How to Make Student Communications Stick

#LetsDoThis

Today's Agenda

+ The Problem—Noise, Competition

+ The Rule of 7

+ Communication Channels

+ Top 5 Channels To Optimize

+ Group Exercise!

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Your Presenter:
Chris Jordan, Regional Director

About CampusLogic

We Help Schools Change Lives

+ The only **student financial services** platform

+ **Remove barriers** from the student journey

+ **Boost** enrollment and student satisfaction

+ **Streamline** efficiencies and communications

+ **Improve** financial aid completion rates

Problem:

Communicating Effectively
with Students
Is Exceedingly Difficult

Student Attention—Who's Vying For It?

A Lot Happens in Just One Second

7,740
Tweets

2,619,856
emails sent
(a lot are
spam)

70,603
YouTube
Video views

1,281
Tumblr
posts

43,642 GB
of internet
traffic

880
Instagram
photos
uploaded

62,263
Google
searches

How Do You Break Through?

Consistent Messaging

Persistence

Multiple Channels
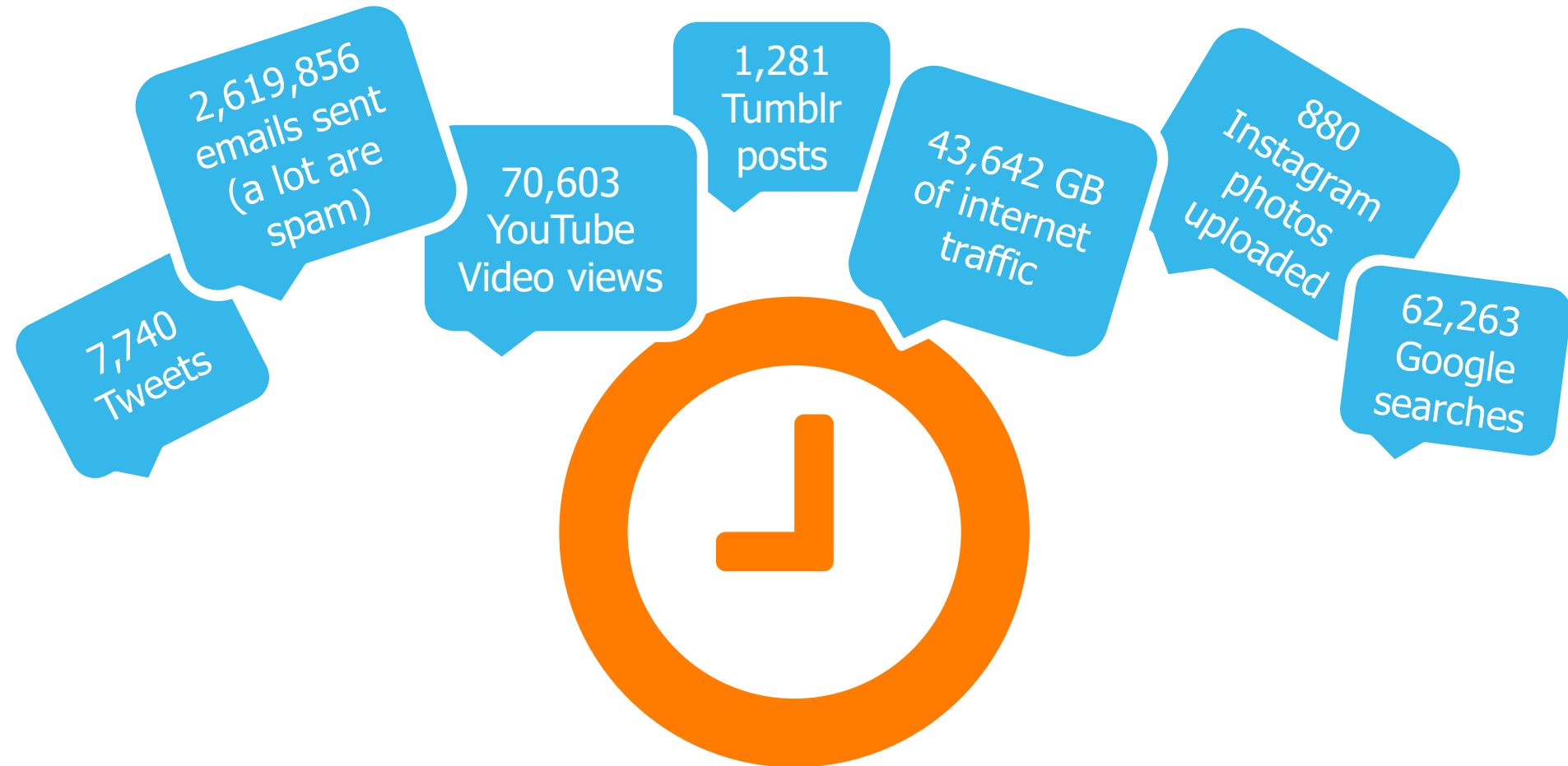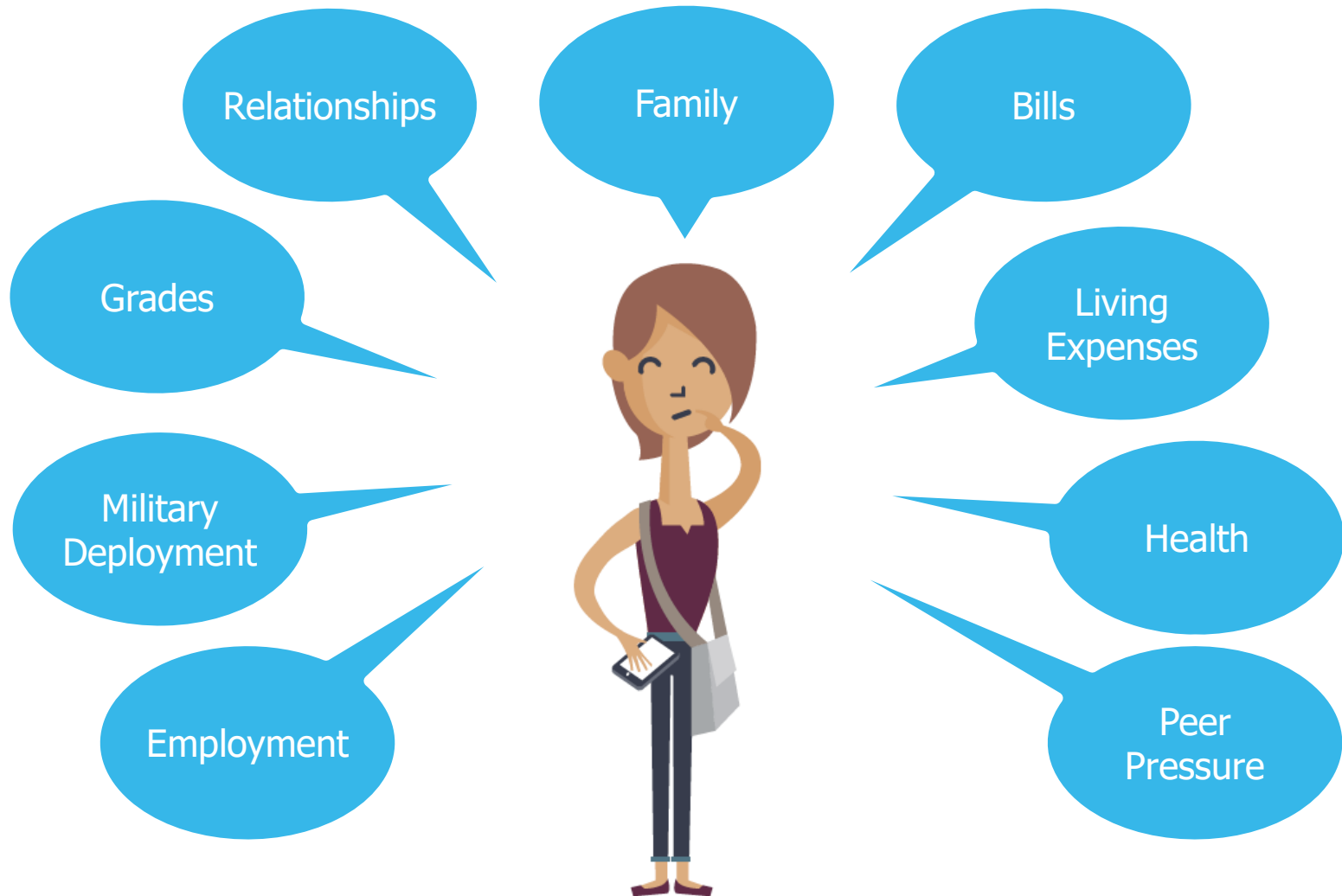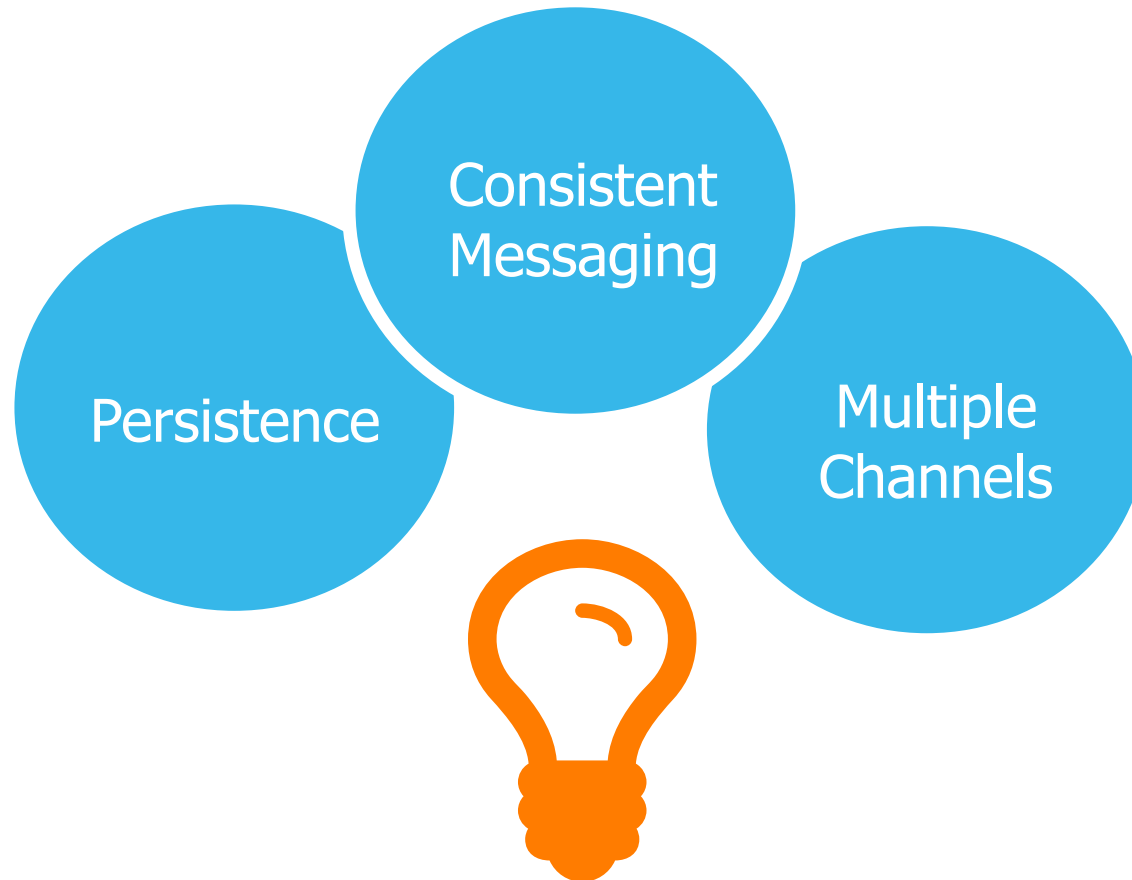
The Rule of 7:

Students Need to See Your Message at Least 7 Times to Take Action

Available Communication Channels

Your Message

- Social Media
- Direct Mail
- Text/SMS
- Email
- FinAid Website (External Facing)
- Student Portal
- Office Counselling
- Ground Events
- Phone Calls
- Radio
- Out of Home (Billboards)
- Online Chat
- Television

Relevant Financial Aid Channels

Optimize Mobile & Online Channels

+ The **average college student** brings **7** Internet-connected devices to campus

+ **60% of Gen Zers** (born 1997–2016) won't use an app or website that's **too slow** to load; **62%** will close out of a site that's too hard to navigate

+ **77%** of Gen Zers say they want relevant information from their colleges via text

+ **More than half** of smartphone users used their phone to look up **health information** or do **online banking** within the last year

5 Channels to Optimize & Personalize

1. Email

2. Social Media

3. Smartphones: Texting & Phone Calls

4. FinAid Website (External-Facing)

5. Student Portal

1. Email

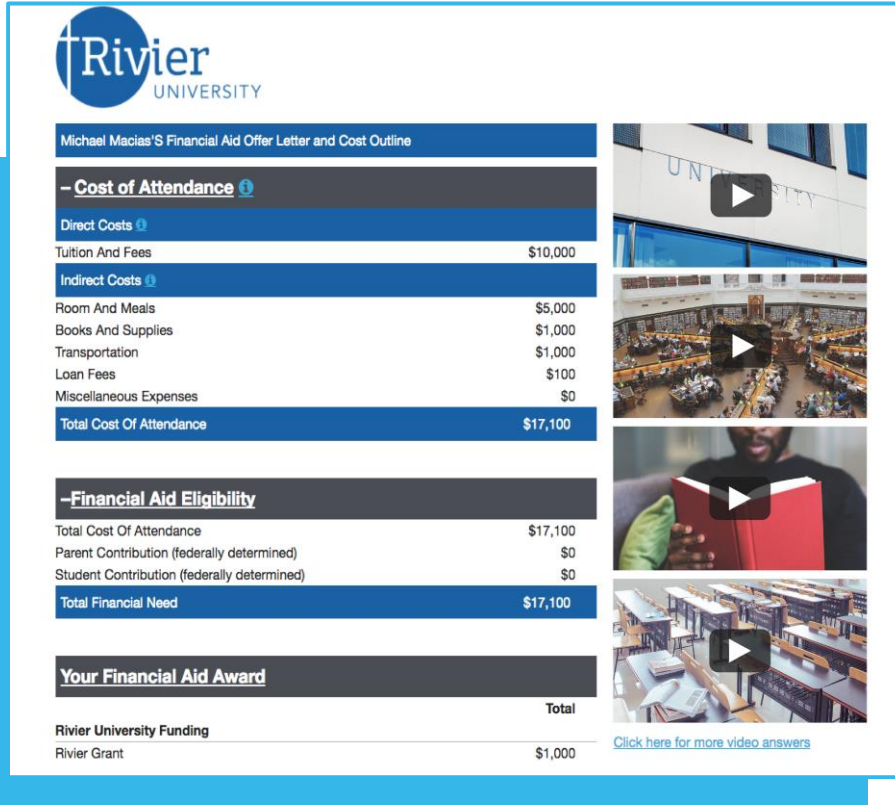**Email Trends**   SPAM   **45%** of all email are spam   **14.5** million spam messages/day

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 ℹ	
Direct Costs ℹ	
Tuition And Fees	$10,000
Indirect Costs ℹ	
Room And Meals	$5,000
Books And Supplies	$1,000
Transportation	$1,000
Loan Fees	$100
Miscellaneous Expenses	$0
Total Cost Of Attendance	**$17,100**
–Financial Aid Eligibility	
Total Cost Of Attendance	$17,100
Parent Contribution (federally determined)	$0
Student Contribution (federally determined)	$0
Total Financial Need	**$17,100**
Your Financial Aid Award	
	Total
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 messages short and sweet

+ Make your 'Call-to-Action' (**deadlines**, specific instructions) clear; add hyperlinks as needed

+ AwardLetter is a BIG WIN for Rivier…It's the email that gets opened, read—and acted on—the most

2. Social Media

Student Social Habits

f 88%   📷 59%

👻 56%   🐦 36%

Pros

+ Students already use these channels

+ 75% of students use social 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

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Social Media
at Grand Valley State (MI) and D'Youville College (NY)

+ Ensure consistent communications across all social channels (Facebook, Twitter)

+ Use strong visuals to create eye-catching posts

+ Make it easy to retweet/share FAFSA and other relevant, outside posts

+ Be prepared to respond, as quickly as possible—or set expectations about the timing of responses
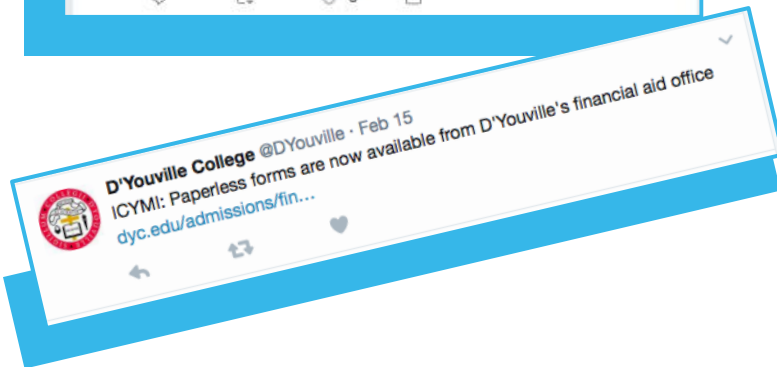
3. Text/SMS...and Smartphones

Student Texting Trends

99%
open rate

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

+ 77% of Gen Z 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 their buy-in

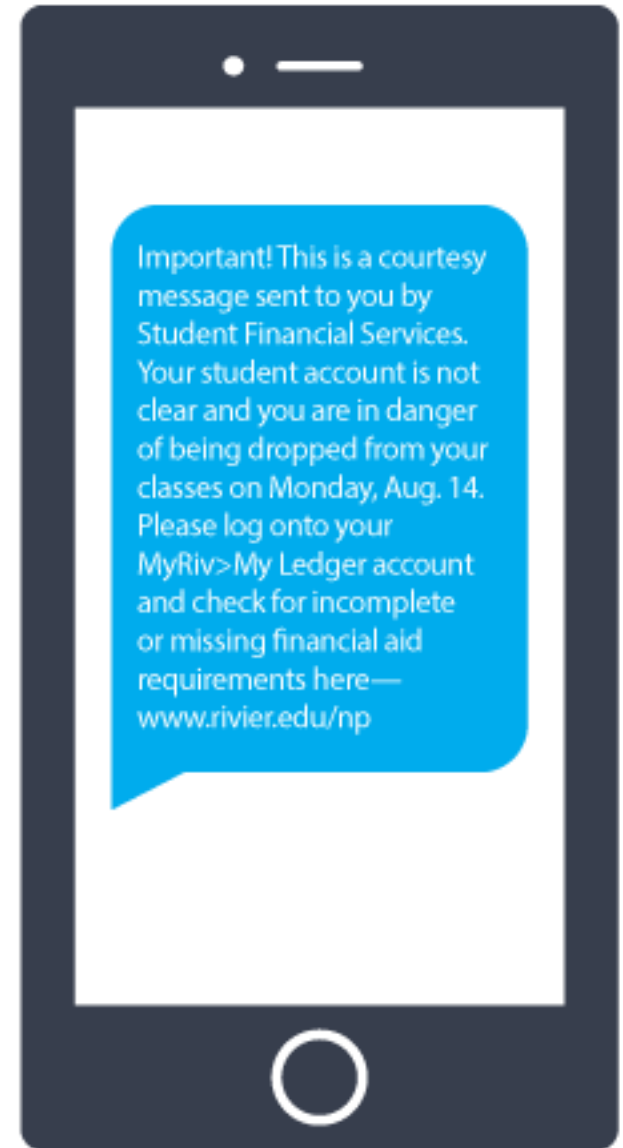+ Regulations exist around communicating in this format—be informed

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
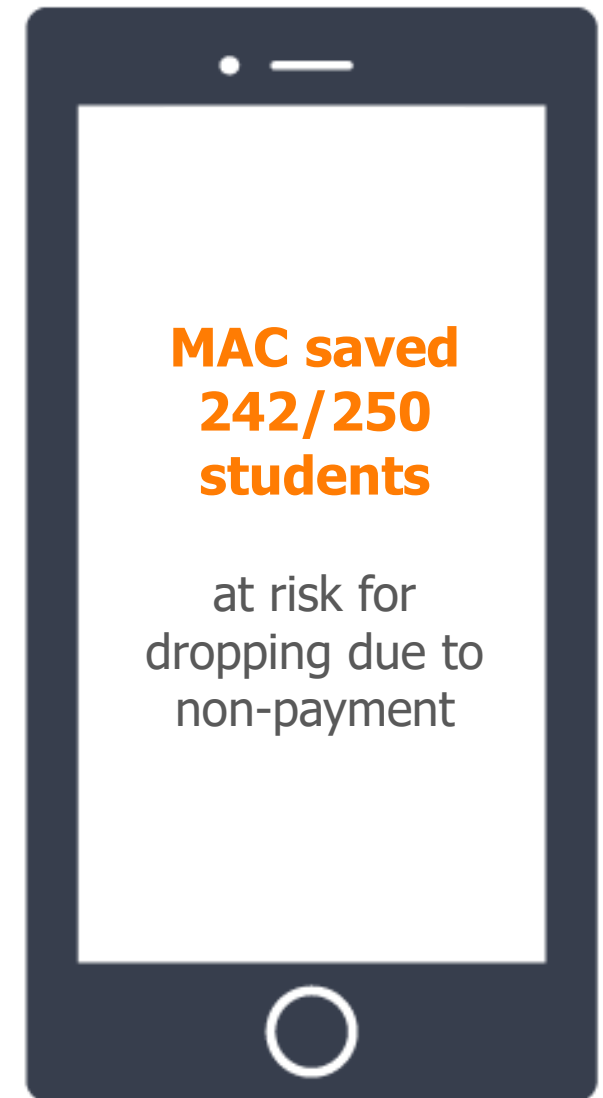
Texting at Rivier

+ Always include a Call to Action (CTA)—like this link to the student portal

+ In addition to including a CTA/link, other best practices for texting include:

  – Always ask for, and document, recipients' permission to receive texts

  – Keep it short and sweet—this example may be too long for some users that can only see messages up to 155 characters

  – Be prepared: Students expect immediate responses—and they don't care about your office's 9–5 schedule

Important! This is a courtesy message sent to you by Student Financial Services. Your student account is not clear and you are in danger of being dropped from your classes on Monday, Aug. 14. Please log onto your MyRiv>My Ledger account and check for incomplete or missing financial aid requirements here—www.rivier.edu/np

4. School/FinAid Website

Website Trends

**72%** of mobile users say a mobile-optimized website is important to them, according to Google

Pros

+ A well-designed, informative website allows students to find information easily

+ Websites can be branded

+ Websites can house an expansive array of information in multiple formats

+ Robust analytics available

Cons

+ Poor user experience causes visitors to disengage

+ You have to actively drive students to visit the website

FinAid Website at D'Youville
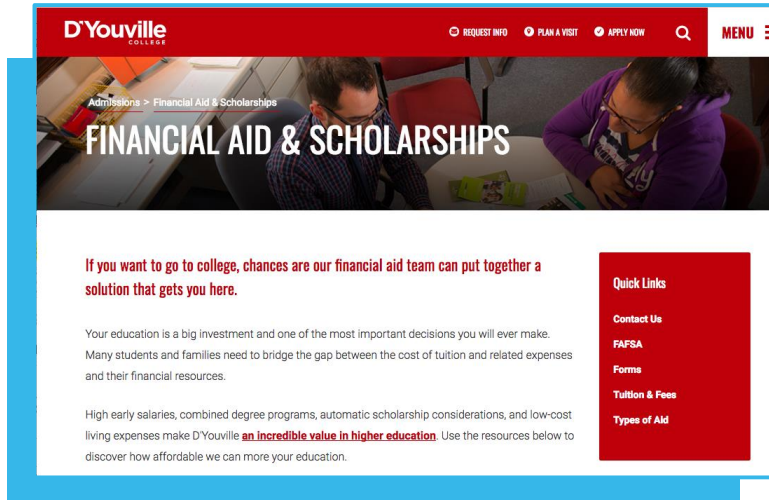
+ Website is mobile-optimized—use this analyzer site to make sure yours is: https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly

+ It's the single source of truth—especially for recruitment and FinAid

+ Use callout boxes, menu, and links to make relevant information easy to find

+ Videos, especially those from FaTV, are highly valued—engaging, easy to follow, and a great step toward FinLit
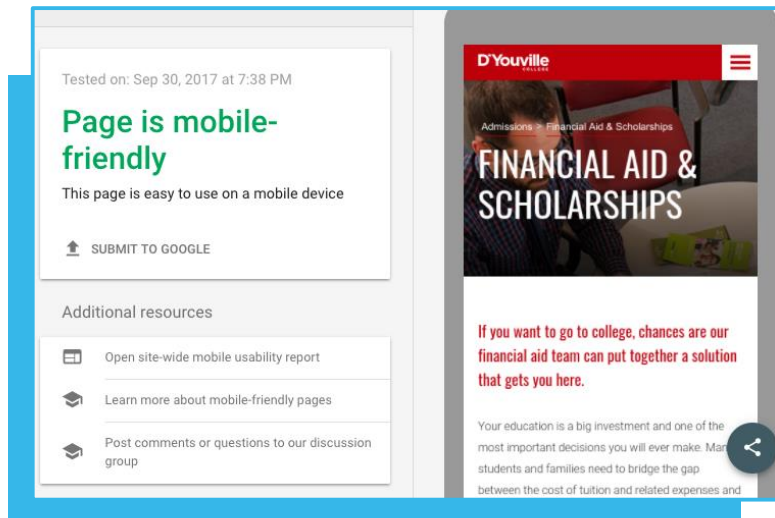
5. Student Portal

Design Matters

75% of users judge your credibility on design and user experience.

Pros

+ Primary point of contact between students & school; secure, personalized

+ Often can target unique messaging by student ID

+ Visitors are already in "school mode" when they log into the student portal

+ Secure; single-sign-on (SSO)

+ Analytics available, sometimes

Cons

+ Portals aren't viewed as the most engaging channel by students

+ Portals can offer a disjointed, clunky experience if not maintained

+ Controlled by IT

Student Portal at Glenville State College

Banner Self-Service portal is helpful for...

+ Timely announcements

+ Relevant documents/forms

+ Personalized account information

...but not a great student experience for personalized messaging

Putting It All Together:
Missing Paperwork Exercise

Missing Paperwork

- Social
- Text
- Email
- Website
- Portal
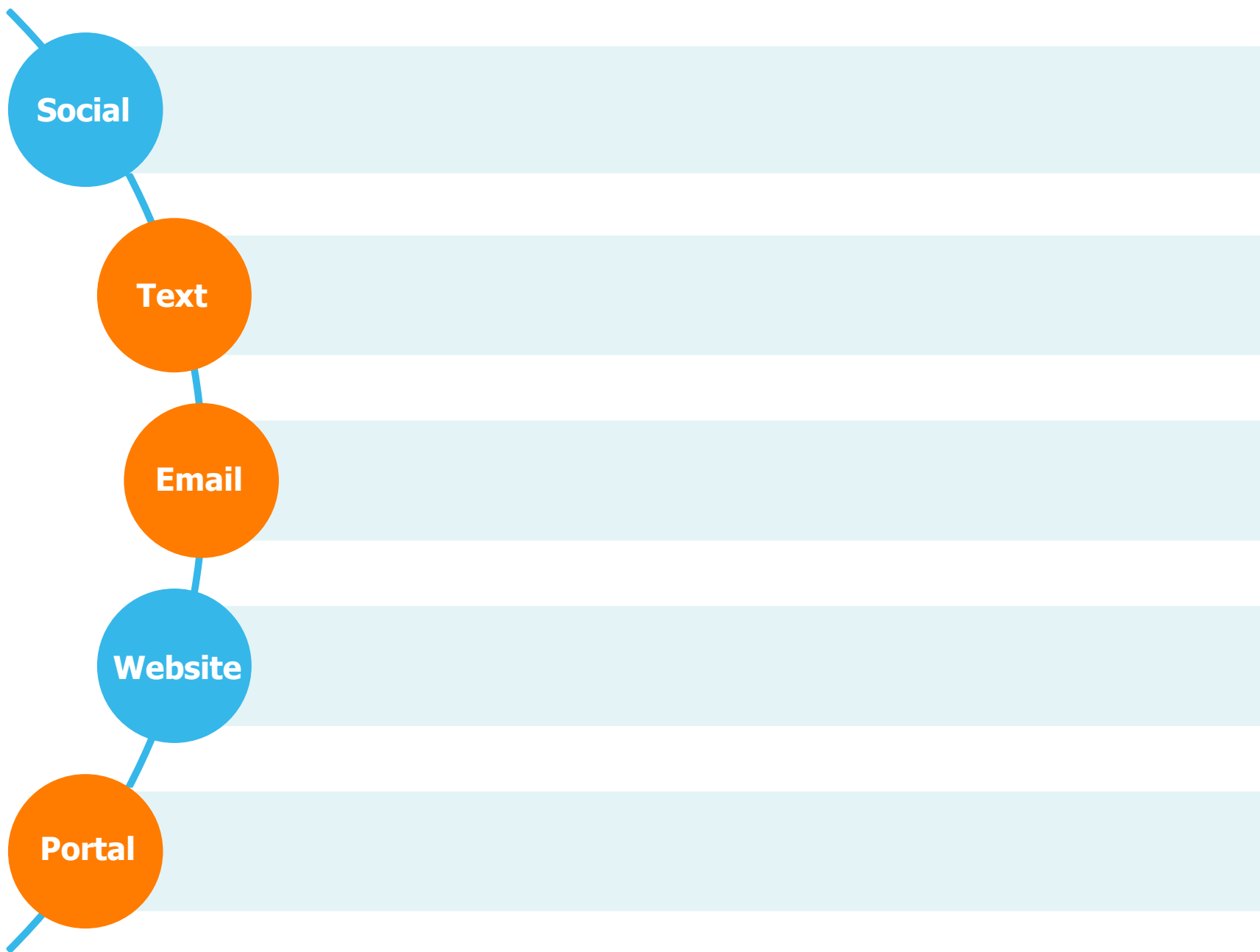
Missing Paperwork

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

Smart-phone
Calls or 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 >

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Thank you!

APPENDIX — MORE 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

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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

Website 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 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 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