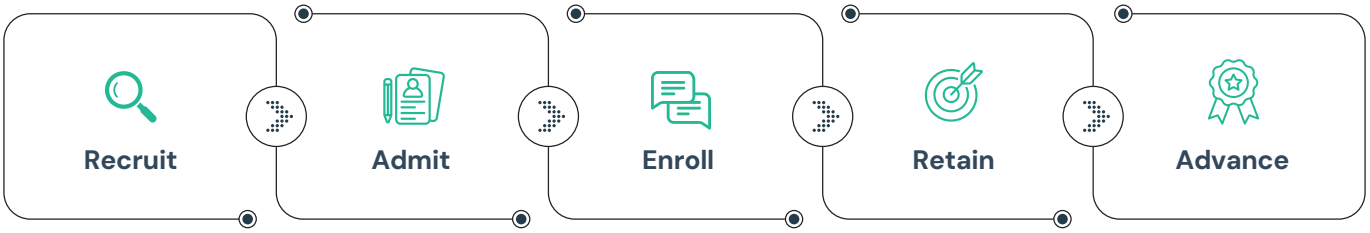
mongoose

The Texting Journey: From Application to Advancement

One student, one relationship, five stages, one platform.



A student's relationship with your institution doesn't start when they enroll, and it doesn't end when they graduate. It starts with an inquiry, and it can last a lifetime: through advising, through a hard semester, through the first gift they make as an alum. Most institutions talk to that student in five different voices: Admissions, Registration, Advising, Student Success, and Advancement, each with its own tools, tone, and inbox. The student never asked for five conversations. They expect one.

This guide follows that one relationship, stage by stage, and shows what changes when every department texts with one coordinated approach, on one platform.

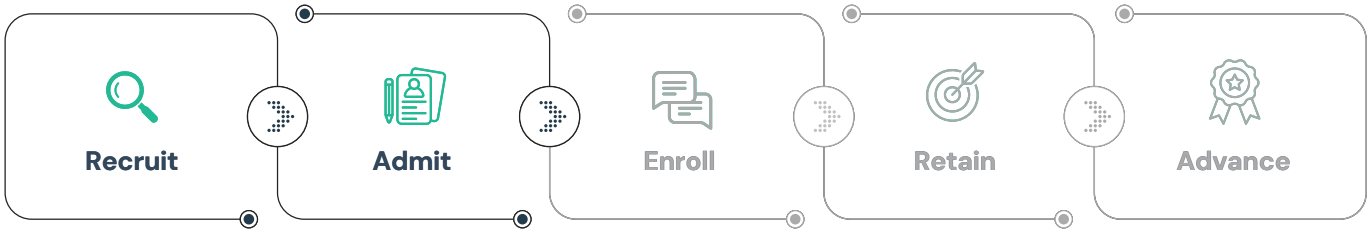
Watch the question change hands at every stage: "Should I apply?" becomes "Did my application go through?", then "How do I pay for this?", then "How do I get through this semester?", then, years later, "Does anyone here still know who I am?" Same student. Different office, different system, every time, unless the platform underneath stays the same.

Across three entry years and 304,913 first-year students at four-year institutions, Mongoose's 2026 State of Engagement in Higher Ed benchmark data found enrollment yield climbing from 3% for students with no texted conversations to 94% for students with 21 or more (a correlation, not proof of cause).

Recruit. Admit. Enroll. Retain. Advance. Five stages, one student. Here's what Mongoose does differently at each one, so students never feel like they're starting the conversation over.

Recruit & Admit

Where the Relationship Starts



The question changes even here, before any office handoff happens: "Is this school right for me?" becomes "Did I get in?" Same counselor, same inbox, no transfer yet, but it's the first version of the pattern this guide follows all the way through.

A prospective student fills out an inquiry form at 9:40 p.m., between homework and a shift at work. She won't check email again until the weekend. If the reply she gets is generic, or if it takes three days to arrive, she's already looking at two other schools by then.

For today's applicants, response speed is credibility. A counselor who answers in minutes, in a channel the student already lives in, is doing more to earn trust than any brochure or campus tour ever could.

Mongoose supports this stage with **Segments**, so outreach reaches the right group instead of everyone at once, and **Smart Messages** built for the exact moment a student is in: an inquiry that just came in, an application that's started but not finished. Connectors into **Slate** and **Ellucian Recruit** mean counselors work from the same student record their CRM already holds, not a second system they have to keep updated by hand. The **Inbox Assistant** works alongside them in the same inbox, handling routine questions so counselors can focus on the ones that need a real answer.

> **What triggers the message:** an inquiry submitted. An application started but not finished. A document still missing. The message goes out the moment it matters, not on a weekly batch schedule.

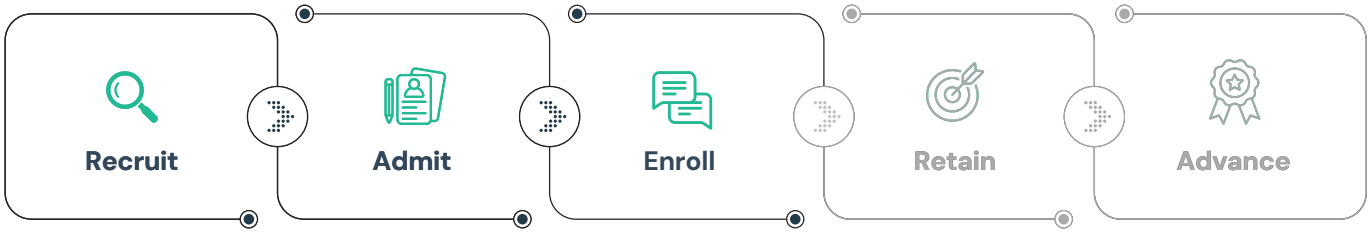
Notre Dame's online Data Science master's program used Mongoose to build a more personal, one-to-one outreach style with prospective students and grew enrollment by 84% over two years. Thomas More University's admissions team uses WhatsApp for international students and Text for domestic students, and fall preview day signups ran 30 students ahead of the same point last year.

At community and technical colleges, recruiting and admissions often run through the same team and the same inbox that also handles registration and advising. The handoff between Recruit and Admit described here can happen inside a single conversation instead of a transfer between offices.

Enrollment teams using Smart Messages see a 2.3X higher reply rate than standard outreach.

Enroll

The FAFSA, the Bill, and the Room



The question changes hands here: "Did I get in?" becomes "How do I pay for this, and where do I sleep?" Admissions hands off to Financial Aid, Student Accounts, and Housing, three offices the student has never dealt with before, all within the same few weeks.

An admitted student gets three different messages in one week: a financial aid portal update she doesn't fully understand, a housing deposit deadline from an office she's never contacted before, and a bill from the bursar that doesn't match either one. She doesn't know these come from three separate teams working off three separate systems. She just knows nothing lines up, and she's not sure who to ask.

Mongoose supports Enroll with Smart Messages built for melt prevention and orientation nudges, Shared Inboxes so more than one counselor can pick up the same conversation without losing the thread, and connectors into **Salesforce** and **Ellucian** so contact records and message activity stay in sync with your CRM. The **Inbox Assistant** also fields routine financial aid and housing questions here, before they ever reach a person.

> **What triggers the message:** a FAFSA that hasn't been filed as priority deadlines approach. A financial aid file still missing a document. A housing deposit or an enrollment verification step left incomplete. Each one fires from the office it actually belongs to, on a channel the student already uses and trusts.

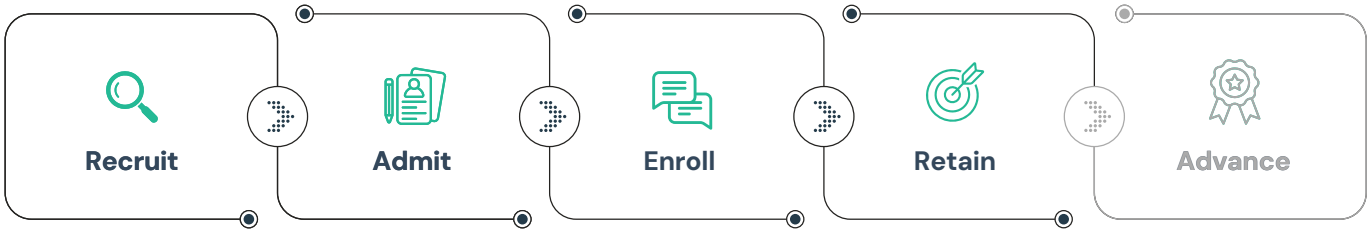
Belmont University moved from broad outreach to individualized, conversational messaging and now holds reply rates above 10%, using that engagement data to build predictive models of who's likely to enroll. Kettering University reversed a decade-long enrollment decline with a campus-wide texting strategy, including a 60% increase in undergraduate deposits in a single year.

In Mongoose's 2026 benchmark data for four-year institutions, FAFSA completion climbs from 4% for students with no texted conversations to 94% for students with 21 or more. The same pattern shows up for enrollment yield and campus visits. It's a correlation, not proof of cause, but the rate rises with each conversation-volume band.

At community and technical colleges, this same window often collapses into one topic instead of three: registration and holds, the single largest thing 2-year students message about, ahead of admissions, financial aid, or advising broadly. The three-office handoff four-year students navigate here is frequently a single conversation there instead.

Retain

The Stage Built to Prevent Quiet Departures



The question changes again: "How do I pay for this?" becomes "How do I get through this semester?" The office shifts from Financial Aid to an advisor or success coach, but the student still expects the institution to know what they just went through.

The quiet ones are the ones you worry about.

Nationally, a four-year public college advisor carries about 286 students; private institutions carry 234. Community and technical college advisors carry an average of 441, and more than 1,000 at many colleges. No one designed those ratios. They're what's left after enrollment grew faster than staffing did. At those caseloads, most students see an advisor once or twice a year, and the ones who need help between visits often can't get through in time.

The cost shows up in the data: 8.8% of Student Success conversations at four-year institutions go completely unanswered, and 9.1% of all conversations at community and technical colleges. For Mental Health conversations at four-year institutions, that climbs to 10.6%, the highest-friction topic in the four-year Student Success data.

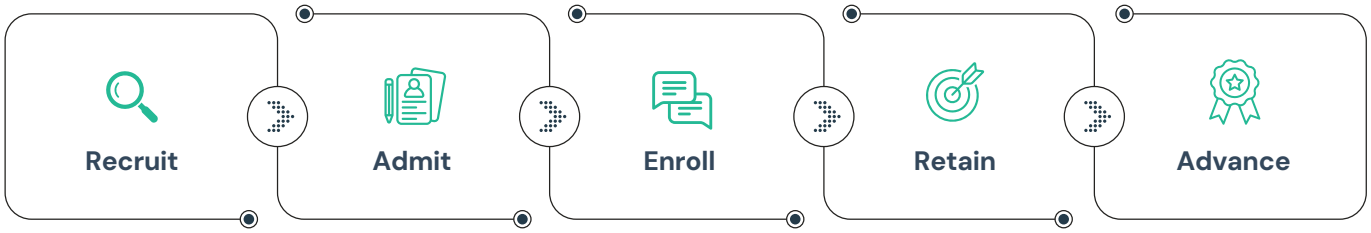
Mongoose supports Retain with the **Inbox Assistant**, live today, handling routine questions around the clock so staff can focus on the conversations that need judgment. Shared Inboxes and Team Templates keep a caseload from collapsing when one advisor is out, and early-alert-triggered **Smart Messages** reach a flagged student the same day, not the same semester.

> **What triggers the message:** a flag from the early-alert system. A missed appointment. A student who stopped responding after weeks of engagement. Retain is the stage most built around noticing before a student has to ask for help.

Defiance College cut no-show rates in half and reached full compliance on housing forms after moving from emails and voicemails to real-time texting and smart segmentation. South Texas College replaced outdated outreach tools with Mongoose Text and saw response rates climb into the 20 to 30% range along with a real drop in no-shows. At Montcalm Community College, a rural two-year institution in Michigan, consistent, coach-led texting became core to the success coaching strategy, carrying students from enrollment through graduation with high reply rates and low opt-outs.

Advance

The Relationship Doesn't End at Graduation



The question changes one last time, years later: every operational question this guide has covered so far gives way to one relational one, "Does anyone here still know who I am?"

The class of 2019 doesn't answer calls. They barely answer email.

Alumni and donor teams face their own version of the capacity gap, spread across a much larger population with far less contact frequency. Donors and younger alumni respond on their own phones, on their own schedule, not during business hours, and not through a channel built for a different generation.

Mongoose supports Advance with **Smart Messages** built for stewardship and Giving Day outreach, a connector into **Raiser's Edge NXT** so donor history travels with the conversation, and **WhatsApp** to reach international alumni and donors where text doesn't reliably land. Here, the **Inbox Assistant** handles routine donor and alumni questions, freeing staff for the conversations that call for a personal touch.

> **What triggers the message:** a lapsing donor before fiscal year-end. A pledge made but not yet fulfilled. An event RSVP that never came in. Advance runs on the same logic as every stage before it: reach out at the moment that matters, not on a fixed calendar.

The University of North Florida's Annual Giving team built a highly segmented Giving Day campaign, sent more than 40,000 targeted messages, and surpassed its donor goal. Carnegie Mellon University refreshed its alumni outreach approach and saw campaign responses increase by 170%.

Donor Stewardship conversations and thank-you messages carry a 92.9% appreciation rate, the highest of any topic across any team Mongoose tracked in 2026. Advancement also holds the lowest unresolved rate of any team, at 3.0%, proof that a smaller, more personal channel doesn't have to mean a slower one.*

** Mongoose's community college benchmark report doesn't include Advancement data, so the figures on this page reflect four-year institutions only.*

The Capacity Math: How AI Agents Change the Equation

Every stage in this guide eventually runs into the same wall: there have never been enough people, or enough hours in a staffed day, to reach every student personally. A public four-year admissions officer reviews roughly 1,035 applications a year. A community college advisor carries 441 students on average, and more than 1,000 at many colleges. Nearly a quarter of all four-year student messages, and close to half of all community college Web Chat conversations, arrive outside business hours: before 8 a.m., after 5 p.m., or on a weekend, when no one's there to answer.

This isn't a motivation problem. Your team didn't fail. The math never worked.

What's solving it today: the Inbox Assistant, Mongoose's Staff Assistant Agent, is live now at institutions handling routine inbound messages around the clock: a question about a deadline, a request for office hours, a status check that doesn't need a person's judgment to answer. It hands off to a human the moment a conversation needs one. Same team. More capacity. Better outcomes.

What's coming: Mongoose is also building a second category, Outcome Agents, purpose-built to drive a specific result rather than just answer a question: the Application Completion Agent, the Enrollment Yield Agent, and the Student Retention Agent. These are currently in development, with release timing to be announced. Once they arrive, the goal is the same as what the Inbox Assistant already delivers: staff time spent on conversations that need a person, not the ones that don't.

None of this works if every department is still running its own tools and its own playbook. At SUNY Dutchess Community College, four departments, Admissions, Advising, Student Activities, and Financial Services, moved onto one platform. Admissions message volume grew 133% while opt-outs fell, and Advising reply rates rose from 6.5% to 7%.

As Brian Sondey, Associate Vice President for Enrollment and Student Success at SUNY Dutchess Community College, put it, Mongoose helps the college "create a spiderweb of support," reaching students with empathy and relevance rather than just information.

A student doesn't experience your institution as five departments. They experience one relationship, and Mongoose works best when every stage in this guide runs on the same platform and the same CRM data instead of starting from scratch.

Chattahoochee Technical College's relationship with Mongoose has grown across four teams over several years: Enrollment and Admissions in 2019, Dual Enrollment and Dual Achievement in 2023, and Financial Aid in 2025. One two-year campus, four departments, built up gradually rather than all at once.

Want to go deeper? Ask your Mongoose contact about the companion guides built for exactly that: what the first 90 days with an AI Agent actually looks like, and how to build the ROI case for a capacity-constrained budget.

One Relationship, the Whole Way Through

Recruit. Admit. Enroll. Retain. Advance. The data says the same thing at every stage: Students who talk to their institution more stay engaged longer, and the ones who go on to give, give more. The climb from 3% to 94% in enrollment yield held across three entry years and both public and private institutions. It tracks with what happens when the conversation never has to restart.

Bringing Your Team Along

If you're the one person sold on this so far, the next hurdle usually isn't Mongoose. It's IT asking about single sign-on, finance asking what this replaces, or a peer department wondering why they need one more system to check. None of those are dead ends. Mongoose runs through the login IT already manages. Finance can compare it against the real cost of manual outreach and missed messages. And a peer department isn't being asked to learn a new system, just to join the platform and CRM connection the rest of your institution already uses.

You don't have to carry every answer alone: ask your Mongoose contact for "How to Talk to Different Departments (or Your Boss) About Mongoose," a resource built for exactly this conversation, and let the results your own team has already seen do the rest.

Book a Demo

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For higher-ed institutions that must engage more students than they can ever reach by hiring, Mongoose is the AI Engagement Platform that runs two-way student conversations across Text, WhatsApp, and Web Chat, and extends them with AI Agents that take action. Unlike a CRM, which stores records, Mongoose is where student relationships get built and moved forward, with humans always in control.

More than 1,000 higher-ed institutions, from community colleges to large public universities, use Mongoose to raise enrollment, retention, and the student experience without growing staff. Mongoose sits above the institution's CRM and SIS as the engagement layer, connecting to the systems institutions already run rather than replacing them.