

Oral Roberts University Increases Response Rates with Messaging



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-Alison Vujnovic,
Director of Enrollment, Oral Roberts University



Overview

Oral Roberts University (ORU) is a premier Christian university located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They offer over 120+ undergraduate majors and minors, 14 master's level programs and three doctoral degrees. About 4,000 students from across the USA and 100+ countries study on campus.

Business Challenge

ORU aims to reach students and parents to talk about admissions and enrollment. The enrollment team had noticed a drop in response rates for phone calls. The university began looking for an alternative channel that would be more effective and tried text messaging to schedule calls at times when potential students would be free to talk. Initially they used Google Text; a standalone tool not integrated with their CRM system.

Answering the Challenge

ORU wanted a text messaging solution that would seamlessly integrate with Salesforce, as well as a platform they could customize to meet their specific needs. Other factors considered during the selection process were ease of use and cost. After piloting a few other solutions, the university selected SMS-Magic because it met all of their requirements.

How ORU Uses Messaging for Better Engagement

ORU uses messaging at all stages of their admissions funnel - from inquiry to applicant, applicant to admitted student, and admitted student to deposited student.

The university has three text messaging lines for various areas. This delineation helps them quickly identify the purpose of a student's outreach.

Re-engaging potential students

In the past, potential students were more likely to call ORU and say that they hit a roadblock in the process or perhaps could no longer enroll at their university. Upon additional outreach to the student, some texted back surprising responses or were more likely to engage in deeper reasoning over text or to schedule a call at a later time.

The counselor in charge of assisting that student receives a notification about the incoming text message. Because messaging is not as intrusive as a call, it is easier for the counselor to text them back and schedule a follow-up call to talk things through.

Conversing with parents

Text messaging has also enabled parents to communicate more with ORU. They get the texting number from the student in most cases. The text messaging line number is also on the enrollment counselor's business cards.

Please note: *In the conversations below, yellow represents a 1:1 conversation.*

Parents ask about campus visits, financial aid status, deposit deadlines, and other information related to the student's application, via message.

RECEIVED

Hi, just wanted to know where has Dave Harrison's application for financial aid reached in your admissions process? Thanks, Kylie.

Appointment setting

ORU's enrollment team includes 15+ counselors who have a goal to reach a specific number of students every week. They also text potential students to schedule calls.

"We've been successful in reaching students who wouldn't have answered the phone when we tried to call them in the past," says Alison Vujnovic, Director of Enrollment, ORU.

ORU segments students based on their funnel status and messages them.

Segments include students who have:

- Applied but are missing credentials.
- Filed their federal student aid information with the university.
- Are scheduled to attend events.

Deadline reminders

ORU sends messaging campaigns about application deadline reminders, confirmations about campus visits and other time-sensitive information. One of their best practices is to ask students questions in the text message, rather than just share information.

"We receive better response rates when we ask people questions, so we always like to end our messages with a question," says Vujnovic.

Vujnovic works with the communications team to outline the best strategy for each texting campaign. After they send the campaign, they measure the response rate and revise the strategy for their next messaging campaign, if needed.

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SENT

Hi Dave, the history scholarship event you signed up for at Oral Roberts University is tomorrow at 9 AM. Are you still planning to attend? Thanks, Barbara.

The university schedules campus visit or scholarship event reminders to students with a three-message cadence; the first message one week before, the next text is sent three days prior to the event, and the last one is sent the day before the event. ORU also sends one-to-one messages to individual students to remind them to complete their application.

The university texts students to update them that their financial aid award offer has been posted on their account to make sure they confirm acceptance of the offer within the deadline. Messaging helps them schedule a time with the student to explain the offer details.

SENT

Hi Dave, your ORU application is incomplete and the deadline is tomorrow. Do you need help with your application? Thanks, Barbara.

MMS for enrollment

ORU sent a funny video via MMS for enrollment to 1,100 students. "Because everything concerning deadlines is serious, we thought a bit of levity might drive engagement. That message received one of the best response rates we've had all year.

"We received 75 text messages back within the first fifteen minutes."

Within the first ten minutes, we received an additional fifteen commitments who went on to pay their deposit. We received 75 text messages back within the first fifteen minutes," says Vujnovic.

The university messages students judiciously to get the best response rate and more phone calls scheduled. "Texting is primarily the tool students use to engage," says Vujnovic. Text messaging also helps ORU combat summer melt. "Messaging helps keep the conversation open. This generation wants live responses. They do expect a 24/7 response if they have a question. SMS-Magic has helped us continue that conversation in a live way that we just have never been able to before."


Messaging high school counselors

To move students closer to completing their admission forms, ORU sends messages to students with links to their platform where they can submit transcripts and test scores. High school guidance counselors are the ones more likely to be sending the university the students' transcripts. Students share their counselor's contact information and email them from the ORU platform, requesting them to log in and send their transcripts. The university follows up with messages to the counselors reminding them to send the student transcripts.

Messaging for administration

ORU also uses text messaging to get paperwork from students. Health and immunization forms and housing reminders go to them via message. Also, class schedules and orientation details are shared by text before students start class in the fall.

"SMS-Magic has been incredibly helpful as a solution for us. It has garnered an increased response rate from our students and our parents. Text messaging has also increased the types of engagement we've had with students across the funnel," says Vujnovic.



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Highlighting the Business Value of Messaging

Greater engagement with students. ORU has noticed a 15% increase in response rate when they use messaging to schedule phone call appointments with students and their families.

Increase in conversions. With more engagement over text messaging, the university has seen a 4% increase in completed admission forms.


Reduction in no-shows. "With the help of texting, we've been able to reduce event no-shows by 90%," says Vujnovic.

More accessible to students. Students and parents find it easier to reach ORU, with messaging.

Higher productivity. "When people are on vacation or out sick for the day, another counselor can carry on the conversation. They can access the previous messaging conversation, as it is posted on the Salesforce record. This access enables them to keep student preferences in mind and communicate effectively," says Vujnovic.

When we asked about Converse Desktop, Vujnovic said that she found it "very straightforward. Being able to scroll through the text, just like you would over the phone is really useful. Identifying the Sender ID before it goes out is helpful too. There's almost no training involved."

Messaging helps Oral Roberts University reach top-of-mind awareness with students as they engage with them more effectively. This engagement has enabled counselors to start conversations with students earlier, increasing their chances of conversion. Students perceive ORU to be more accessible, because the university uses their preferred communication channel, text messaging.



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About SMS-Magic

SMS-Magic is a proven, global messaging platform for Salesforce, with over 1800 clients across 59 direct carriers, including small, midsize, and enterprise accounts. SMS-Magic enables Salesforce users to engage buyers and win and retain more new customer revenue, while creating strong customer relationships that drive sustainable competitive advantage. SMS-Magic is the most positively reviewed messaging application on Salesforce AppExchange.



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