

2010

# Report on the Use of Electronic Communications in College Recruiting

A Co-Sponsored Study Conducted By



Enrollment Management  
Product Solutions

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## Introduction

With the growth and introduction of numerous electronic communications channels, enrollment managers and higher education marketing managers are faced with an ever expanding set of variables to consider when planning their marketing and communications programs.

Not only are the volume of electronic channels growing, the way in which students use those channels and the content they desire is also changing.

Because budgets are finite, these new communications channels must be evaluated in the context of traditional marketing and communications methods that have proved successful. Are these new communications tools replacements for traditional methods such as direct mail, high school visits, college fairs or recruiting by telephone? Are they merely supplements to the marketing mix? How much budget should be allocated to these new tools at the expense of traditional methods? What content is best suited for these new tools? What frequency of use?

These are but a few of the issues that enrollment managers must now face in planning their communications programs.

This research is designed to provide senior management of colleges and universities with actionable data they can use to understand and react to the changes brought forth in an era of rapidly changing forms of electronic communication and the changing patterns of use of these tools by college-bound students.

## A Co-Sponsored Study

Public and private institutions throughout the United States participated in this co-sponsored study. Collectively, the participating institutions contributed over 12,000 names of students to be surveyed. The combined list included students from all 50 states, and households from a full range of socio-economic and demographic strata.

## About Longmire and Company

Longmire and Company, formed in 1986, has worked with over 300 public and private four-year institutions throughout the United States.

Our work centers on conversion by providing enrollment managers with the tools, information and products they need to grow and control enrollment.

If you need additional information or have questions, please contact Bob Longmire, President, Longmire and Company, Inc. at (913) 492-1265.

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## Methodology

The survey instrument (attached at the conclusion of this report) contained 13 questions and captured 86 data points relating to student use and preferences regarding new and existing electronic communications channels, as well as traditional print and personal forms of contact historically used by colleges.

In addition to the quantitative data captured by the survey, several survey questions captured qualitative data relating to what college-bound students perceive to be the most and least helpful methods of communication initiated by colleges, and what forms of contact (i.e. electronic, mail, personal) are best suited to specific types of content.

Analysis was conducted on differences in groups related to gender, ethnicity, ACT and SAT scores and geographic regions. No substantial differences in the data were notable by ethnicity or region. Differences were notable in gender and ACT and SAT scores. These differences are noted later in this report.

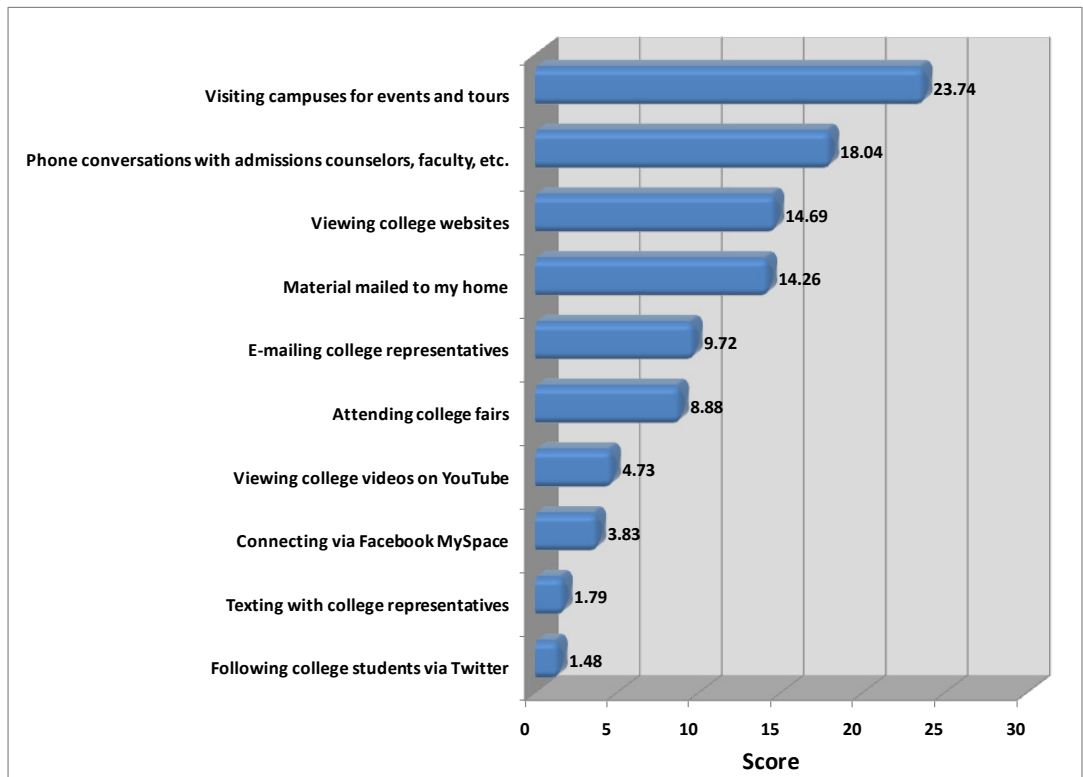
## Traditional methods hold strong.

Even with the advent and expansion of electronic communications channels, two traditional methods of contacting and communicating with students remain strong. Students were asked to rank order the relative influence of personal interaction, printed material mailed to their home, and electronic forms of communication in shaping their college selection decision. Electronic forms of communication are considered the weakest among the three. This finding in no way diminishes the value of electronic communications as a tool for recruiting and communicating information to prospective students.

However, the finding suggests that a student's intellectual and emotional commitment to a college is most likely to come from personal interaction and the material that arrives in their mailbox.



## Students rank usefulness of various channels of communication in getting information necessary to make college selection.



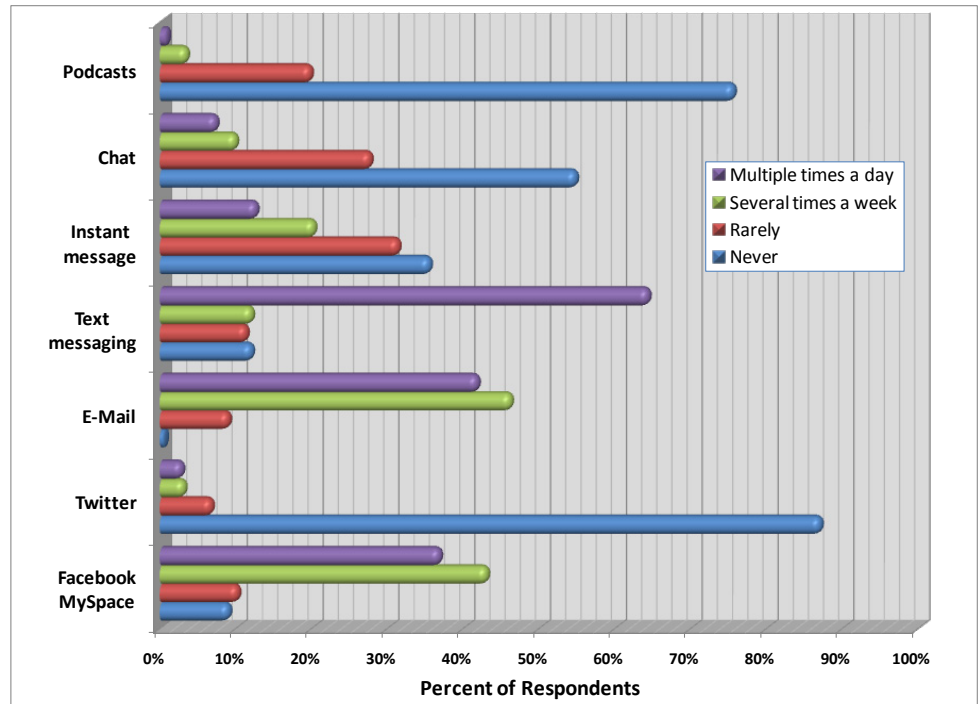
## Students stay connected through multiple channels.

The three most commonly used channels of communication by students involve text messaging, e-mail and Facebook/MySpace.

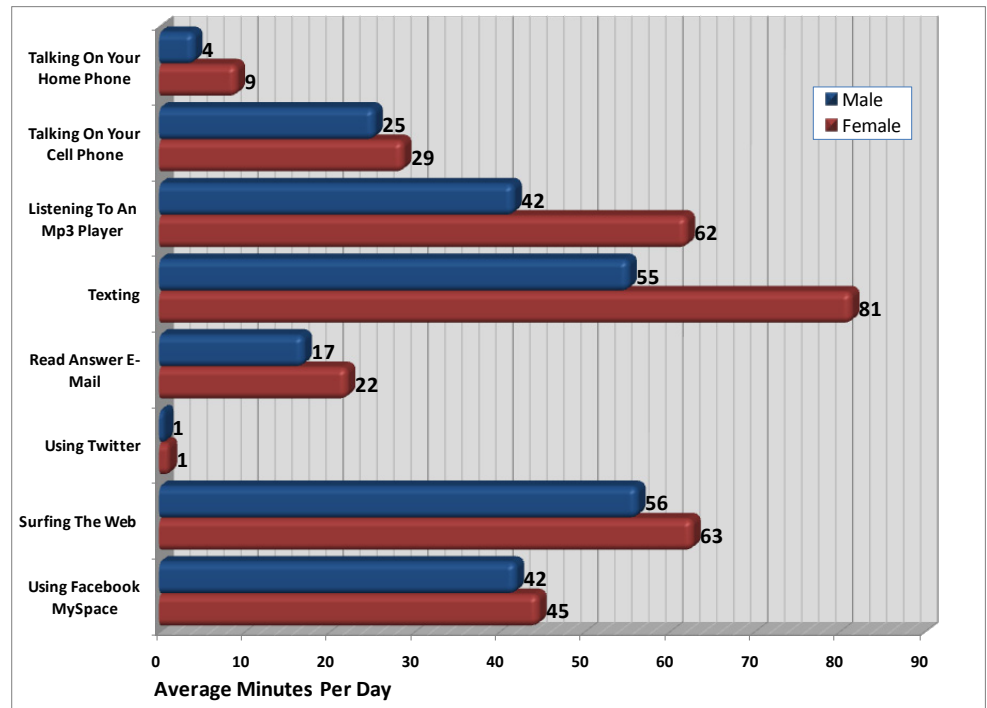
Three channels, as illustrated in the chart at top-right, are never used by half or more of the students surveyed. Twitter is one of these three, although this may change dramatically as awareness of Twitter grows.

Students are spending a sizable amount of time each day communicating through numerous channels, most notably texting (81 minutes per day). Females spend more time per day using these channels than do males.

### Frequency of use of various electronic communications channels



### Daily volume of channel usage (by gender)

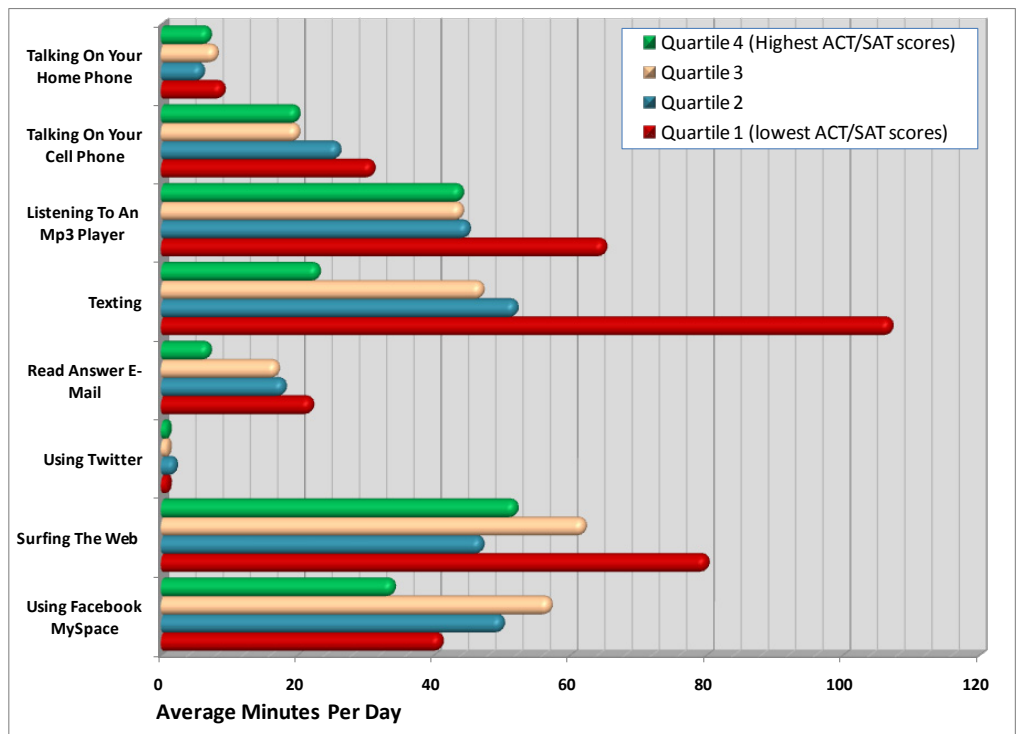


## High achievers differ in volume of usage.

High achieving students spend fewer minutes a day communicating electronically than do lesser achieving students. The difference in volume is striking. Using texting as an example, the lowest achieving students average over 100 minutes per day compared to just over 20 minutes per day among high achievers.

The channels used in greatest volume by high achievers include "surfing the web" and listening to an MP3 player.

### Daily volume of channel usage (by ACT/SAT score)



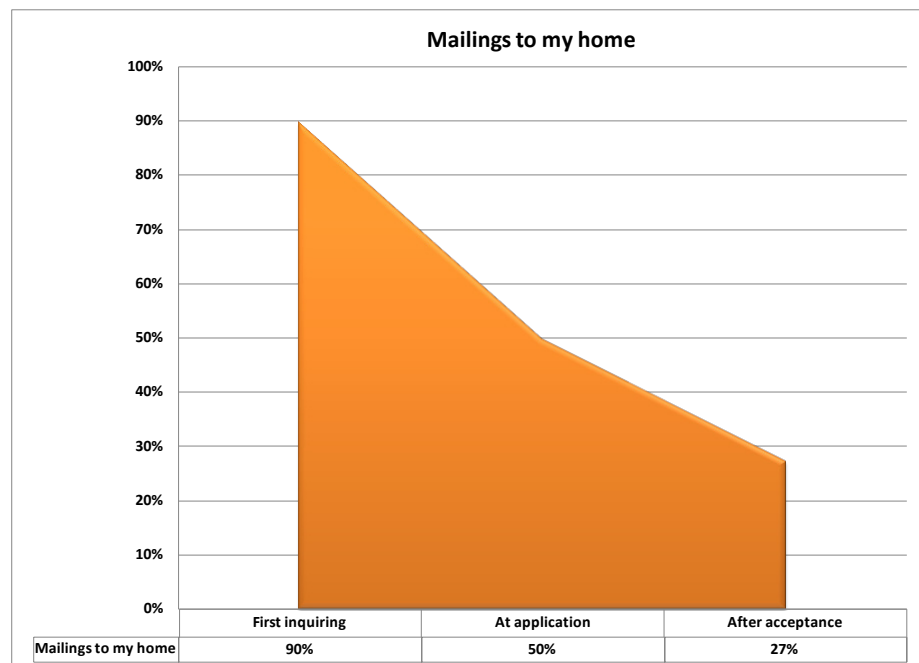
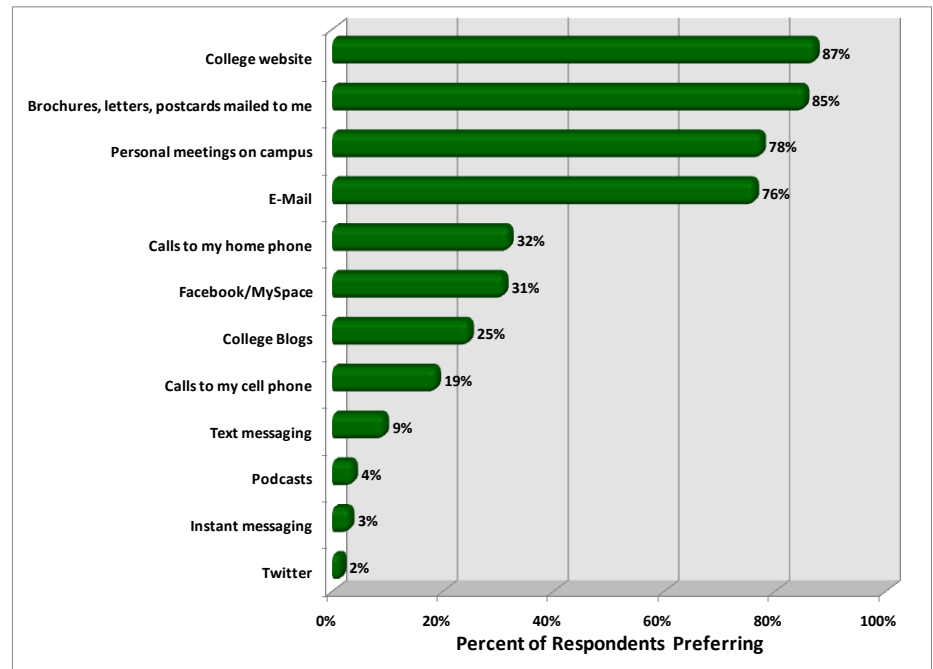
## Preferred methods of learning about colleges.

By a large measure, students most prefer to learn about colleges and interact with them through 1) the college's website, 2) brochures, letters and postcards mailed to their home, 3) by talking with someone at the college, and 4) communicating through e-mail.

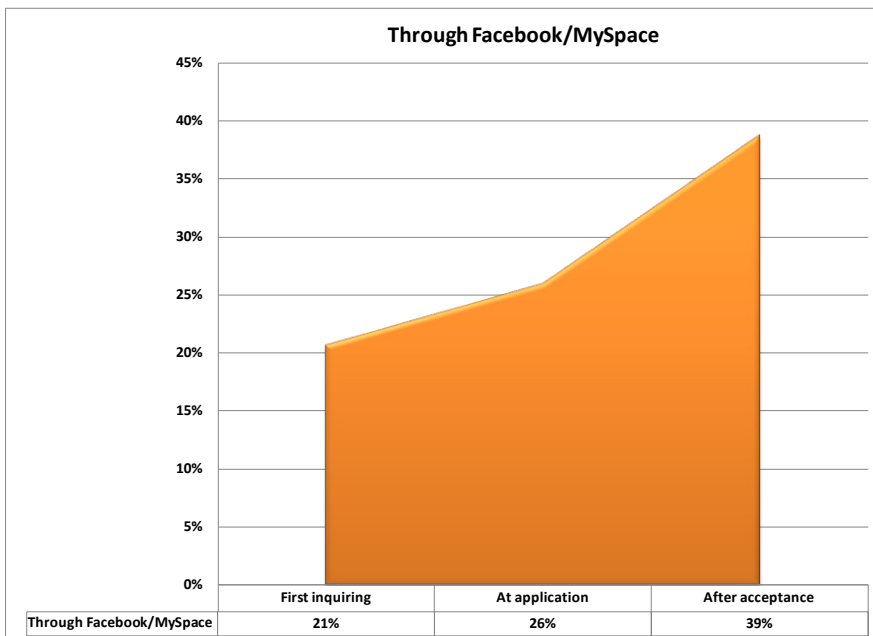
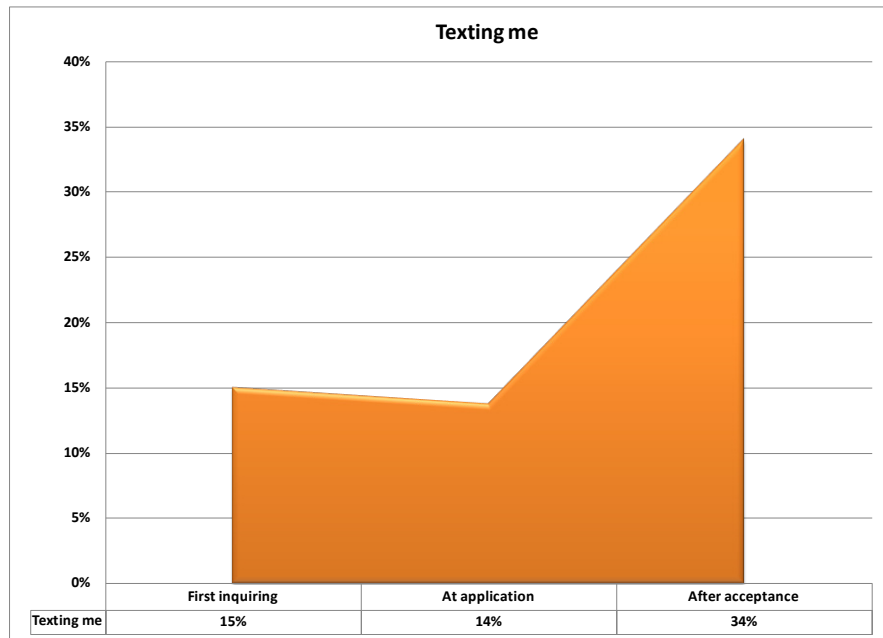
## Communicating at key stages of the college selection process.

As the chart at right (and on the following two pages) illustrates, students have distinct preferences for obtaining information and communicating with colleges depending upon where they are in the recruiting cycle. At right, it is clear that three-fourths of students do not wish to receive mailings after they have been accepted to a college.

### Preferred methods of learning about and interacting with colleges



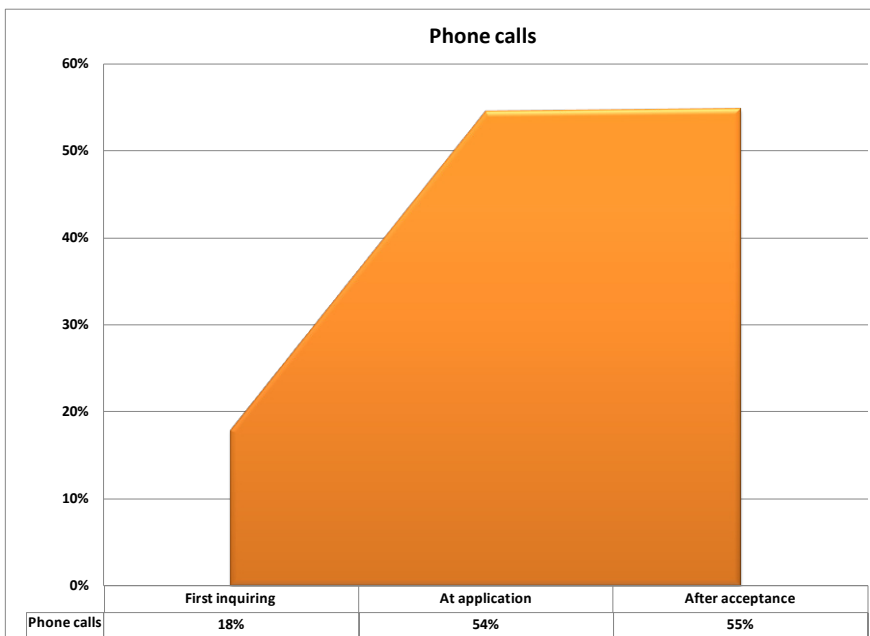
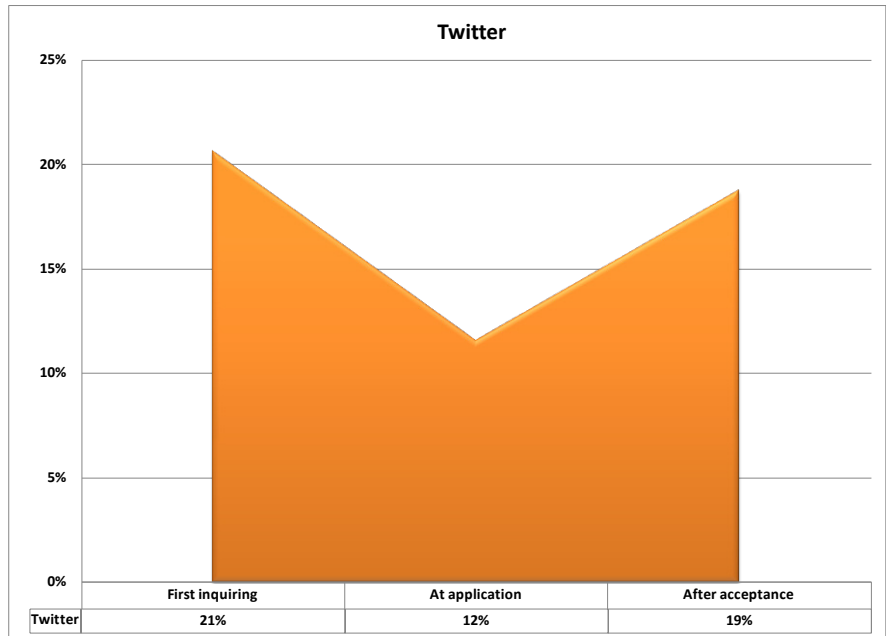
The volume of students who wish to receive texts from a college grows after they have been accepted. The qualitative data captured in the survey responses illustrate that students believe texting is a valuable method of obtaining information about events and deadlines.



Similar to texting, students see greater value in communicating with a college through Facebook and MySpace after they have been accepted to the institution. Again, they believe this channel of communication is well-suited to providing news and information about events at the college of their choice.



The relatively low percentages illustrated in the chart at right, and the shape of the chart may be indicative of a lack of awareness of Twitter among the students surveyed for this project. No more than 21% of students indicated the value of communicating through Twitter at any single point of the recruiting process.



Communicating through personal telephone calls ranks second only to direct mail as a valued method of communicating with a college at the application stage and after being accepted. This illustrates the lasting importance and value that students place on human contact relative to college selection and enrollment.

## Favored ways of receiving information from colleges.

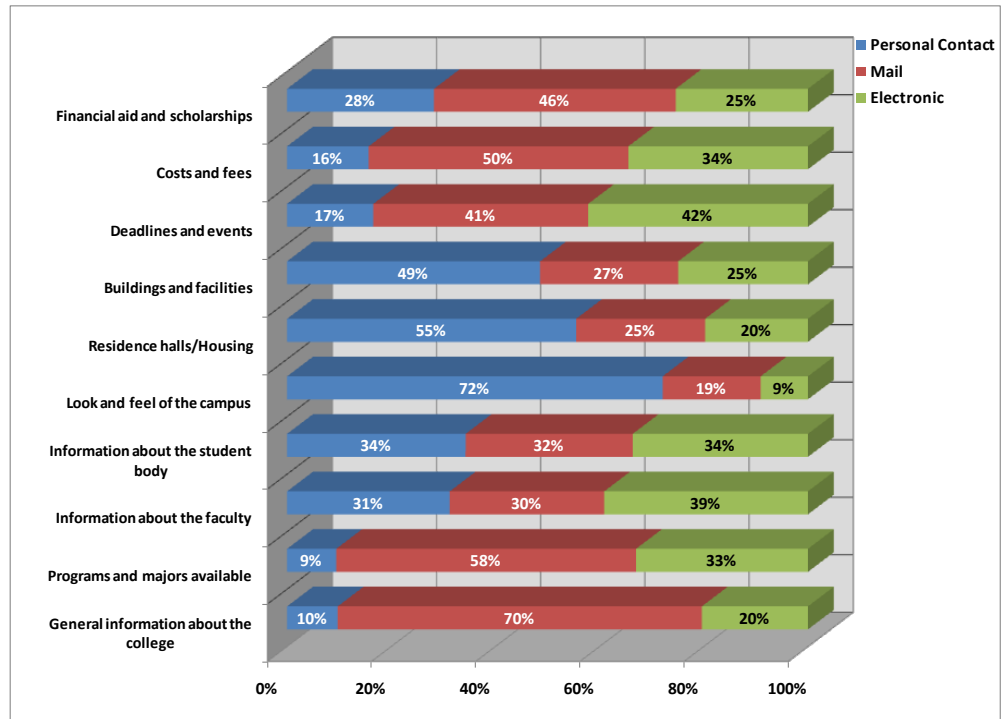
In the survey, respondents were presented with a list of topics that colleges commonly communicate to students. They were then asked to indicate the channel they most prefer to receive that type of information (e.g. electronically, through personal contact or through the mail).

Students have strong preferences for receiving certain types of information through specific channels. For example, as the chart at right illustrates, a sizable majority prefer to receive general information about a college through the mail. This holds true for information about programs and majors available.

To obtain a sense of the look and feel of the campus, nearly three-quarters prefer personal contact (i.e. visit to campus). This is also how they will assess residential housing and the buildings and facilities on campus.

The preferred method for obtaining information about costs, fees, scholarships and financial aid is through the mail.

**Preferred channel of delivery for various issues and topics**



Students prefer to receive information electronically on such topics as deadlines and events, other students attending a college, and faculty.

## Frequency of contact by communication channel.

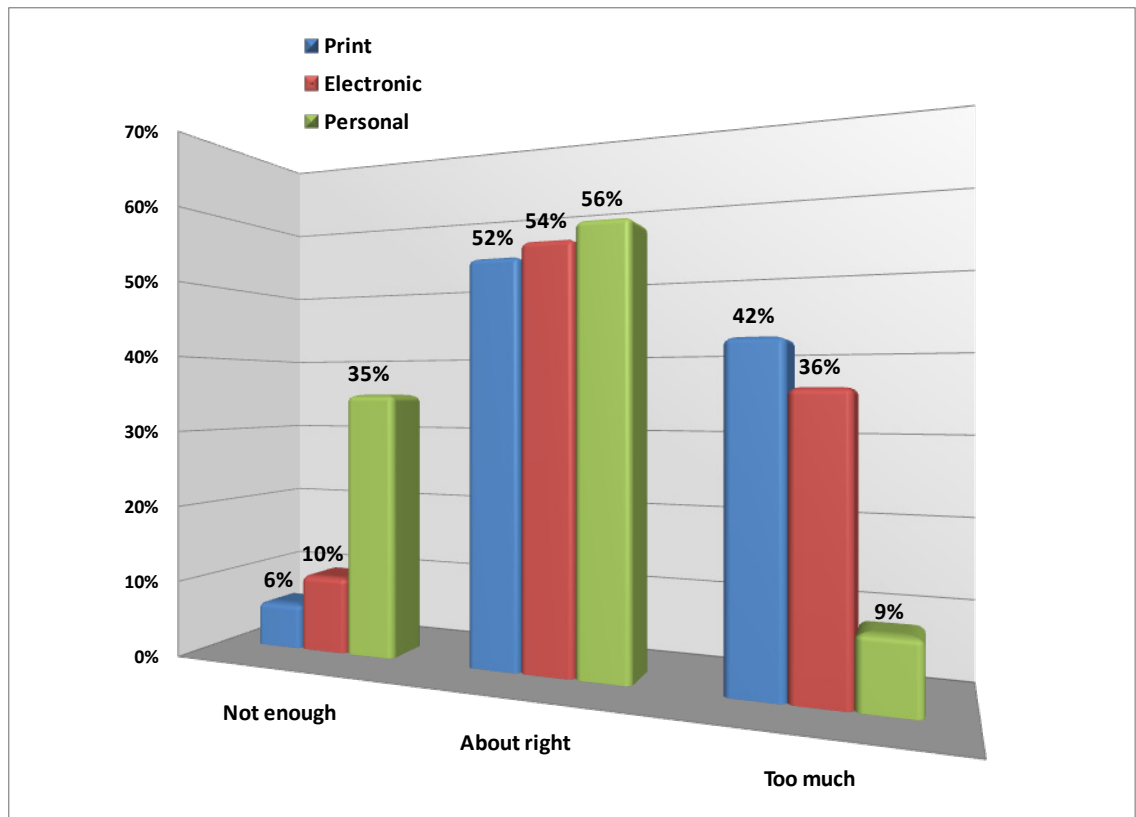
Students were asked to indicate whether they receive "too much", "not enough", or about the right volume of communications and contacts from colleges through various channels (i.e. print, electronic, and personal contacts).

Approximately half of the respondents indicate that they receive the right volume of contact through these three primary channels. However, 42% say that they receive too much

printed material in the mail. And over one-third say that they receive too many contacts electronically.

Interestingly, over one third say that they do not receive enough personal contact from colleges.

### Opinions about the frequency of contact by contact type

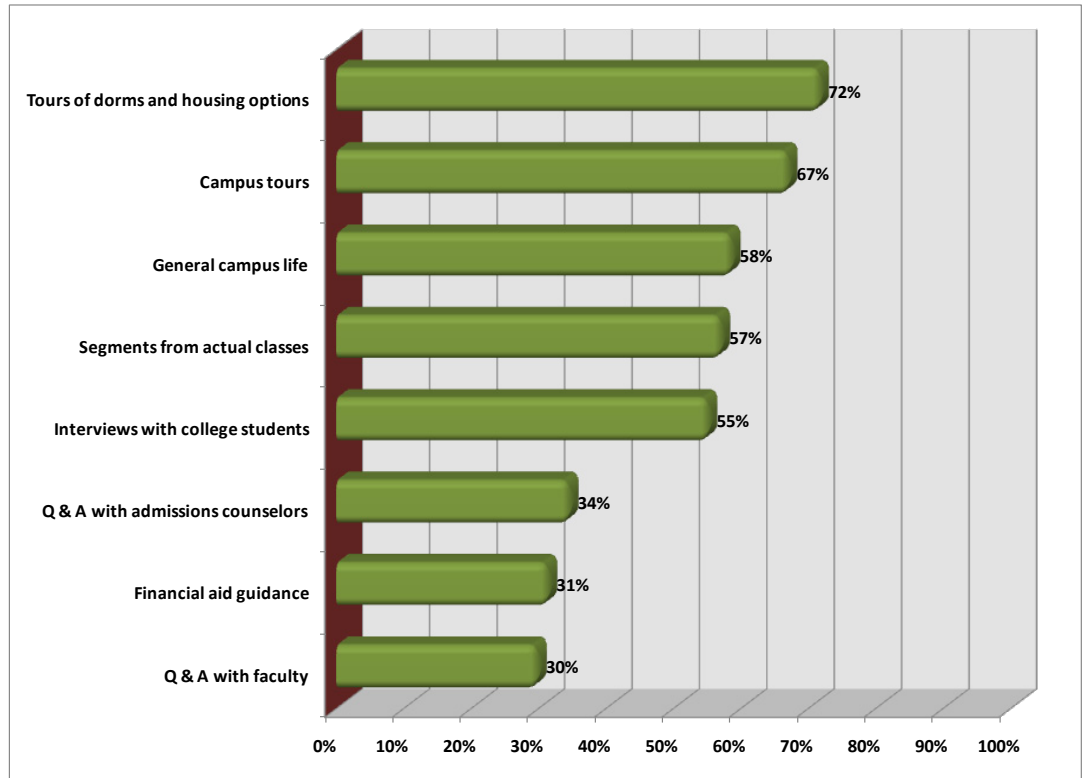


## YouTube and Twitter

YouTube appears to be an attractive option for students to experience the “look and feel” of a college.

Students favor viewing residence halls and housing options, getting a sense of campus life, touring the campus, hearing from existing college students, and seeing what college classes are like.

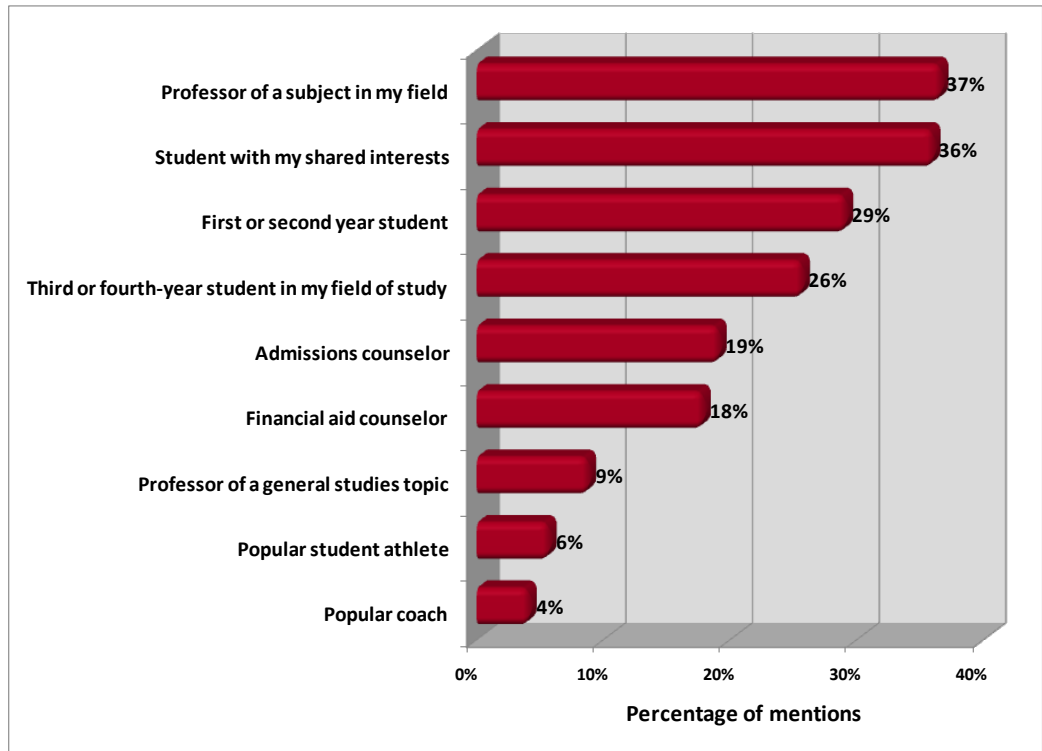
**Most desirable YouTube content about colleges**



## Who would prospective students follow on Twitter?

While Twitter has yet to gain widespread awareness among college-bound students, respondents to the survey did provide information about who at a college they might follow on Twitter if they used it.

The most commonly mentioned people to follow would be professors and current students.





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