



# Fresh Insights from EAB's 2021 Communication Preferences Study

How to Communicate with Generation COVID

# Today's Presenters



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# 2021 Communication Preferences Survey in Brief

Data Collection: February 23–March 11, 2021

## Total Respondents

15,291

high school students

## College Plans

91%

of respondents plan to go to college after high school

## First-Generation Status

First-Gen: **20%**

Non-First-Gen: **80%**

## High School Class Year

Seniors: **40%**

Juniors: **40%**

Sophomores: **20%**

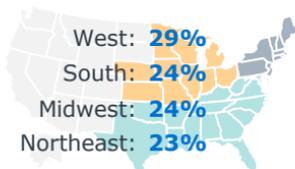
## Gender

Female: **62%**

Male: **35%**

Other: **3%**

## Region



## Household Income

\$60K or less: **22%**

\$61K–\$120K: **19%**

>\$120K: **17%**

Unknown: **42%**

## Ethnicity



# 2021 Communication Preferences Survey in Brief



## Research Topics and Key Findings

### TOPICS EXPLORED

1. How students are searching for information
2. Sources used for college search
3. Expectations regarding personalized content
4. Social media use and interactions with colleges
5. Expectations regarding college websites
6. Willingness to share personal information
7. Students' use of voice search
8. Experiences with the FAFSA

### KEY FINDINGS

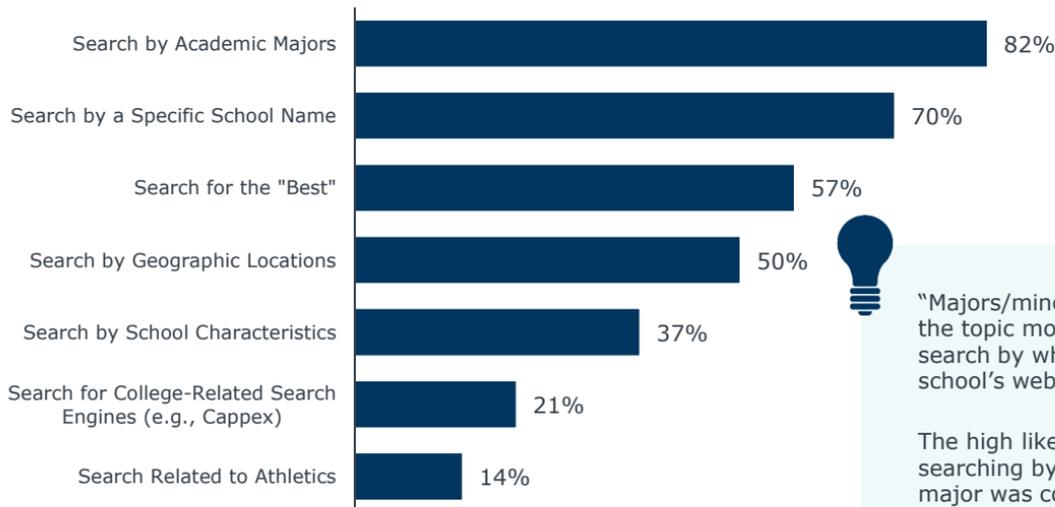
- ✓ Academic majors drive online college searches
- ✓ Parents are the most important source for college information
- ✓ More younger students want personalized content
- ✓ Ubiquitous social media engagement
- ✓ Website experience matters
- ✓ Students are willing to share personal information when asked
- ✓ Most students are using voice search
- ✓ Financial aid is a mystery to be unlocked

# Academic Programs Are Key

## A Significant Majority of Students Search by Major



When using a search engine (whether typing or voice search) to look for information about colleges or universities, what type of search(es) are you most likely to perform?



"Majors/minors offered" is the topic most students search by when visiting a school's website.

The high likelihood of searching by academic major was consistent across all demographic segments.

# College Search Tools

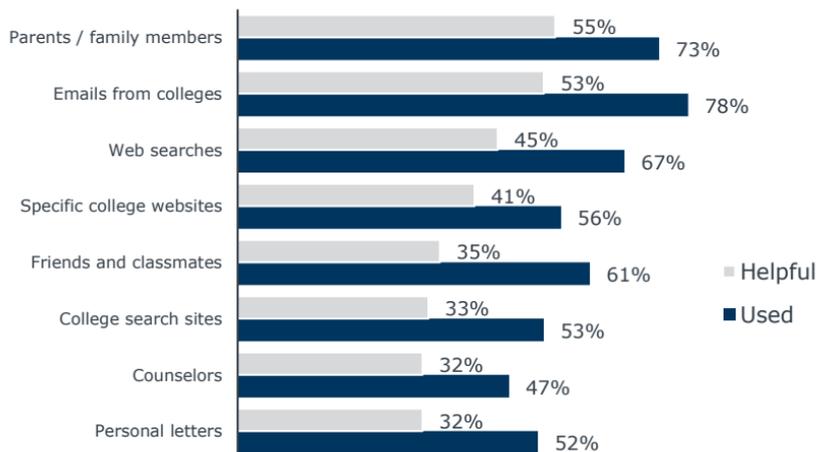


## Multiple Sources Create the Full College Picture



Consider the sources of information you have used and indicate which sources are most helpful.

### Most Helpful Sources for College Search (Top 8 out of 28)



Parents rank higher for:

- Males
- Non-first-generation students from higher-income households
- Asian and white students
- Students from the Midwest

Emails ranked higher for:

- Females
- Students from lower-income households
- Black and Latinx students

# Students Want a Personalized Experience Earlier



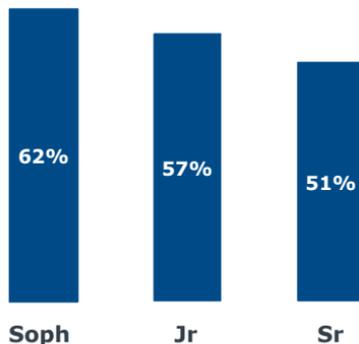
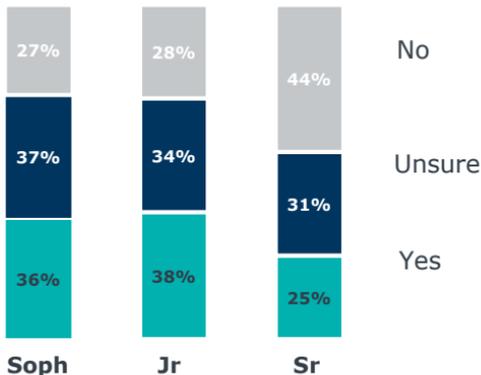
## And They are Willing to Be Tracked to Get It



Do you want college websites to track your actions on their websites?  
Do you want personalized content based on your actions?

36% of sophomores and 38% of juniors say they want college websites to **track their actions** on websites.

62% of sophomores and 57% of juniors say they want **personalized content** that identifies them by name or area of interest.



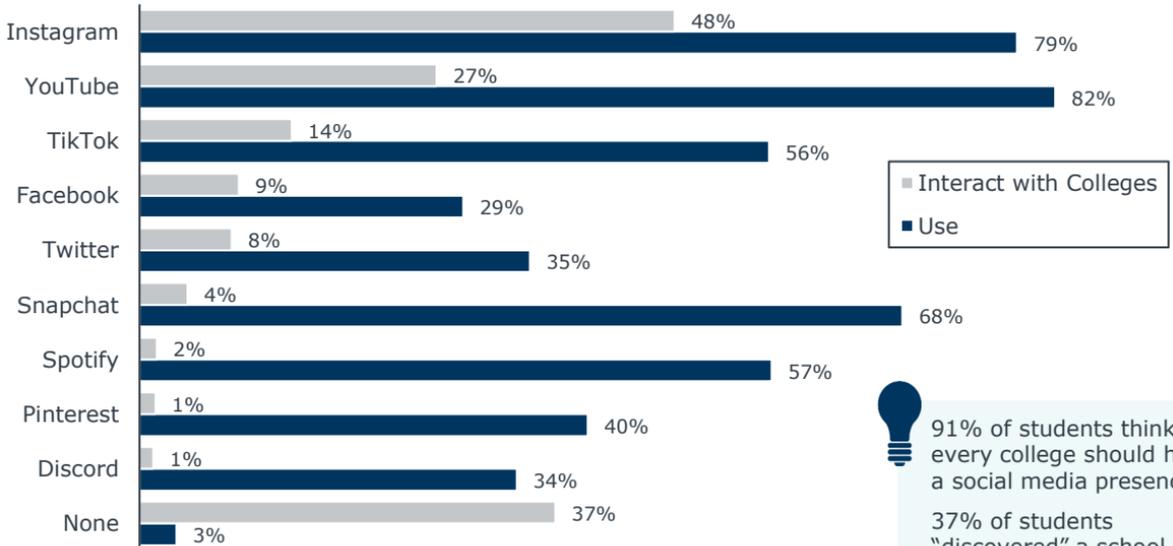
# Students Expect a Social Media Presence



## Even Though They May Not Interact With It



Select all of the social media you currently use.  
Have you interacted with a college or university on any of the following social media?



91% of students think every college should have a social media presence.

37% of students "discovered" a school on social media.

# Website Experience Matters

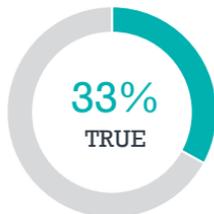


For Better or Worse, Your Website Is Leaving a Lasting Impression



Please indicate whether the following statements regarding college websites are true for you.

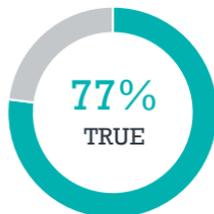
1 All college websites are the same.



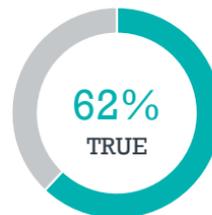
2 A well-designed website will improve my opinion of a college.



3 A poorly designed website will negatively affect my opinion of a college.



4 I will abandon college websites that are not user-friendly.



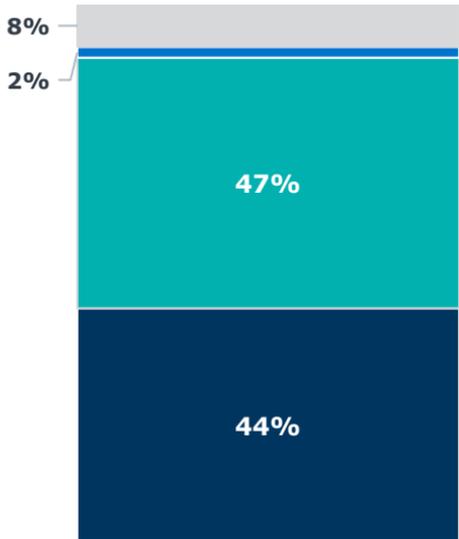
Source: EAB 2021 Student Communication Preferences Survey.

# Students Are Willing to Share

When Asked, Students Will Provide at Least Some Personal Information



[When you visited a college website where you were asked to provide personal information,] did you provide your personal information?



No

Yes, but I used fake information

Yes, some of the information requested

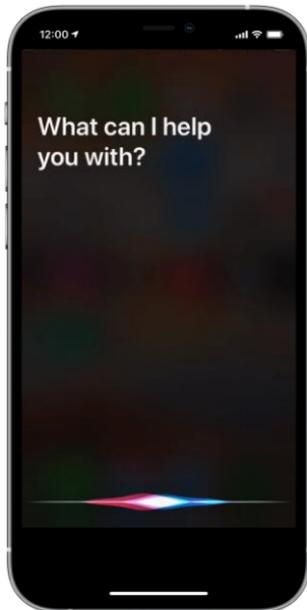
Yes, all the information requested

# Most Students Are Using Voice Search

## Students Rely on Voice Search to Answer Specific Questions



How often do you use voice search (e.g., Siri, Google, Alexa) for any reason?



22%

At Least Once a Day



44%

At Least Once a Month



44%

Never

59% of students say they use voice search to answer specific questions.

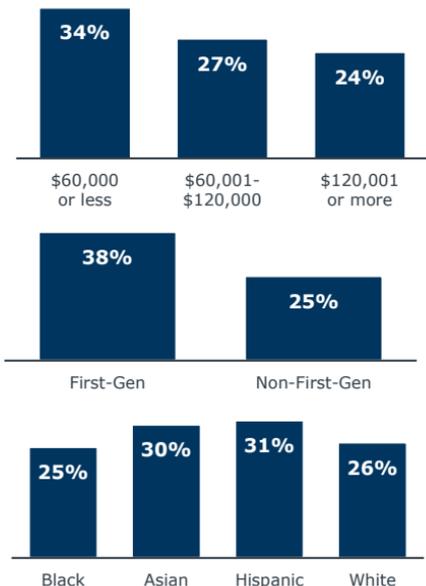
# Financial Aid Is a Mystery to Be Unlocked

## More Work Needs to Be Done

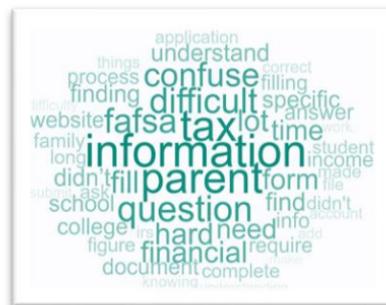


Did you have any difficulty completing the FAFSA?

### Students Who Had Difficulty



What was difficult about filling out the FAFSA?



### Who is encouraging students to fill out the FAFSA?

Low-Income/First-Gen/Hispanic	High-Income/Non-First-Gen /Asian/White
1. Counselor	1. Parent
2. Parent	2. Counselor
3. Teacher	3. College Rep

Source: EAB 2021 Student Communication Preferences Survey.



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I'd like to further explore the following topics (select all that apply):

- 1 Specific challenges when completing the FAFSA
- 2 Enhancing website design and navigation for prospective students
- 3 Student feedback on virtual presentations and virtual campus tours
- 4 Ideal timing of communications for key messages
- 5 Other

## Further Resources

Learn More About How EAB Can Help You Meet Your Enrollment Goals



Discuss the material with Pam and Madeleine



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