CASE STUDY

Smart Integration Leads to Texting Success at Jacksonville State

"**We have sent over 100,000 text messages this past year.**
That was definitely not our admission counselors having to do that work,
texting on their phones, it was truly the work of Cadence and our
CRM being **integrated in a way that allows our staff to use the
responses that come in to build relationships**."

- LAUREN FINDLEY
Director of Undergrad Admissions at Jacksonville State University

Overview

There are many reasons for the recent success, but Lauren Findley, Director of Undergrad Admissions at Jacksonville State University, and Shaun Stancil, the school's Systems Administrator, led a team to having its largest freshman class in school history.

Findley attributes much of the success to increased communication with prospective students coupled with their partnerships with Ellucian Recruit and Mongoose Cadence.

After discussing it with their team, it's clear the success of Jacksonville State also has a lot to do with an excellent communications strategy and some brilliant integration. This case study will highlight what their team is doing right to engage with students.

The challenge

The Undergraduate Admissions team turned to texting as students were not responding to emails, phone calls and direct mailings.

Who is Jacksonville State?

> Located in Jacksonville, Alabama

> 4-year public institution

> Over 95 academic programs

> 9,000+ degree-seeking students

Challenges

> Declining enrollments and applicants

> Shrinking pool of matriculants

> Declining event attendance

The Secret Sauce: Combining automation with personal messages

You do not normally see the word "smooth" paired with the word "integration," but Shaun Stancil and the team at JSU used Cadence in conjunction with Recruit to accomplish great results in just one cycle.

"Cadence is easy to work with. Our CRM (Recruit) is a robust system, and I really had to dig in deep into some of the stuff with Microsoft Dynamics. Learning to work with it was a much bigger hurdle than working with Cadence APIs." - Shaun Stancil

With clever integration and the use of well-crafted, automated texts triggered by activities, the staff can better respond to questions.

RECRUIT

cadence
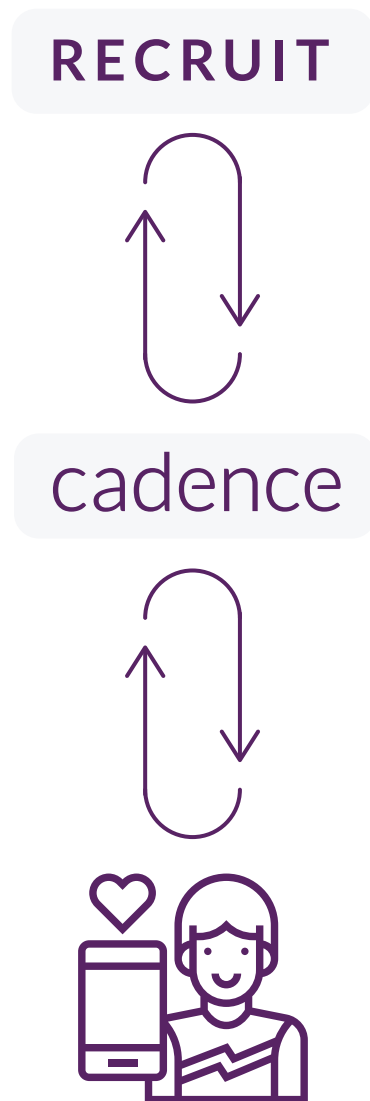
Data triggers action

"You couldn't create custom activities [that could be plugged into the comm plan] in Recruit, so we were stuck with what they had... we used faxes! I used the 'fax activity' as a trigger, so when a fax activity gets creates it fires off a workflow and I used that to do what I wanted to do [with texts]." - Shaun Stancil

Shaun created a custom script that runs every 15 minutes, looking for new data and any open text message activities. The script pulls those activities down and uses the Cadence 'Send Message' API to actually send those messages out. The activities are then closed out immediately after.

Efficient use of templates and merge fields

Lauren builds text message templates in Cadence with the code option. The code is placed into the activity code in the CRM. Then, when the workflow is generated through the activity code, it signals for Cadence to send the template. That allows messages to be sent in an automated fashion.

Activities trigger text messages

> **Inquiries** - students interested in coming to JSU are welcomed

> **Incomplete applications** - links are provided for missing items after a student submits

> **Student accepted** - students are sent a congratulatory message and a follow-up three months later

> **Scholarships** - award recipients are notified and congratulated

> **Deadline reminders** - sent to students regarding scholarship, housing, and orientation deadline reminders

> **Events** - invitations, reminders, and follow-up surveys are sent to attendees

ACCEPTANCE TEXT

Hi <FIRST NAME>! Jacksonville State University will be mailing out acceptance letters soon, but I wanted to be the first to tell you - you have been accepted to JSU! Congratulations 🐔 - <STAFF FIRST NAME> <STAFF LAST NAME>

Striking a balance with automation

While the Undergrad Admissions team has a specific schedule of campaigns targeting prospective students and transfer students, there are instances where staff members want to communicate with students for other reasons.

They encourage admissions counselors to use segments when they have messaging that varies from the main plan. An admission counselor will create their own templates and communicate with groups as they see fit.

YIELD/DECISION TEXT

> Hey <FIRST NAME>! I'm bringing "Future Gamecock" yard signs to OHS tomorrow for students planning to attend JSU. If you are planning on attending in the Fall, reply with a 😊, if you are still unsure, reply with a ✋, and if you are not coming, reply with a 👎 -Thanks, <STAFF FIRST NAME>!

The results

In just one cycle, Jacksonville State has amassed impressive improvements on applicants, enrollments, and transfers. Based on their success, the school has also initiated a student search campaign in the fall of 2019.

100,000+ texts sent

> **39%** increase in freshman enrollment

> **10.7%** increase in transfer enrollment

> **Applications** submitted and processed **almost doubled**

> **420 more freshmen**

> **Largest freshman class in JSU history (1,493)**

MISSING ITEMS TEXT

Hi <FIRST NAME>, this is <STAFF FIRST NAME> Jacksonville State! I wanted to let you know we received your application, but we still need the following information to make a decision: <URL>

How do you respond to all those texts?

"If they tell us no, it allows us to focus on the other students, those high-quality prospects that are more likely to come to JSU." - Lauren Findley

While the initiative is a bit daunting, Jacksonville State maintains an expectation of 24 hours to respond to students. That helps the staff manage the workload of responding to texts that may come at any time. Admissions counselors will also coordinate with each other to cover vacations and leave.

Special attention is paid to monitor reports every few days to keep track of how many texts go out, how many texts go unread, and which messages fail. This way, they can improve efficiencies with future communications.

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