

AI-DRIVEN ENROLLMENT COMMS:

Efficiency, Empathy, and Engagement Blend in Higher Ed

mongoose 

INTRODUCTION:

Enrollment Communications in the Age of AI

Imagine a prospective student anxiously awaiting a response to an application question. Meanwhile, the admissions office is inundated with emails, texts, and calls. The disconnect is apparent: students crave immediate, personalized attention, but admissions teams are stretched too thin. What if this gap could be bridged effortlessly?

Today, many institutions try to cover the need for SMS messaging with students using their existing customer relationship management tools (CRM). But CRMs are purpose-built for a different communication style — and limited when it comes to tailoring communication to students' unique needs and providing valuable messaging insights. Enter AI for enrollment communications: a transformative relationship that connects the human element with technology to streamline communication.



“CRMs may bill themselves as all-in-one products, but our CRM texting system was just unusable. Our recruitment team was having fits because it was so clunky and couldn't do the things we needed.”

James Coker, Senior Associate Director of Admissions Operations, East Carolina University

“Research shows that students prefer instant communication channels like text messaging, and they expect a level of personalization that many institutions struggle to deliver,” says Matt Baker, Associate Vice President of Product Management at Mongoose, a leading AI-driven, two-way conversation intelligence platform for higher education institutions. “CRM tools simply aren't designed to build relationships, prioritize notifications, leverage data, or make the most of the staff's time. Institutions need a conversation intelligence platform for that.”

The potential benefits of AI for enrollment communications are substantial: faster response times, improved relationship-building, and better use of staff resources. But every new technology has a learning curve, and AI in higher education is no different.

This playbook explores how institutions apply AI to enrollment and student communications. We will illustrate what's possible when universities move beyond traditional messaging systems or CRMs to meet students where they are — on their phones. We'll also explore how institutions can adapt this technology to become more effective as they move along an evolving spectrum of AI maturity.

AI Meets Higher Education Enrollment

The future of higher education communication isn't just about sending more messages; it's about sending smarter, more meaningful ones. AI-powered platforms like Mongoose transform how universities engage with students, enabling them to scale personalized communication without sacrificing quality.

But how, exactly, does it achieve those outcomes?

Here's a glimpse of the benefits institutions are capturing from approaching text messaging with students with a conversation intelligence platform rather than an all-purpose CRM. →



Building Relationships

An AI tool like Mongoose enables personalized messaging at scale, allowing institutions to connect with students on a deeper level. For example, automated messaging tools can tailor responses based on student behavior and interests, fostering a sense of individual attention.

In fact, Jacksonville State University saw an average 28% increase in enrollment for undergraduate recruitment over three years.



Faster Response Times and Notifications

With Mongoose, universities and colleges can significantly reduce the time it takes to respond to student inquiries. This improves the student experience and increases engagement because students are more likely to write back.

Institutions using Mongoose see a 6X increase in student engagement compared to those not using texting tools and a 3X increase when integrated with CRMs.



Enhancing Staff Efficiency

AI-powered tools free up staff time by automating repetitive tasks such as responding to common inquiries or sending follow-up reminders. This allows staff to focus on more meaningful interactions and high-impact activities.

For example, Mongoose can automatically sort inquiries into categories, flagging high-priority messages for immediate attention while managing routine requests in the background.



“For budget reasons, we dropped our two-way texting software. But we brought it back as soon as we saw how hard it was to build relationships using CRM texting.”

Christopher Scheppner, Associate
Director of Admissions, St.
Bonaventure University



Leveraging Data

Advanced AI tools can analyze unstructured conversational data to extract valuable insights. This helps institutions understand student sentiment, identify trends, and make data-driven decisions to improve communication strategies.

For instance, Mongoose’s emotions and key topic analysis can highlight concerns students are hesitant to voice directly, allowing universities to address potential issues proactively.



Protecting Privacy and Compliance

Compliance with communication regulations is crucial to avoid being seen as spam and to protect institutional reputation. Mongoose’s focus on data privacy ensures that universities can use AI tools responsibly, protecting the institution and maintaining trust with students and families.

Text messaging forms the backbone of communication and awareness throughout a student's relationship with an institution, making it easier to hit different milestones. Consider these examples of touchpoints used by some institutions when they map out text messaging templates, from prospective students to new and current students to graduation students:

Application Nudges

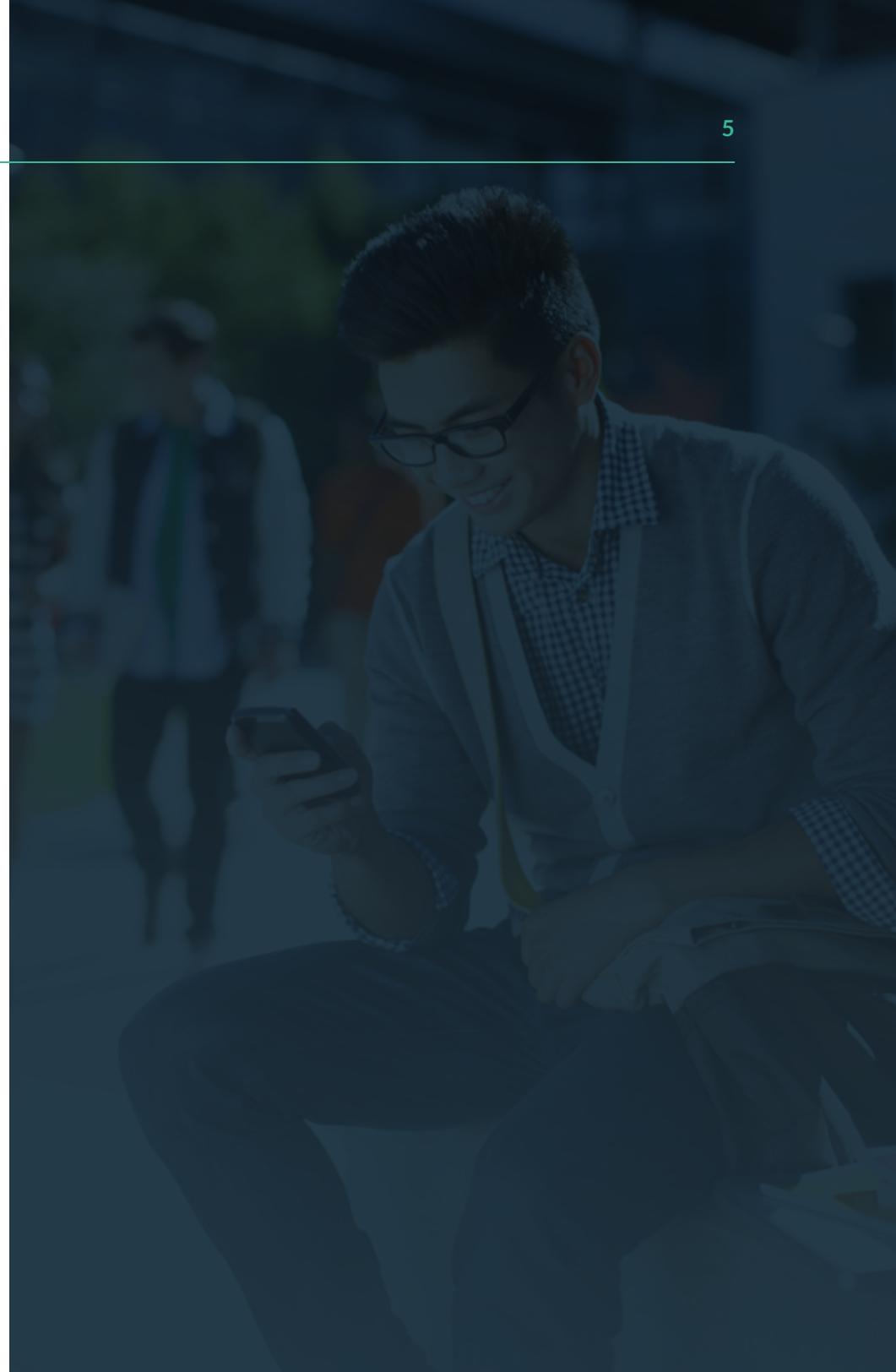
PUSH TO APPLY

Hi <FIRST NAME>, it's <STAFF FIRST NAME>, your admissions counselor at **(Mongoose U)**. We're accepting applications for **(Term)**. Please feel free to text me here or my colleagues at **(Group Inbox Number)** if you have any questions! Reply "STOP" to no longer receive these communications.

Financial Aid and Deposit Reminders

SCHOLARSHIP NOTIFICATION

Hi <FIRST NAME>, Congratulations, you may qualify for the **(Mongoose U) (Scholarship Name)**! Would you be interested in more information? Reply "STOP" to no longer receive these communications.



Campus Visit and Event Information

VISIT INQUIRIES

Hi <FIRST NAME> this is <STAFF FIRST NAME> from (Mongoose U) Admissions. We are hosting a campus tour for interested students on (Date/Time). Are you and your family interested in attending? Reply "STOP" to no longer receive these communications.

New Student Welcome Messages

ACCEPTED STUDENT CHECK-IN

Hi <FIRST NAME>! Hope midterms went well and you're enjoying break. I wanted to check in before the office closes on Friday and make sure you were aware of Scholars Weekend and reception dates, or see if you had any questions? I'm also going to be sending a full update email this week - keep an eye out!

Source: [Mongoose](#)

Ultimately, embracing conversation intelligence and AI is not just about keeping up with technological trends — it's about future-proofing the institution. Institutions that leverage AI to enhance engagement, improve efficiency, and deliver a more personalized student experience will be able to fall back on stronger, more engaged student relationships. Over time, it transforms how an institution connects with students, creating lifelong advocates who feel seen, heard, and supported throughout their academic journey.



KEEPING AN EYE ON COMPLIANCE

In the race to enhance student engagement with AI, remember that trust is earned, not automated. Missteps in AI-powered text communication can have serious consequences, from disengaged students to costly penalties that restrict an institution's ability to reach its audience.

A single misstep in following the rules can turn well-intentioned outreach into spam, jeopardizing the institution's credibility and communication channels. By choosing AI tools that prioritize security and compliance, institutions can build meaningful connections with students while safeguarding the institution's reputation.

AI Maturity Model for Higher Education

Different institutions have different capabilities when it comes to technology. As institutions explore AI to enhance enrollment and student communications, they move along a maturity curve and acclimate to the technology over time.

Baker notes that the maturity curve also reflects on the institution's recognition of the transformative potential in the technology itself:

"AI-mature organizations have a clear plan to integrate AI progressively across workflows, aiming to reshape processes to be more efficient and impactful, with a built-in flexibility to adapt as AI capabilities advance," Baker explains. "These institutions understand the power of AI to transform the complex, nuanced world of unstructured conversations into actionable insights that drive clarity, growth, and student understanding."

As institutions advance along the AI maturity curve, they move from basic automation to sophisticated analytics that drive strategic decision-making.

At the beginner level, AI's role is mainly about efficiency, streamlining communication workflows and reducing repetitive tasks. As institutions progress to the intermediate level, the focus shifts to enhancing student engagement through chatbots and real-time support. Finally, advanced institutions leverage predictive analytics to anticipate student needs and intervene before challenges arise. This progression improves communication and fosters a data-driven culture that supports long-term success.

Here's a look at the kinds of capabilities an institution can capture at different levels of maturity with AI technology like Mongoose:



Maturity Level: Early

EXAMPLE CAPABILITY

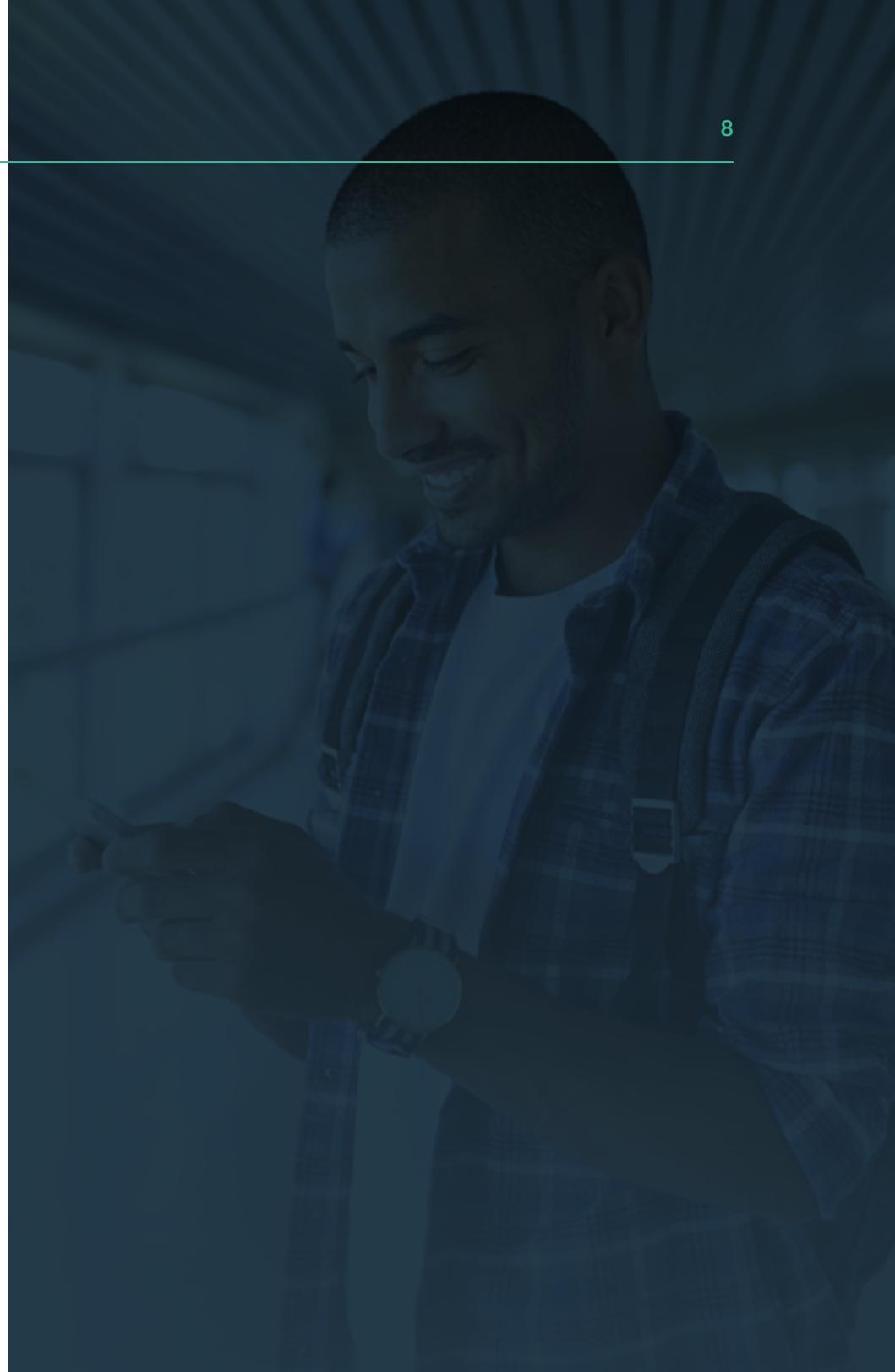
Suggested Replies and Template Creation: Program AI tools suggest responses based on previous conversations and automate template generation, speeding up communication workflows.

In this scenario, the AI tool interprets incoming texts and responds automatically if the student's intent is known with a high degree of certainty, while also notifying staff when a human needs to intervene.

EXAMPLE BENEFIT

Templates and suggested replies streamline communication, reduce repetitive typing, and improve response consistency, especially in non-English replies.

Staff have more time to personalize responses when needed, enhancing efficiency and productivity in messaging.





Maturity Level: Intermediate

EXAMPLE CAPABILITY

Automated Chatbots with Live Chat Integration:

Chatbots handle routine inquiries, while live chat allows staff to intervene as needed.

This hybrid model ensures that AI can quickly address common questions while more complex issues can be elevated to human assistance.

EXAMPLE BENEFIT

Combining automated chatbots with live agents enhances service availability and frees up time for staff to focus on more in-depth student engagement. The balance of automation and live support improves student satisfaction and allows for more personalized, high-impact interactions.



Maturity Level: Advanced

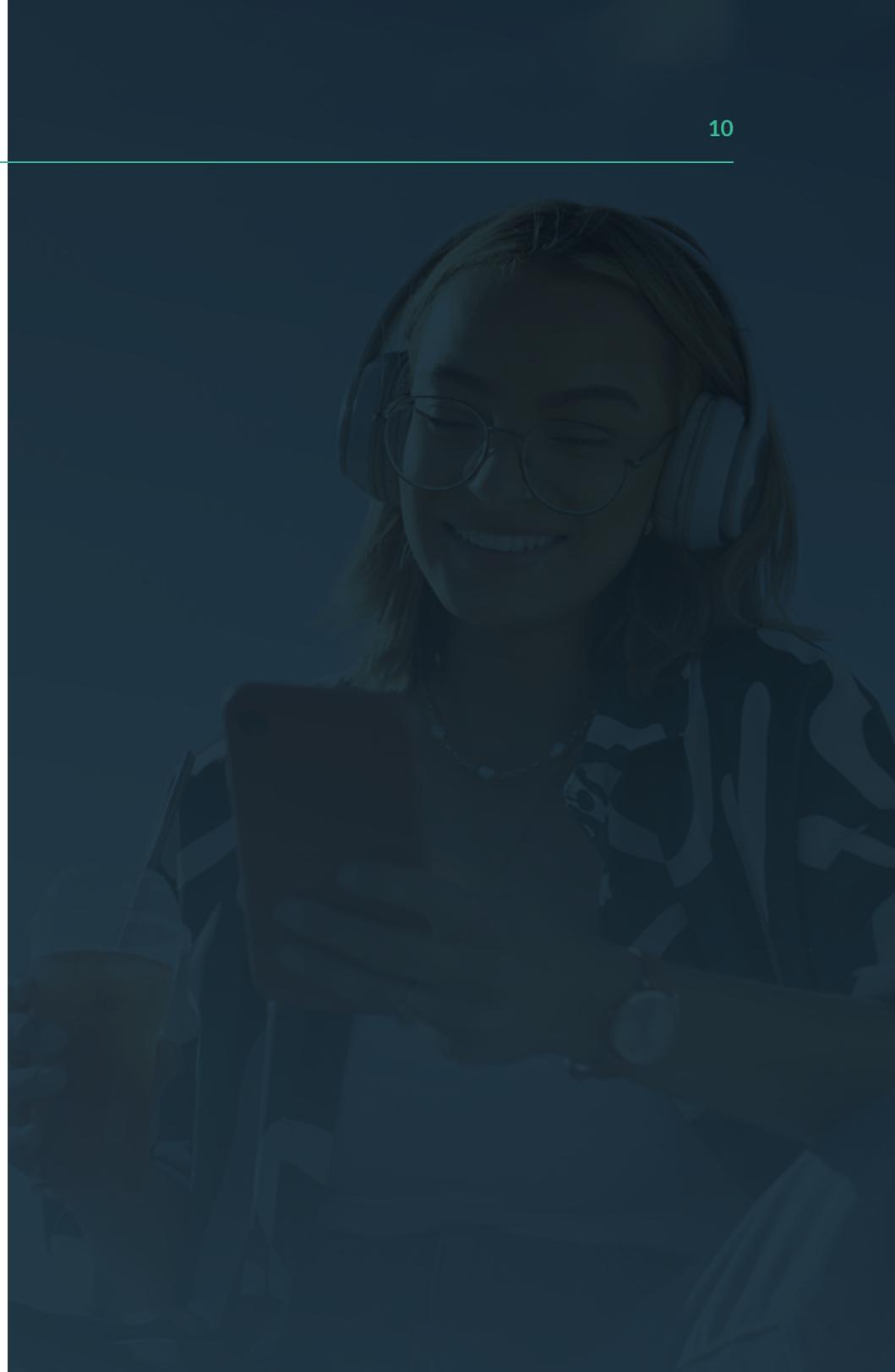
EXAMPLE CAPABILITY

Mining Unstructured Conversational Data for Insights: AI analyzes large volumes of unstructured conversation data to identify trends, assess sentiment, and surface actionable insights about student needs and satisfaction.

This information helps institutions identify specific areas for improvement in communications and services.

EXAMPLE BENEFIT

Advanced AI provides institutions a strategic advantage by uncovering deeper insights, enabling proactive and data-informed decision-making. Institutions can refine student engagement tactics based on real-time feedback and respond to emerging trends, ultimately improving student retention and experience.



“I have absolutely loved the efficiency that Mongoose has brought to our team when it comes to texting! We are able to track texting easier and messages integrate into the Slate timeline so other staff can see the conversations if they get an inbound call and I am not here. It helps us know what conversations are happening and when.

”

Being able to send mass personalized messages has also been a HUGE time saver. We have also been able to build strong relationships with our prospective students and meet them where they are: on their cell phones!”

Associate Director of Admissions, University of Mary Washington

Why go all the way with AI? Institutions progressing from beginner to advanced AI maturity gain substantial strategic advantages, including deeper insights into student needs, the ability to make proactive adjustments, and improved service quality.

Over time, these advantages build up to give an institution a database that can be used to draw better insights. Unstructured data from student conversations can be analyzed for patterns and trends, informing decisions that more accurately address student challenges and preferences.

This data-driven approach enhances retention by enabling timely interventions. It fosters a more responsive and supportive environment that aligns institutional actions with students' evolving needs, ultimately leading to better outcomes for students and the institution.



AI for Impact in Enrollment

AI for enrollment communications presents a remarkable opportunity for higher education institutions to redefine how they connect with students, parents, and alums. As student expectations for personalized, real-time engagement continue to rise, universities that harness the power of AI will be better positioned to meet these demands and create meaningful, lasting connections throughout the academic lifecycle.

AI is not about replacing an institution's dedicated admissions team or removing the human touch that defines its culture. Instead, it's about amplifying the team's capabilities. With AI taking care of routine responses and administrative tasks, staff can redirect their time and energy toward what truly matters – building genuine, impactful relationships with students.

The future belongs to those who can combine the efficiency of technology with the warmth of human interaction, creating a truly student-centered experience. Institutions that thoughtfully and responsibly embrace AI will make this vision a reality.

[CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION](#)



What's possible for your organization?

Mongoose is transforming higher education engagement as the pioneering Conversation Intelligence Platform (CIP), setting a new standard for how institutions connect and build trust with their communities. Using AI-driven insights, Mongoose decodes interactions with students, faculty, alumni, and families, enabling institutions to build trust and empathy through personalized connections. By turning unstructured conversation data into actionable intelligence, Mongoose empowers institutions to anticipate needs, engage at scale, and strengthen relationships throughout the student lifecycle. Trusted by more institutions to send more messages than anyone else, Mongoose ensures standards-aligned, compliant communication, fostering relationships that enhance student success, alumni bonds, and community ties—all through conversation-driven engagement. Today Mongoose empowers thousands of teams at a thousand Higher Education institutions to make 80 million connections a year.

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