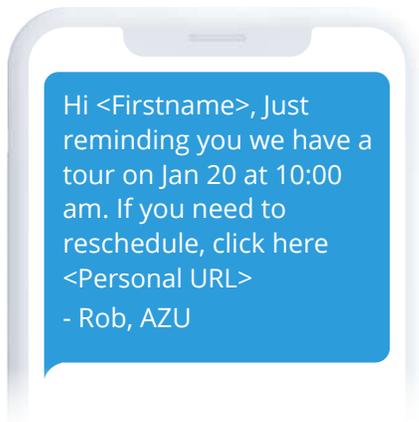
When a student texts INFO, Rob (your recruiter) is alerted by the SMS-Magic desktop so he can immediately reply with a personal conversation, answer any questions, send more information or schedule a call.

When the student replies TOUR, they are automatically sent a message that makes it easy to schedule their visit.

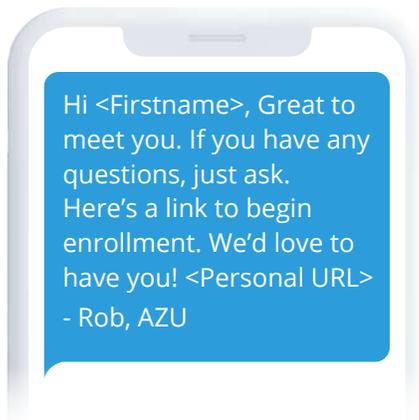


When the student schedules a campus tour, Rob is notified via email. The student is also sent an immediate confirmation message.

Students are also sent automatic reminders on a regular basis of their tour date. You can also offer them the option of changing their date through the same automated process.



Follow-up to Visits with Conversations



After the tour, Rob sends a personal message to the student. In this case, he also sends a personal link for the student to enroll.

When the student clicks on the link to submit the enrollment form, a new conversational messaging flow begins to walk them through the admissions process.

When you converse with them the way they want, making it easy for them to interact with you, you get a leg up in their university selection process. Plus, you get to focus on having conversations with students. Learning about what they need, helping them understand the value your school brings and recruiting the best students for your programs.

Once you've attracted them and created enthusiasm for your school, continuing to use text messaging to streamline onboarding is a natural transition.

Automate Student Applications with Conversational Text Messaging for Education

Text messaging makes it easier for you and your students to apply and confirm their enrollment and acceptance. It also makes it easier for students to ask for your help and for you to continue building on the relationship you began during your recruiting process.

Since text messaging is the conversation channel of choice for your students, they'll naturally read and respond to your messages concerning their enrollment process. Thanks to the powerful automation available with advanced conversational text messaging solutions, you'll be able to share and track all applications using workflows and digital tools. This means you focus on students, not on which form they need to sign.

Our clients use text messaging during the recruiting, application, and enrollment processes to simplify and accelerate results while also building a stronger relationship with their incoming students, thanks to personal conversations.

Automating the Application Process with Text Messaging

There are a number of ways to use text messaging to simplify and improve your application process. Here are a few ideas.

1. Offer text opt-ins for more information or help.

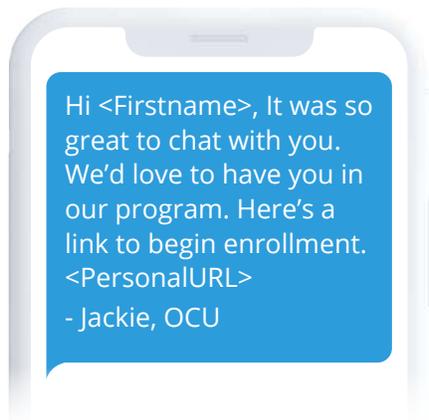
Students won't necessarily pick up the phone and call you if they have questions about the application forms on your website, your curriculum or programs, or need your help. Offering a text opt-in to ask questions or get help makes it easy for digital natives to engage with you the way they want. They'll like you because you'll converse with them in the way they prefer, and they're much more likely to engage with you through a text message than any other channel.

For example, on your website, add a message that promotes the option to text a specific keyword to a specific short code for help, to get answers to questions etc. When they text you, you will immediately be notified and can respond to them quickly, beginning a conversation that's personal, quick and easy.

2. Invite key prospects to apply to your school

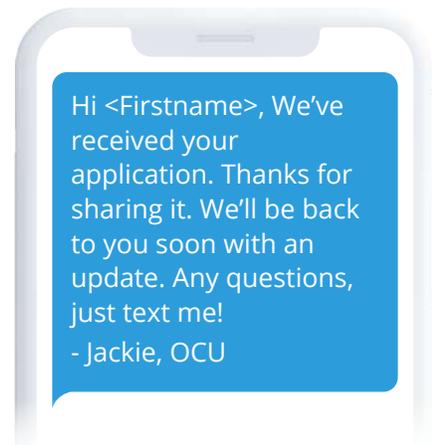
You meet a large number of students. You can easily send the students you select to invite to your program a text message to start the application process.

For example, after you meet with a top prospect, you can send a simple message with a personal link to an application form.



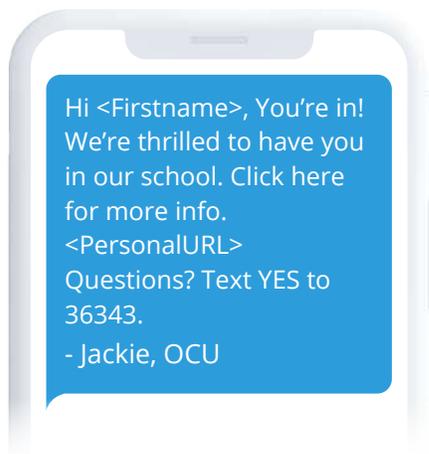
When a student clicks on the link, you'll know they've clicked and be able to monitor their progress.

When they submit the application form, a confirmation message is automatically created and sent.



If the student responds to the text, Jackie is immediately alerted so that she can respond immediately with a personal message to answer questions or simply have a chat.

3. Automate acceptance messages and offer more information



When a student's application is accepted, an acceptance message can automatically be sent, along with a link to start another multi-message series that guides a student through the admissions process.

You can create messages to guide a student through the admissions process, from financial aid to housing, campus activities to class schedules. You can also blend messaging with emails based on which channel is most appropriate for the communication.

For example:

- Forms for financial aid, housing and class schedules can be sent to students via email, for ease of access.
- You can monitor student progress with submitting these forms. When they delay, you can automatically trigger text messages at specific points in time to remind them to complete applications and other necessary forms.
- You can also automate messages that offer keywords to text for help, more information, a call from a counselor and more.

By using conversations to remind and encourage students throughout the process, as well as offer them help, you create a stronger relationship with students while simplifying the process for all. Because all communications are tracked in your CRM, you'll know the history of student conversations whether the communication was made via text message or email.

Now that your students are on campus, you can make their time with you even more meaningful by continuing to use text messaging to keep them involved, engaged and safe while they're there.

Keep Your Students Engaged Throughout Their Time with You

How do you get your students' attention when they're running between classes, studying, enjoying life and generally busy as bees? Unlike email, text messaging for Higher Ed can and will get your students' attention so you can share information, events, and more with them.

Let's face it. Your students are all digital natives. They spend more time on their smartphones than they do anywhere else. When you communicate with them the way they naturally like to converse, everybody wins.

That's why text messaging for Higher Ed is such a powerful communications channel for universities and other educational organizations. Your students will read your messages. They will respond. In fact, text messages get 6X the responses vs. email and 10X vs. phone calls. How's that for connection power?

Get Hip with Text Messaging for Higher Ed

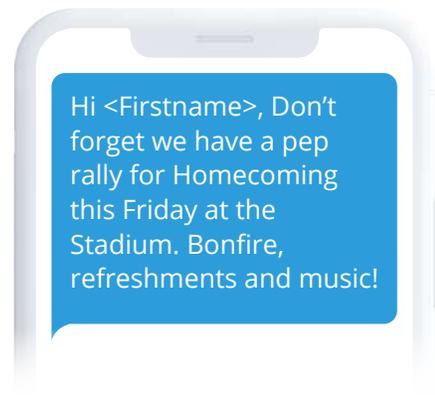
You can use conversational text messaging for virtually any communication you want to share with your student population. And they will love you for it.

Following are just a few examples:

1. Campus announcements

Whether you want to send out information about classes, campus schedules, and updates or simply let your students know about something that just came up, text messaging is the fastest and most effective way to reach them.

You can send out a simple outbound informational message to your entire student population.



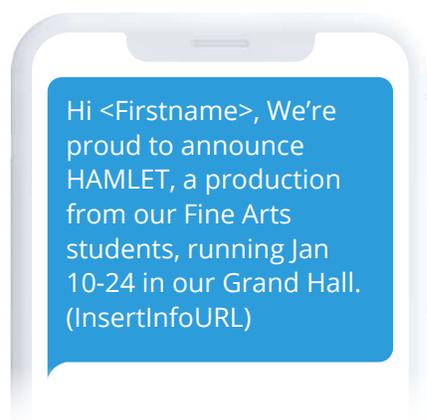
You can send a message to a select group of students, from everyone in a specific class to those in a school to those with a certain GPA.



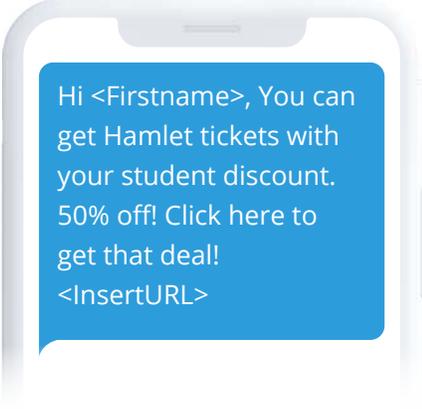
2. Events and special opportunities

Some campus events require registration or some kind of response from students. You can easily use text messaging for Higher Ed to manage those events, as well.

For example, let's say you want to promote and sell tickets to your Fine Arts production of Shakespeare's Hamlet. You can promote the event, guide your students to their discounted ticket sales and remind them of the upcoming event, all with a single multi-touch messaging campaign. Here's how.



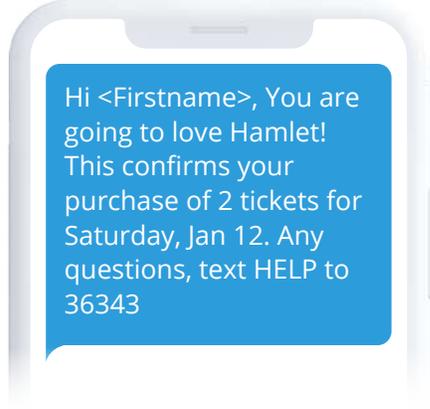
First, you send a message telling them about Hamlet.



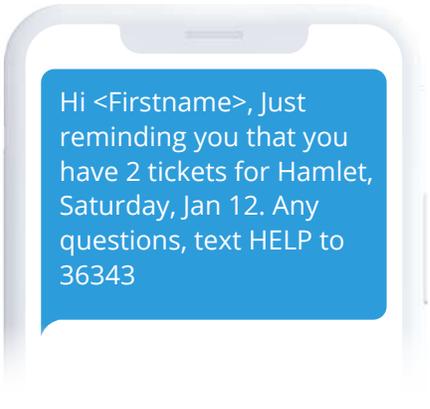
Hi <Firstname>, You can get Hamlet tickets with your student discount. 50% off! Click here to get that deal!
<InsertURL>

Next, you can send a message a week later offering them a student discount.

When your student buys the tickets, you can automatically trigger a confirmation message. You can also offer a keyword response for them to ask questions or get help.

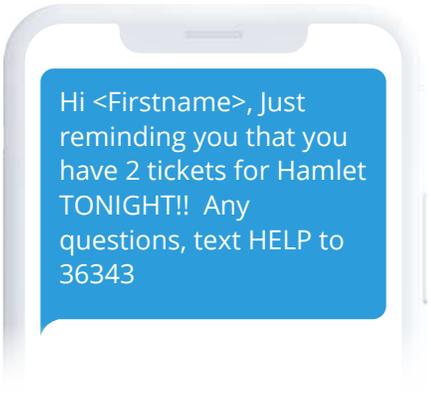


Hi <Firstname>, You are going to love Hamlet! This confirms your purchase of 2 tickets for Saturday, Jan 12. Any questions, text HELP to 36343



Hi <Firstname>, Just reminding you that you have 2 tickets for Hamlet, Saturday, Jan 12. Any questions, text HELP to 36343

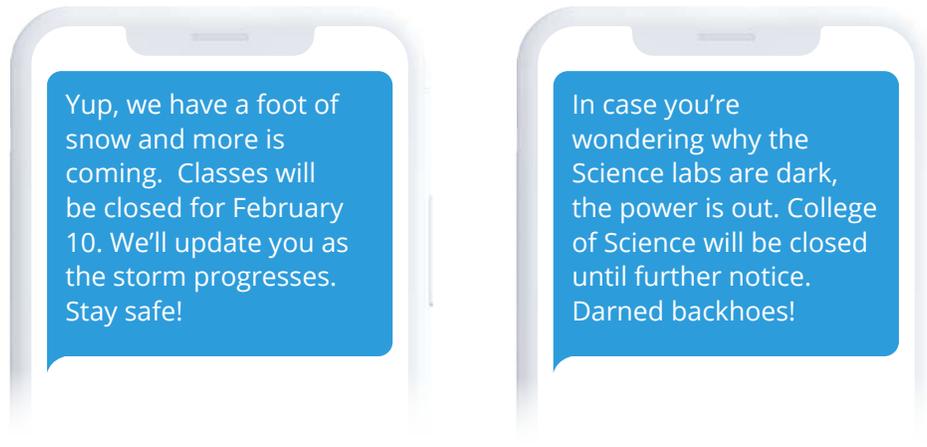
Then, you can send reminder messages ahead of the actual play date, as often as you'd like.



Hi <Firstname>, Just reminding you that you have 2 tickets for Hamlet TONIGHT!! Any questions, text HELP to 36343

3. Emergency announcements

Text messaging is a fast way to get emergency information to students. For example, weather advisories, road closings, building closings, class cancellations, and more.



Conversational text messaging gives you the flexibility to communicate virtually any type of information, quickly and effectively, to any segment of your student population.

This includes even after they graduate and become valued alumni.

3 Fundraising Strategies for Engaging Alumni via Text Messaging

Successful alumni fundraising initiatives start with engaging your donors in a conversation. Engaging alumni via text messaging helps you do just that.

Since the majority of your alumni use text messaging every day, it's a natural way to begin and continue a conversation with them about your institution, your plans for the future, and what matters most to them.

When using text messaging to have donor conversations, here are three key strategies to increase your success, and have fun along the way.

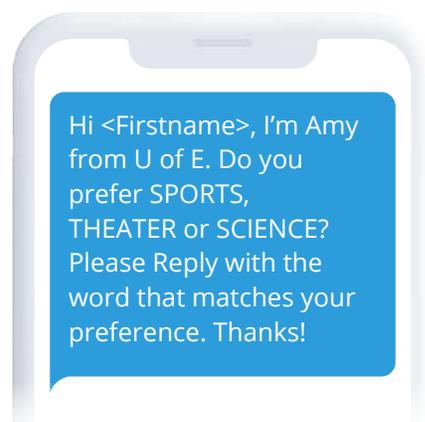
Use Text Messaging to Learn About Alumni as Individuals

Asking a recent graduate, with thousands of dollars of student loan debt, for a large contribution isn't going to work. It's surely not going to help you impress them with how much you care about their world.

The same can be said for asking a patron of the arts to fund your new basketball stadium, or asking a sports fan to contribute to the purchase of that new library.

Engaging alumni via text messaging gives you the power to quickly learn more and more about your alumni, so that you can tune your requests to match their financial situation and areas of interest.

You already know their graduation year, which helps you better segment your alumni based on their projected financial giving ability. Use text messaging to survey your alumni to learn more about their passions and interests. For example:



Engage Alumni via Text Messaging to Build a Relationship

Now that you know what interests them at a high level, you can tune your requests. You can continue to ask them questions to learn even more about them, giving you the key insights to build a relationship.

Just remember, you won't build a relationship by only asking them for donations. It's just as important to give back to them with programs or opportunities that match their interests. You want to be a partner for life, not that pesky organization that always asks for money.

Use text messaging to invite alumni to networking events, special programs at your campus, or continuing education opportunities. Texting makes it so easy to keep your alumni in the loop concerning key news and updates, fun announcements, and more. For example, use messaging to invite your alumni to a special networking function, then remind them of the date and time.



If you want to get donations from your alumni, always continue to give. That's the foundation of long-term relationships.

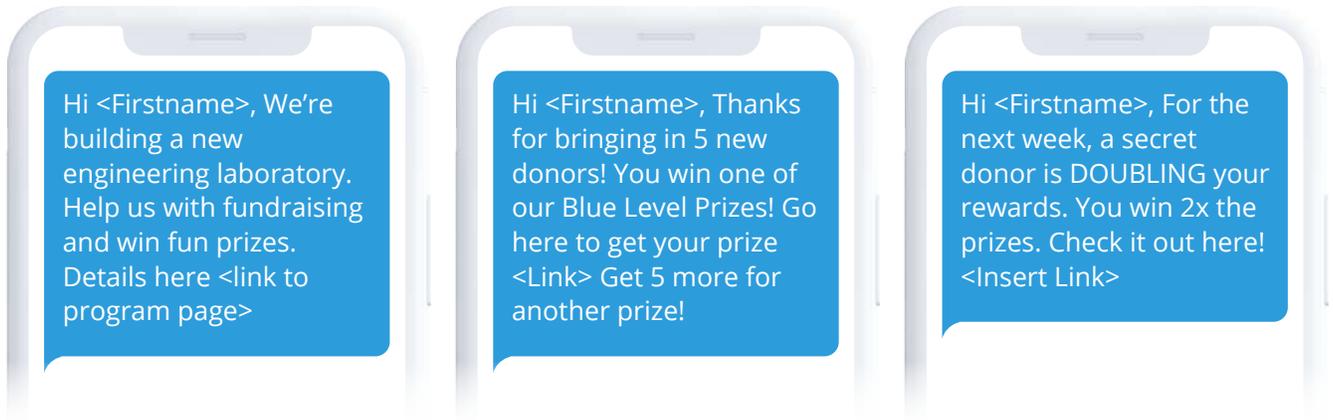
Ask Alumni to Help You Fundraise, and Make it Fun!

Alumni can help you with more than money. When you make it fun for them to help, it's even better.

Every activity can become fun and engaging when you turn it into a game. Text messaging helps you create that fun environment for fundraising. You can incite alumni to get involved in your fundraising goal, based on different actions that contribute to your success.

For example, you can award prizes for alumni who capture different levels of investment, create campaigns within their local networks, contribute new fundraising ideas, and more.

Engaging alumni via text messaging makes it easy to gamify fundraising. You can announce the program, send promotional texts to keep the game top of mind, feature winners and their ideas, offer special prizes, and share each alumnus's personal status with them.



Text messaging gives you the chance to have important conversations with your alumni, for fundraising and continuing to build long-term relationships.

You'll communicate the way they like, learn about what matters to them, as you show you care about them as individuals, and build relationships that fuel ongoing fundraising success.

The Bottom Line

When you find out how powerful conversational text messaging can be across the entire student-to-alumni lifecycle, you'll wonder why you hadn't thought of using it before.

So what are you waiting for?



About SMS-Magic

SMS-Magic is a proven, global messaging platform for Salesforce, with over 1500 clients across 190 countries, including small, midsize, and enterprise accounts. SMS-Magic enables Salesforce users to engage buyers and win and retain more new customer revenue, while creating strong customer relationships that drive sustainable competitive advantage. SMS-Magic is the most positively reviewed messaging application on Salesforce AppExchange.

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