

CASE STUDY

How Eastern Washington University Reinvented Communications with Texting

The overview.

Jens Larson, Director of Student Communications at Eastern Washington University (EWU), has specialized in crafting and analyzing marketing and enrollment strategies since 2011.

APRIL 2017

Jens and the team at EWU turned to texting with the hope of engaging students who were hard to reach otherwise (a plight to which we can all relate). Texting quickly simplified previously arduous processes, which allowed staff to be more efficient. Students and families were engaged and delighted with personal, guided experiences. After just one cycle, EWU saw a dramatic improvement in responses, engagement, and yield. In fact, enrollment metrics shifted almost day one; and since then they've continued to expand and refine their use of texting to achieve better outcomes and improve efficiencies.

The challenge.

- 20% of the class is made post May 1
- 40-50% of the class is comprised of transfer students
- Transfer student applications are generally submitted late in the cycle
- The number of candidates from feeder schools is perpetually declining
- Response rates were declining across all mediums

In communicating with students, one thing that has been made clear to Jens is that **students need direction**. They can often get confused and feel more comfortable texting for help.

Students just want
someone to talk to
who can help them
solve a problem.

“There’s so much value in being able to help a student who legitimately does not know what to do. The ability to message back and forth on a medium they’re comfortable on helps the student navigate the process and ultimately means retention for the institution.”

WHY STUDENTS PREFER TEXTING

- › Human interaction is appealing
- › Having a text answered unleashes dopamine in the brain
- › As opposed to a 1-on-1 meeting, a text conversation can last as long as needed

How does EWU engage with students?

EWU uses an engagement model when texting students, allowing for a more effective, genuine experience. Because messages are personal, timely, and relevant, the number of students who opt out has dramatically decreased.

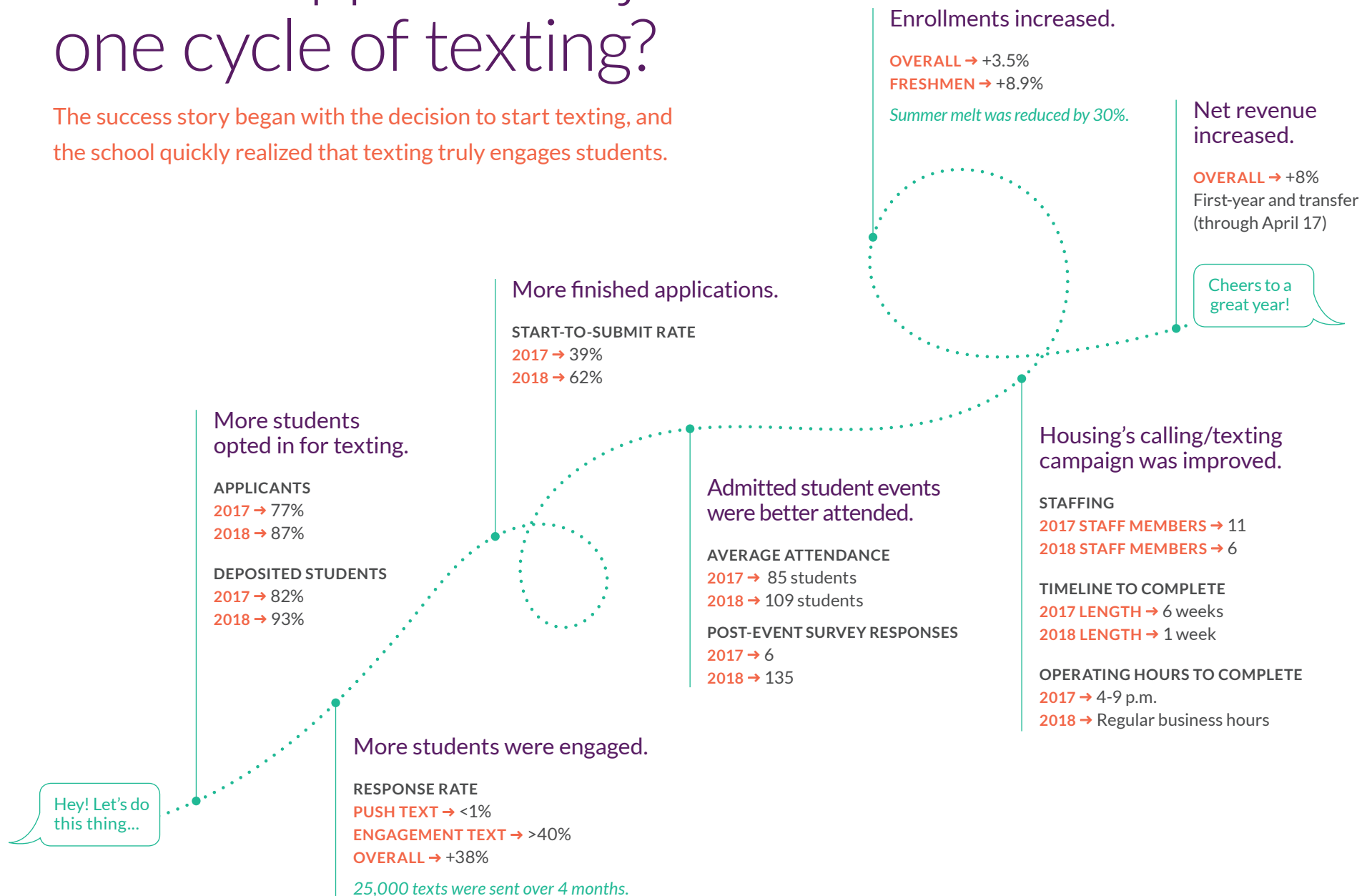
With texting, students feel comfortable saying, “Actually, I do not know what I have to do.”

WAYS IN WHICH EWU HAS FOUND THAT TEXTING HELPS TO UNCOVER MISCOMMUNICATION:

- › Nudges the many students who thought they submitted their transcript, but didn't
- › Reminds students who thought they signed up for an event, but didn't
- › Aids Pell-eligible and first-generation students through an often confusing financial aid process

What happened in just one cycle of texting?

The success story began with the decision to start texting, and the school quickly realized that texting truly engages students.



How important has texting been at EWU?

Jens says texting has worked so well within departments responsible for interacting with prospective students that, “Recruiters would revolt if we took texting away, and the housing team will never look back.” An opportunity exists to expand further into the student lifecycle, where texting could positively impact student success, graduation rates, and young alumni engagement.

When is texting more effective?

When it's part of an integrated communication flow plan. A good mix is key. While texting is highly effective, you shouldn't abandon other forms of communication such as emails and campus flyers. Use what has been working and supplement it with your texting platform.

Want to write
your own success story?

LEARN MORE AT MONGOOSERESEARCH.COM.