

Hispanic Students and the Web

The E-Expectations of College-Bound Hispanic High School Students

As the Hispanic population continues to grow in the United States, more and more Hispanic students are graduating from high school and attending college. But how do Hispanic high school students research colleges and universities? What do they expect from college Web sites?

The E-Expectations series measures the online behavior and expectations of college-bound high school students. As part of the Class of 2007 study, Noel-Levitz, James Tower, and the National Research Center for College and University Admissions (NRCCUA) examined the responses of 242 Hispanic students along with the responses of white students. Did these two groups have different e-expectations?

For the most part, Hispanic students want to do many of the same things on college and university Web sites as white students: find out about financial aid and admissions. They are interested in new technologies like podcasting and are open to receiving recruitment calls and text messages on their cell phones. But two major differences are the level of parental involvement and their overall knowledge of the college application process. To turn the e-recruitment of Hispanic students into the enrollment of Hispanic students, colleges and universities need to guide them more strategically through the application and financial aid process.



The E-Recruitment Implications of the Increase of Hispanic Americans

According to a study conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, one in four people in the United States will be of Latino origin by the year 2050.¹ Between the 2001-2002 and 2013-2014 school years, the number of Hispanic high school students is expected to increase by 73%, from 312,315 to 541,228. By 2014, Hispanic students will account for 47% of all high school minority students in the United States.²

Hispanic students are also online. The AOL Latino 2006 Hispanic Cyber-sudy revealed that 55% of the Hispanic population, or more than 16 million people, were online, with 77% having access to broadband. Furthermore, the study found that 68% of Hispanics who went online considered the Internet to be the best source of making "final brand decisions." Finally, the study found that, while mostly or partially acculturated Hispanics tended to prefer online content in English, 40% found Spanish-language content appealing.³

Embracing New Technology

Hispanic students have embraced many types of e-communication, even more than white students in a number of cases.

When asked if they had downloaded a podcast, 14% of Hispanic students said they had, with 16% also saying they had downloaded a video podcast. This response was twice as high as that of white students (7% and 8% respectively).

With regard to activities they would like to do on college Web sites, 57% of Hispanic students said they would like to participate in an online chat event, compared to 48% of white students, while 54% of Hispanic students said they would like to download a video podcast, compared to 44% of white students.

White students showed a higher rate of cell phone ownership, with 71% having their own phones versus 60% of Hispanic students. However, Hispanic students were more open to taking calls from college representatives (66% compared to 60% of white students) and far more open to receiving text messages from colleges (61% compared to 46% of white students).

With this in mind, what do Hispanic students desire from college sites and what do they want to do online?

1 "Caught in the Financial Aid Information Divide: A National Survey of Latino Perspectives on Financial Aid," (The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute and Sallie Mae Fund, March 2004, PowerPoint presentation).

2 Minaya, Guido A, "Hispanic Fund: Recruiting and Retaining the Fastest Growing Student Market Segment," (PowerPoint presentation at the National Conference on Student Recruitment, Marketing, and Retention, Denver, Colorado, July 2006).

3 Wentz, Laurel, "Online Hispanic Audience is Predominately Bilingual," Ad Age (September 18, 2006).



Here's What I Want to Do on Your Site

Hispanic students and white students had very similar responses to activities they would like to do on college Web sites. The most commonly cited activities—completing financial aid estimators, using a tuition cost calculator, and completing an application—were about the same for both groups. The following chart shows the top 15 activities from both groups of students.

Activities Students Enjoy	Hispanic	White
Complete a financial aid estimator form	87%	88%
Complete a tuition cost calculator	84%	83%
Complete an admissions application online	83%	81%
Request a campus visit by completing a form	78%	80%
Exchange instant messages with an admissions counselor or student worker	75%	72%
Complete a form to RSVP for a campus event	75%	72%
Read a blog written by a current student	68%	64%
Read a blog written by a faculty member	67%	64%
Submit a form to receive information in the mail or e-mail	67%	69%
Enter information about your interests to see a personalized Web page	67%	62%
E-mail a faculty member	65%	64%
View a virtual tour	65%	63%
Read profiles of current students	63%	63%
Read profiles of faculty	61%	63%
Fill out a form to get a personalized PDF viewbook	58%	59%



Parents Not as Likely to Participate in Research

The largest behavioral gap between Hispanic students and white students appears to be the amount of parental support with college research. Where 65% of white students said that their parents are helping with “some of the research and paperwork,” only 48% of Hispanic students answered affirmatively to that question. Half of all Hispanic students said they were doing all the college research and paperwork on their own, compared to 30% of white students.

Part of this may be because of vastly different rates of parental college attendance. When asked if either parent had attended college, 69% of white students said yes, compared to 42% of Hispanic students.

Knowledge of financial aid options also appears to be a barrier. When asked to identify sources of financial aid, 43% of Latino young adults and 51% of Latino parents could not identify even one source. More than two-thirds (68%) of Latino parents said they had not received any financial aid information while their children were in grades K-12.⁴

Strategies for E-Communication with Hispanic Students

So how can campuses improve e-communications with Hispanic students? Here are four strategies to take away.

1) Guide Hispanic students through the admissions process online.

The largest enrollment barrier to many Hispanic high school students is one of information about admissions and financial aid. With half of college-bound Hispanic high school students researching and completing forms on their own, the more guidance campuses can provide, the more likely these students will successfully apply to college.

2) Reach out to the families of Hispanic students .

Even though many Hispanic families are not necessarily doing the research and paperwork for their students, they do value a college education. In fact, 95% of Latino parents said they expected their children to go to college.⁵

By communicating more directly with parents of Hispanic students, especially about matters such as financial aid, campuses can have a meaningful, direct influence on Hispanic student enrollment—and perhaps increase the rate of parental participation in researching and completing paperwork.

⁴ “Caught in the Financial Aid Divide.”

⁵ Ibid.



3) Consider bilingual communications.

As noted earlier, while many Hispanic students and parents are comfortable with English materials, 40% do appreciate having materials in both English and Spanish. Consider having Spanish Web pages, e-mails, and other communications for prospective Hispanic students and their families, especially for key items such as financial aid and admissions information.

4) Put new technologies to work in Hispanic recruitment.

There appears to be little significant difference in the online behavior and expectations of Hispanic students. In some cases, Hispanic students seem even more willing to use media like text messaging and podcasts in their college searches. These are cost-effective technologies that offer a terrific personal, one-to-one feel. They are also ideal formats for bilingual communication. Spanish-language podcasts could offer valuable information to students that they could in turn share with their families.



About the Research Sponsors

James Tower

James Tower is a full-service Internet marketing company specializing in recruitment communication services for higher education. Our solutions create human connections with your prospective students. We offer AdmissionsGenie (our Internet recruitment solution); CDs and DVDs; virtual tours; e-mail marketing campaigns; Web site design; content management solutions; and publications.

Noel-Levitz

Noel-Levitz has consulted with nearly 2,000 public and private institutions, helping these campuses and systems reach their goals for enrollment, marketing, and student success at the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels.

NRCCUA

The National Research Center for College and University Admissions (NRCCUA) conducts the largest in-school college and career planning survey among high school students. Services include student search lists, recruitment publications, and related communications resources.

About the methodology

This E-Expectations: Class of 2007 study uses responses from a telephone survey of 1,018 college-bound high school seniors. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

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