



CASE STUDY

Texting for a Two-Year School

A Case Study from Rosedale Technical College

Overview

David Detar is Rosedale Technical College's Director of Student Enrollment. He has been with Rosedale Tech for five years and oversees the Educational Outreach, Admissions, and Financial Aid teams. Dave and his teams craft recruitment, engagement, and retention communication strategies for Rosedale Tech.

Rosedale Technical College is ranked on Forbes' list of Top 25 Two-Year Trade Schools.

"Rosedale Technical College is a different kind of private, non-profit college. We prepare our students for careers in high-demand fields with live work and hands-on training. Our students learn in a friendly, family-style environment from knowledgeable instructors. An associate degree in specialized technology can be earned in just 16 months."

- Dave Detar, Director of Student Enrollment at RTC

What makes Rosedale Tech different?

Rosedale Tech students are trained in trades-based skills, including: Automotive and Diesel Mechanics, Electrical, HVAC, Welding and Industrial Maintenance Technicians, Class A Truck Drivers.

Rosedale differs from traditional four-year schools in a variety of ways:

- Key programs offer new class starts every 8 weeks (Commercial Driving License every 5 weeks) rather than only offering a Spring and Fall class start
- 70% of student population is adult (out of high school for a few years)
- 30% are high school (starting school within 2-6 months of their high school graduation)
- 10-15% of student population are service veterans
- 8-12% of student population are attending with state or federal agency assistance
- Currently, only 4-5% of student population is female.*

**The female demographic is under-represented in the trades. Rosedale is working diligently to change that and created a Rosedale Riveters group to network and discuss ways to overcome obstacles and challenges in the industry.*

Why texting?

For Rosedale, email is not a successful contact strategy.

Phone calls prove difficult because students don't answer calls from telephone numbers they don't recognize and frequently have no accessible voicemail.

Texting has proven to be the most reliably consistent mechanism for reaching students.

The first steps to incorporating texting were tricky. Rosedale did not have a robust Student Information System and there was not an easy mechanism in place to contact prospective students. Each admissions rep was assigned a mobile telephone. This was effective for texting an individual student but not hundreds or thousands of students. Also, without entering contacts associated with telephone numbers, replies came in anonymously.

This process was overly complicated and often led to errors. Texting multiple students at a time was almost impossible. Finally, the availability of admissions reps did not always match up with the best times to text (and reach) prospective students.

Ultimately, it was apparent that a texting platform was needed.

The platform choice was clear

“With Cadence, the students have an easy way to communicate with the staff at Rosedale Technical College. It helps build and maintain relationships with the students and makes them feel more at ease while attending school.”

- Jennifer Cox, Executive Assistant at RTC

The Rosedale staff considered several factors when choosing a texting platform:

- > Price
- > Ease of implementation
- > User-friendly interface
- > Client support – ability to offer best practices, etc.
- > Desktop application and mobile app options
- > Ability to implement the system enterprise-wide
- > Willingness to solicit feedback and enhance the system

Rosedale essentially conducted an RFP (Request For Proposal) process by evaluating five different texting platforms, observing system demos, and collecting costs proposals from the top three.

“Mongoose Cadence was the clear-cut favorite. They checked all the boxes for us.”

- Dave Detar, Director of Student Enrollment at RTC

A texting policy ensured everyone was on the same page

Rosedale's texting policy established guidelines for users to follow to ensure everyone was using the medium effectively. The staff also took care not to over-text students in order to minimize the number of opt-outs.

The policy included:

- › Having appropriate measures to collect opt-in consent
- › Establishing a lead/student contact strategy to identify touch points throughout the student lifecycle
- › Setting guidelines on timing and the content of messages
- › Structuring messages to include questions and/or a call to action
- › Limiting or eliminating the use of slang and emojis

Texting gets results:

PRE-CADENCE

SHOW RATE ~60%

START RATE ~65%

WITH CADENCE

START AND SHOW RATES

INCREASED 10% OR MORE

In two years with Cadence:

140,000

Texts sent, enterprise-wide

85,000

Texts sent for recruitment, engagement,
and retention activities

- > Those texts averaged higher than **60% reply rate**
- > Orientation attendance **improved by approximately 15%**
- > Texts sent to confirm appointments average **higher than a 70% show rate**
- > Cadence has helped reduce melt and has given Rosedale a **76% start rate**
- > Show rate for orientation has improved to **more than 90%**

After a short time frame of testing Cadence and monitoring results, the staff at Rosedale realized that the platform could (and should) be implemented enterprise-wide.

Amount of texts sent across departments:

ALL DEPARTMENTS

2016-2017 **55,000+** → 2017-2018 **70,000+**

ADMISSIONS, EDUCATION OUTREACH, AND FRONT OFFICE

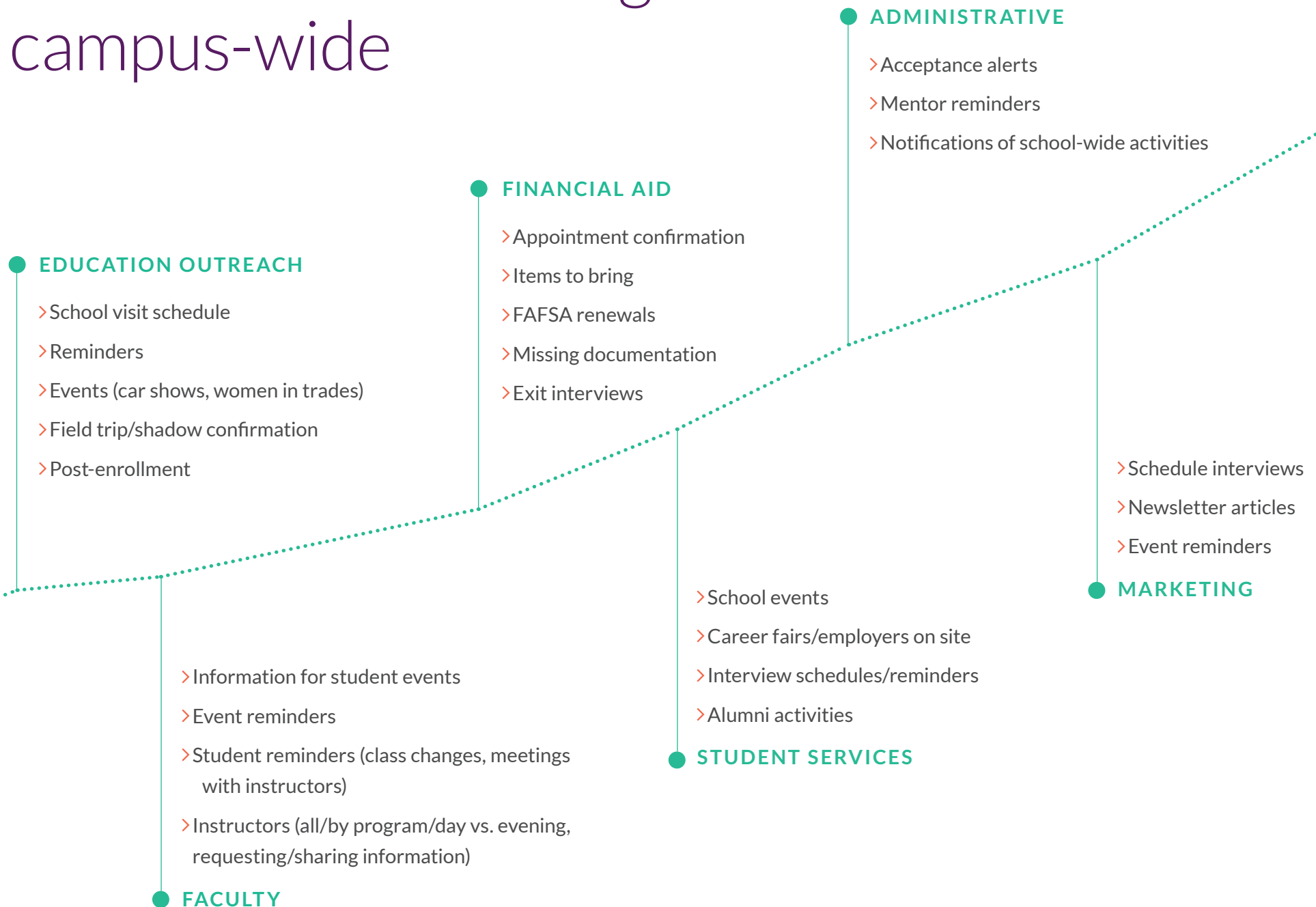
2016-2017 **35,000** → 2017-2018 **40,000**

INSIDE ADMISSIONS

2016-2017 **10,000** → 2017-2018 **20,000**

Both years averaged a 60% reply rate!

Rosedale takes texting campus-wide



Next steps for Rosedale Tech

As Rosedale looks toward the future, the staff has targeted additional groups to establish a texting strategy that includes:

- **Parents** - Keep them aware of milestones occurring between the submission of an application and the actual class start
- **High School Counselors/Instructors** - Inform them of school events, career fairs and field trips, and identify prospective students
- **Employers** - Share career fair invitations and set up interviews
- **Media** - Alert news outlets of student achievements, noteworthy visitors, and special events

Taking texting to advancement

Finally, Rosedale envisions utilizing Cadence as a key piece of their communication strategy with graduates, and to text reminders of key school events as well as fundraising and stewardship opportunities.

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