Two successful approaches to deploying chatbots that support students

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#FYE20
Co-presenters, and chatbot initiative managers

C. Lindsey Fifield
Project Director – Chatbot, Office of Student Success
Georgia State University

Crystal Miller
Associate Director of Student Success Innovations, Office of the University Provost
Arizona State University
Signal Through the Noise: Reaching Students of Generation Z

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What is a Chatbot?

- AI enhanced
- Conversational messaging
- Text based platform
Chatbot Structure

Knowledge Base
- Student-Centric
- Robust and Learning
- 24/7 access
- Student Guide
- Friendly
- Relatable

Campaigns
- Targeted
- Strategic
- Timely
- High Impact
- Student Engagement
- Coordinated
Meet students where they are to get them where they’re going

Personalization
Relationship Building
Instant Fulfillment
Anytime, Anywhere
Chatbot Deployment

- Tactical
  - Data Driven
  - Focus on Action

- Relational
  - Experience Driven
  - Focus on Engagement
Text nudges have been shown to increase matriculation rates by up to 11% points.
Meet Pounce

Reminders
Guided Tutorials
Surveys
Targeted Human Support

We’re doing it thestateway
185,211 total messages (RCT)

1.5 million
Currently

90% of students engaged

63% of students engaged in 3 or more sessions
Pounce Admission Results

Summer Melt

Fall 2012: 11%
Fall 2013: 13%
Fall 2014: 16%
Fall 2015: 18%
Fall 2016: 14%
Fall 2017: 14%
Fall 2018: 12%

Pounce Introduced

We’re doing it #thestateway
“I love Pounce. It’s not pushy.”

“I’d rather get a text than an email.”

“I liked how convenient it was. I didn’t have to look through my emails, I just went to my text.”

“The language doesn’t sound like a machine. It’s chill.”

“I like how it was personalized to me.”
Barriers to Retention

Complete your FAFSA!

PAY your balance!

REGISTER for classes!

See your ADVISOR!

Apply for GRADUATION!

We’re doing it #thestateway
Campus Collaboration

We’re doing it #thestateway
Retention Chatbot Campaigns

Hey [First Name]! Looks like your immunization hold is preventing you from registering this semester. 😞
Having trouble taking care of your immunizations? (REPLY Y/N)

Y  Yes

Good News: 🎉 GSU Student Health Services has options where you can pay little to zero cost for your immunizations! Call ☎️ 678-891-3866 in you're interested or have any ?s.

N  No

Great! The registration deadline is 01/17, make sure to submit proof of immunization by then. 🎈 FYI: GSU Student Health Services has options where you can pay little to zero cost for your immunizations! Call ☎️ 678-891-3866 in you're interested or have any ?'s.

Hey [First Name]! Looks like you still have a balance 🙀 & we don't want your classes to be dropped. 😞 Check PAWS to see your balance. Do you still plan to take classes this Fall 🍁? (Y/N)

Y  Yes

Great! 🎉 FYI - If your aid doesn't cover your balance due & you’re not ready to pay in full by the deadline, you can sign up for a payment plan. Visit bit.ly/gsu_pay_plan

N  No

That’s okay. 😞 Make sure to log in to PAWS & drop your classes ASAP so you won’t be charged. 🙀
Differences between treatment and control group are shown in parentheses.

- Resolving Holds (22%)
- Reducing withdrawals for students with a balance (50%)
- Engaging with Financial Aid (33%)
- Early Registration (10%)

Retention Bot
RCT
Outcomes
Retention Chatbot Impact

**Treatment:** 28% Reduction  
**Control:** 7% Reduction

**Treatment:** 31% Reduction  
**Control:** 23% Reduction
Driving student success, retention, graduation and lifelong commitment to ASU
Sunny, ASU’s Chatbot

Provides 24/7 service and connection to first year students through their preferred communication channel
Goal

Improve the service experience for first year students by eliminating time-consuming, transactional conversations.
Sunny’s introduction

- First introduced to prospective students in February 2018
- Assists students through the admission process to course enrollment
- Continued to engage and support new first-year students, starting in Fall 2018

“Sunny really helped me with a number of issues. Because of her I am enrolled in classes today. She helped me set up an appt with my advisor! She also kept reminding me to send in transcripts and it was super helpful. I thought I had run out of time to go to school this semester but Sunny helped me think it was possible.” - Fall 2018 first-year student
Data-driven approach

Leverage predictive analytics and retention indicators to develop highly relevant campaigns targeting students with risk factors for a just-in-time connection

Examples:
- Academic status reports submitted by faculty about class attendance, homework and exam performance
- Civitas persistence outlook, check for a drop in the last week
- eAdvisor off track for their major
- Academic warning/probation

“Sunny was always chiming in around the time I would be wondering about something so it was helpful and made my year improve.” - Fall 2018 first-year student
Outreach campaigns

• Regular check-ins inquire how a student is feeling
• Provides students with encouragement
• Reminds students of relevant resources

Examples:
• Support during midterms and finals
• Resource series on advising, tutoring, career services, health & wellness
• Messages to normalize and support students with a retention indicator
Sunny engagement

~36,000
First year students reached F18 – S20

1.8 million
Outgoing text messages

32%
Average monthly student engagement; 40% interactive campaign engagement

59
Increased outreach campaigns from 10 in F18 to 59 in F19

2,550
Knowledge base responses

30,000 messages triaged

114,000 messages received from students

Sunny handled 74% of student’s messages without human intervention

840 estimated hours of staff time saved in 2019
Students are getting automated answers that used to be handled through emails, phone calls, or in-person appointments by ASU staff.
Student satisfaction

Students entering their second year at ASU were surveyed in August 2019 to get their opinions on Sunny. **50% of respondents found Sunny to be helpful, friendly and informational.**

We recently checked in with those completing their first term in Fall 2019, and found that **78% of respondents are happy with Sunny.**

Student feedback shows a connection to Sunny:

- *She helped me out and made me laugh*
- *Sunny made me feel connected to ASU*
- *Sunny texted me when no one else would*
- *She reminded me about how special I am :)*
- *Asked how things were going when I felt new and awkward*
- *It's nice to know that I could contact someone if I had any issues*
- *I wasn't so lonely all the time, it was almost as if I was talking to another human*
The bottom line on chatbots

ASU is continuing to invest in chatbot as a communication and service tool for prospective and current students.

When added to a portfolio of communication channels, chatbots can:

- Save staff time
- Create virtual connections
- Enhance person-to-person conversations
- Nudge students to take critical steps forward in their academic career
Coordinated strategy

• Deploy chatbots with a coordinated strategy
• Align with the institution’s brand
• Place student needs at the center
Personalized approach

Be **timely** and **personalized** through **segmentation**. Effective outreach focuses on:
- Belonging
- Engagement
- Student Success

**Use student’s (preferred) first name** at the beginning of every new message to personalize and so that the student knows the message is meant just for them.
Keep it casual

When texting with students, make sure to add some fun to the mix!

- Develop a conversational tone
- Use emojis and gifs
Chatbot Expectation Tips:

**DO** – Be upfront with students about what the bot CAN do

I'm Sunny, your trusty virtual assistant. I'm here to help you navigate your way through your college experience here at Arizona State University.

**DON'T** – Pretend it’s a human

I'm so sorry. I'm just a robot and sometimes I get confused. I can get a human to help!
Chatbot Expectation Tips:

**DO** – Escalate to staff if needed

Hmm, I don't have an answer to that right now. A human will review your message to help me reply as needed. You can also rephrase, and I'll try again.

**DON’T** – Expect the bot to answer every question

Sorry if I wasn't helping. If there's something I'm not getting, there are humans who check on me to catch my mistakes.
Chatbot Take-Aways

Coordinate your **Campus Strategy**
Think…Total Student Experience

Keep the messaging **Relevant**
Natural voice and intention

Make it **Personal**
Personalization = quality interactions
Thank you! Any questions?

Connect with us here or online if you think of anymore questions.

C. Lindsey Fifield, Georgia State University
cfifield@gsu.edu

Crystal Miller, Arizona State University
crystal.miller@asu.edu
Please remember to submit your evaluation on Guidebook!

#FYE20