8 SURPRISING NEW FACTS

How to Engage High School Students and Parents Online

1 High school students use search engines more often than site navigation to find specific information within a college's website.

HOW DO YOU FIND INFORMATION ON A COLLEGE WEBSITE? (SELECT ONE)

31%
I use a search engine

22%
I look at the links the site offers and figure out which one is the best path

20%
I use the search tool on the site

16%
I use the links from emails

11%
I use the links from college planning sites

1%
Other

TAKEAWAY
SEO is critical. If anyone has any lingering doubts about the importance of search engine optimization, this data should answer it once and for all. Using a search engine is how students and their parents prefer to find information on your website.

Parents agree. Search engines were their top choice, too, for finding information on a college website.

2 High school sophomores, juniors, and seniors often click on paid digital ads, with sophomores leading the way.

HAVE YOU EVER CLICKED ON AN AD FOR A COLLEGE THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE SEEN ONLINE? THIS COULD HAVE BEEN ON A WEBSITE OR ADS IN SEARCH RESULTS, ON SOCIAL MEDIA, OR SOME OTHER WEBSITE. (YES/NO)

Percent "Yes"

SOPHOMORES	61%
PARENTS OF SOPHOMORES	38%

Percent "Yes"

Juniors	55%
Parents of juniors	36%

Percent "Yes"

|	
Seniors	47%
Parents of seniors	33%
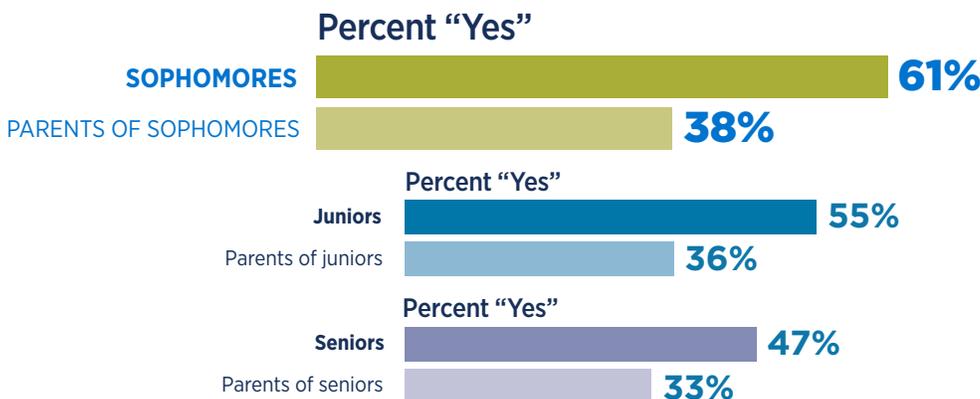
TAKEAWAY
Paid online ads should be an established part of your college marketing mix for all high school grade levels and for parents. To get the most from your ads, experiment with "gated carrots"—resources, privileges, or opportunities on your landing pages that can only be accessed by submitting contact information.

3

Online net price calculators are almost as influential as the entire college website, especially for high school seniors.

Sophomores   **Juniors**   **Seniors**

College website
4.05
4.03
4.00

Financial aid calculator results
3.30
3.57
3.81

Emails from the school
3.63
3.68
3.72

Printed brochures
3.34
3.45
3.24
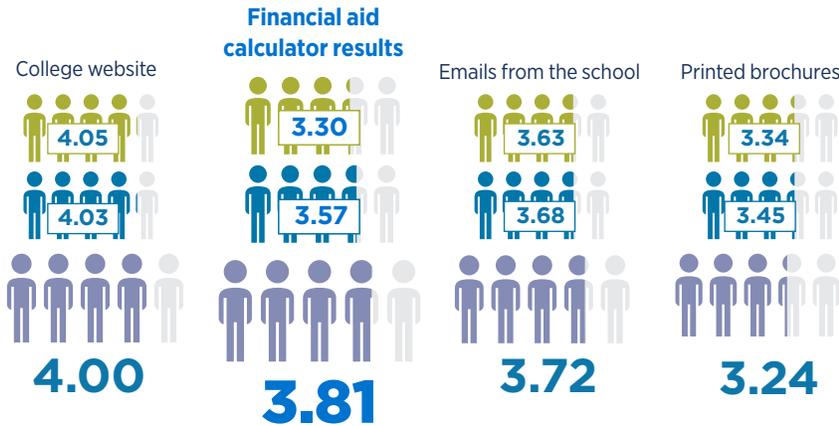
TAKEAWAY
Provide a net price calculator on your website that is easy to complete within just a few minutes. The calculator should be a primary call to action on your site at the same level as "request information," "apply for admission," and "schedule a campus visit."

Videos of classrooms, students, resident life
3.26
3.23
3.28

Phone calls from admissions counselors
2.47
2.78
3.05

College planning website entries
3.05
3.10
2.80

Social media posts
2.83
2.69
2.77
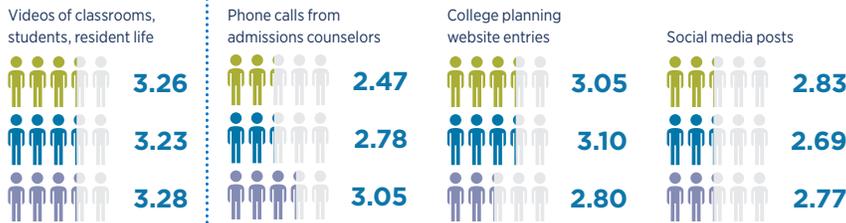
Parents agree. Calculators were second only to websites in their rankings, too.

4

60% of students use college planning websites, as do about 40% of parents.

Percent "Yes"
Juniors — **67%**
Parents of juniors — **37%**

Percent "Yes"
Seniors — **61%**
Parents of seniors — **43%**

Note: Sophomore data was not available for this item.
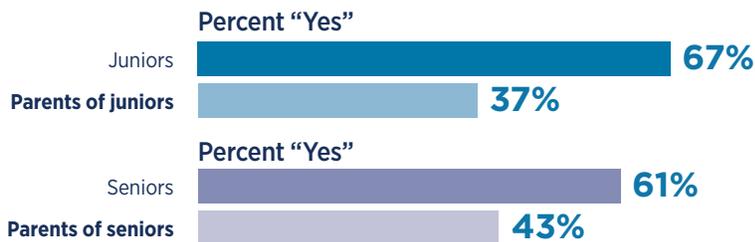
TAKEAWAY
Building a strong presence on college planning sites is important. Choose credible sites and make sure they maintain accurate, up-to-date information that appropriately portrays your brand. Also, be sure to consistently track referral traffic from these sites.

5

1/2 of parents take action on behalf of their students, especially parents of seniors.

Completed college applications for their student

- **Parents** of sophomores — 4%
- **Parents** of juniors — 4%
- **PARENTS** OF SENIORS — 62%

Completed request for information forms on college websites

- **Parents** of sophomores — 62%
- **Parents** of juniors — 55%
- **PARENTS** OF SENIORS — 57%
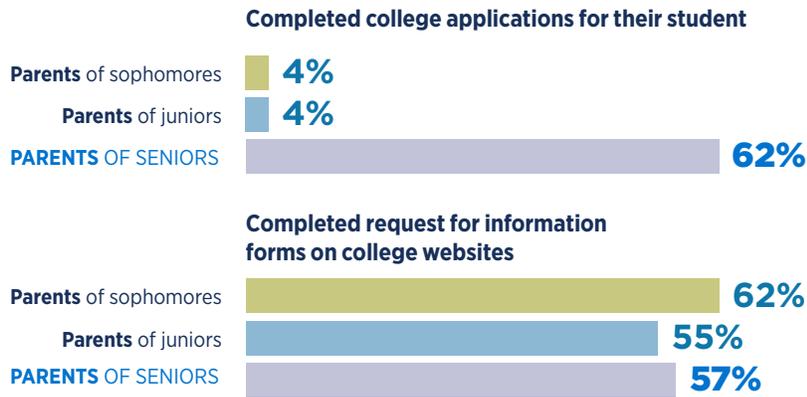
TAKEAWAY

Expanded parent communication and programming are more essential than ever before in college marketing and enrollment management. Realize that when you communicate with students, parents are also reading the materials. The days of only engaging students are long past.

DID YOU KNOW?

Parents visit campus often, too!

- **Parents** of sophomores — 24%
- **Parents** of juniors — 46%
- **PARENTS** OF SENIORS — 65%
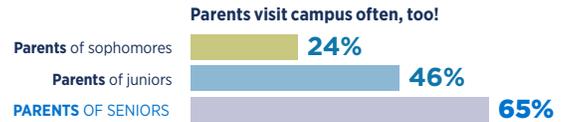
6

About 2/3 of students and parents are receptive to text messaging, and 1/3 to 1/2 are open to social app messaging, but most have received neither.

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ALLOW A COLLEGE TO SEND YOU TEXT MESSAGES OR USE A SOCIAL MESSAGING APPLICATION (SUCH AS MESSENGER, KIK, OR WHATSAPP) TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

"Yes" to texts

- Sophomores — 62%
- **Parents of sophomores** — 59%
- Juniors — 68%
- **Parents of juniors** — 61%
- Seniors — 68%
- **Parents of seniors** — 69%

"Yes" to social messaging apps

- Sophomores — 48%
- **Parents of sophomores** — 24%
- Juniors — 38%
- **Parents of juniors** — 25%
- Seniors — 33%
- **Parents of seniors** — 22%

Have never received texts or social app messages from a college

- Sophomores — 78%
- **Parents of sophomores** — 89%
- Juniors — 77%
- **Parents of juniors** — 88%
- Seniors — 58%
- **Parents of seniors** — 82%

TAKEAWAY

Based on these findings, more institutions should, at minimum, begin to incorporate texting. The findings of a separate 2017 report from Ruffalo Noel Levitz confirmed that texts are effective for recruitment. (See *2017 Marketing and Student Recruitment Report of Effective Practices*, page 4.)

7 — Students' #1 place to find social media links is the college's website.

HOW DO YOU FIND SOCIAL MEDIA SITES THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY? (SELECT ALL)

Through the school's website

Sophomores	57%
Juniors	54%
Seniors	58%
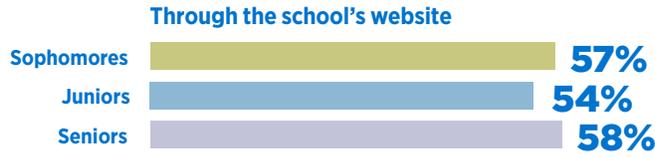
Parents agree. Going to the college's website was their top choice, too, for finding links to a college's social media pages.

Through links in email sent by the school

Sophomores	43%
Juniors	43%
Seniors	41%

Links on college planning sites

Sophomores	36%
Juniors	35%
Seniors	28%

Searching on a specific social media channel

Sophomores	36%
Juniors	32%
Seniors	33%
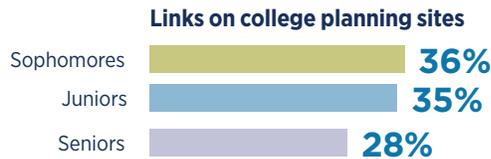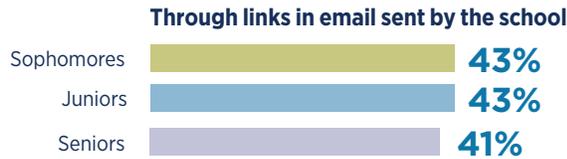
Seeing ads for a school in social media

Sophomores	34%
Juniors	33%
Seniors	30%
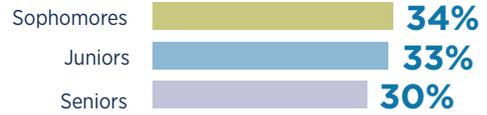
Seeing posts shared by friends on social news feeds

Sophomores	25%
Juniors	26%
Seniors	28%

Suggestions from parents/guardians

Sophomores	17%
Juniors	14%
Seniors	12%
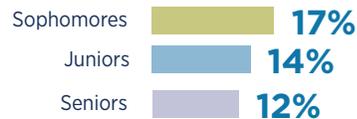
TAKEAWAY
Place social media links in a conspicuous location within the website. It is common to place these at the very top, very bottom, or both. Also, consider publishing live feeds from social media on your homepage.

8 — Snapchat is #1 for daily use, but Facebook is #1 for learning about a college.

Preferred for daily use by high school students

1. Snapchat
2. Instagram
3. YouTube
4. Facebook
5. Twitter
6. Google+
7. Pinterest
8. LinkedIn
9. Periscope
10. Vimeo

Preferred for learning about a college by high school students

1. Facebook
2. YouTube
3. Instagram
4. Google+
5. Twitter
6. Snapchat
7. Pinterest
8. LinkedIn
9. Periscope
10. Vimeo

TAKEAWAY
Colleges and universities should continue to use a mix of social media, as students and parents both use a variety of channels. Videos and photography are key. Consider assigning a social media expert on staff to make sure social media is managed well.

Parents use Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube at much lower rates than students on a daily basis, and they use Facebook, Google+, and Pinterest at higher rates on a daily basis.