

ADVi THE VIRTUAL ADVISOR FORMATIVE FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS SPRING 2021

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A LETTER

FROM THE TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

Dear Colleagues,

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is pleased to partner with the Urban Education Institute at the University of Texas at San Antonio to conduct ongoing, rigorous evaluation of our Virtual Advising Project. This report represents the first of several critical areas of inquiry that will inform ongoing improvement of the Virtual Advising Project and our chatbot, ADVi.

We are heartened by the report's findings that 87% of students would recommend ADVi to a friend and 77% of students had acted in response to a text from ADVi. However, these student perspectives also offer important critical feedback. In particular, students are suspicious of links delivered via text and lack understanding that the ADVi chatbot is backed up by human advisors whom they can request a conversation with anytime.

The findings detailed in this report are informing changes that will be implemented for the 2021-22 academic year, including:

- Initiating text campaigns in September, addressing student feedback that ADVi's messages were behind their personal timelines for critical steps;

- Adjusting messaging to make clearer how students can connect to a human advisor or ask their own questions rather than just responding to ADVi's prompts;
- More clearly communicating to students that ADVi can and will provide support beyond college and financial aid applications;
- Offering more opportunities for students to notify ADVi that they've taken steps like completing their application or FAFSA, which will in turn allow for better segmentation and personalization of subsequent campaigns; and
- Where feasible, providing detailed information in the body of texts instead of via links to websites.

We are grateful for our continued partnership with UEI and the opportunity it provides. We look forward to continuing to improve our efforts to support Texas students so they may achieve their postsecondary dreams.

Respectfully,

Erin Willig Director, Virtual Advising and Strategic Student Outreach

INTRODUCTION

Improving access to higher education for all Texas students has long been a goal in our highly diverse state. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, which Commissioner Harrison Keller has called “the most significant disruption to higher education institutions since the end of the Second World War.”

Freshman enrollment in the country declined 13.1% last fall compared with the previous year, while overall college enrollment fell by 2.5% during the same period (NSCRC, 2001). Enrollments declined similarly statewide, by about 3%, with two-year colleges hit hardest with a nearly 8% drop, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) found (White, 2021).

High school students struggled as they learned remotely with limited access to campus college counselors. Many colleges were closed to in-person tours and operations. Fewer Texas students completed the FAFSA last year, decreasing from 20% to 17% (White, 2021). All these factors created even more urgency for state and local leaders as they grappled with how to stop declining enrollments, while still providing students critical information and tools about the college-going process.

Fortunately, at the time the pandemic hit, the THECB was prototyping a virtual tool that is now available to students 24/7. The THECB’s Virtual

Advising Project reaches students with “critical and timely information to support their postsecondary journey.” The ultimate goal of the project is to help more Texans “access higher education and complete their credentials at Texas colleges and universities” (THECB, 2021). The tool, called ADVi, short for “advisor,” is a text-based, artificially intelligent chatbot that sends text messages about college-going information and action steps and responds to incoming questions from users. It can automatically answer many questions texted by students and connect them with the Virtual Advising Project’s trained human advisors when questions cannot be addressed by the bot. ADVi started as a partnership with The University of Texas at Austin in 2019 and was brought in-house to the THECB and made available to all Texas students in fall 2020. During the 2020-21 academic year, most ADVi users opted into receiving texts via the ApplyTexas application.

The Urban Education Institute (UEI) at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) established a research partnership with the THECB’s Virtual Advising team in fall 2020, thanks to generous funding support from Greater Texas Foundation. Over a three-year period, the UEI team will collaborate with the THECB team to facilitate rigorous continuous improvement cycles to strengthen ADVi’s effectiveness and engagement with students.

This research brief provides key findings from the project’s first round of research, which focused on getting feedback from ADVi student users about the tool’s content and usability, as well as their perceptions of the tool, understanding of the college-going process, and access to resources outside of ADVi.

The UEI research team led 60-minute, virtual interviews with 28 high school seniors and two recent high school graduates from the San Antonio area. (See Appendix A for the full interview protocol.) In February 2021, the THECB team sent a text message through ADVi to all 4,207 opted-in students enrolled in a Bexar County high school, explaining the interview opportunity and asking for permission to share their contact information with the UEI team. The UEI team then reached out to a subset of the 162 students who consented via text, making sure to include students from different school districts, with varying levels of engagement with ADVi. All participating students received a \$10 e-gift card to the vendor of their choice. (See Appendix B for a table with characteristics of the student interviewees.)

Interviews were conducted in March and April 2021, which means that all students had received the welcome message and the “Bot Tips & Tricks” campaign.¹ Depending on when they opted in, students also received campaigns about essays and resumes (October-November), transcripts and recommendation letters (December), FAFSA and outside scholarships (January-February), and choosing a college (March-April). Students do not receive retroactive campaigns or have a way to reference past campaigns, but they can access information covered in previous campaigns by using hashtag commands.

Key findings are listed on the following page, and each subsequent section elaborates on these highlights.

¹ “Campaigns” are text messages pushed out to student users on a schedule set by the Virtual Advising Team.

KEY FINDINGS

- **87% of students said they would recommend ADVi to a friend**
- **40% of students found most or all of ADVi's texts to be helpful and relevant**
- **77% of students took action because of an ADVi text, and most of these students took steps related to the FAFSA or financial aid**
- **67% of students preferred text-only content over texts that included links; all but two students were interested in seeing more infographics or other visual content**
- **50% of students did not know they could text with a human advisor and 53% of students did not know they could send their own texts to ADVi. None of the students knew about ADVi's commands (#help, #pause, #followup, etc.)**
- **Most students did not remember opting into ADVi, but almost all students grew to trust ADVi's information, and 50% of students said they would trust ADVi more if their school promoted it**
- **A third of the students were learning virtually as a result of the pandemic and did not feel well supported by their high schools in the college process, so they engaged more with ADVi**
- **Criticisms for ADVi included the lagging campaign timeline; the quantity of texts, specifically when ADVi sent more than one text at a time; and repetitive questions without memory of previous responses**
- **Students offered a variety of suggestions for new content that they'd like to get from ADVi: personalized lists of scholarships for students to apply to; detailed information about specific colleges; and content about college-going steps after being accepted to college, writing application essays, and setting up virtual college tours**
- **Most students had good understanding of college application and financial aid steps but lacked information about post-decision steps, like finding housing, attending orientation, getting immunizations, etc.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Invest in district- and school-level outreach to educate school staff about ADVi and develop their buy-in for the tool. School staff can encourage students to sign up for ADVi earlier in the college-going process and can help students deepen their engagement with the tool.
- Build out ADVi's tools and communication plan for introducing the bot to new users and explaining how to use it, including a link to ADVi's website and short video tutorials. Consider adding an introductory email that includes the same information and the logos of the Virtual Advising Project's partnering organizations. Send reminders about ADVi's commands, AI chatbot, and human advisors throughout the year. Provide photos or videos of ADVi advisors to help students feel more comfortable about taking advantage of this resource.
- Incorporate infographics, videos and pictures into texts, and focus on creating text-only campaigns that are easy to understand and do not require students to leave their texting app.
- Future areas of focus should include: Learning more about students who text with human advisors, have learning differences, and who take non-traditional pathways.

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWEES

All interviewees intended to enroll in college in fall 2021. Twenty-eight participants were high school seniors, one participant was a 2020 high school graduate who took a gap year, and one participant was looking to reenroll in community college after taking time off to care for her family. Twenty-six students had already applied for college and all but one of them had been accepted. The other four students were still in the process of applying.



STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

“With everything else except mail, I have to be the one to seek out those posts, videos or conversations, so I like that the text messages come even without me having to do anything.”

-San Antonio ISD Student, March 2021

“At the beginning [ADVi] was very helpful because I was [doing school at home] ... Most times the college advisors were either busy with other students or simply not there, so who was I supposed to talk to? ... Last year, they were pretty active [with college fairs] and all the [schools] you could think of were at the GO Center, this year not really when it comes to that. But the previous year, yes, they were helpful, but here’s the problem, I was a junior then and I guess they were looking for seniors, I was like, ‘I’m not a senior, I’ll wait until next year,’ but I did not know that this pandemic was going to happen.”

-San Antonio ISD Student, March 2021

“[All of the topics] were helpful in some way, it’s just that I had also gotten some information from my dual credit program about college readiness and whatnot, so it added on to that.”

-Southwest Preparatory Student, April 2021

“With the college process, there’s a lot of due dates and there’s a lot of steps so the fact that ADVi knew the steps and was doing it maybe a week, two weeks, a month...giving you a good timeline of what to do next, it kind of takes a little bit of the pressure off. Especially when you’re like ‘I don’t know what to do, I don’t know what to do,’ and you’re feeling overwhelmed, [ADVi’s] like ‘There’s this next step, and there’s this next step.’ It wasn’t like all at one time and that’s what I liked the most about it, that it spread it out, but it reminded you in a way where you could keep up with it.”

-North East ISD Student, April 2021

“I’d have to definitely say the FAFSA portion [was the most helpful topic] ... My counselors would talk about it, but they would never actually help with it or go as in depth with it like ADVi did.”

-Harlandale ISD Student, April 2021

“The way that I got involved in the texts was after I applied to all of the schools so that definitely wasn’t helpful to me...I had also filled out my financial aid long before I started receiving the texts.”

-North East ISD Student, April 2021

“I believe I applied for financial aid because it slipped my mind to do it and the bot reminded me to, so I was kind of glad to see it, like ‘Oh okay, thanks for the reminder.’”

-Northside ISD Student, April 2021

ADVI ENGAGEMENT

Had students responded to one of ADVi's texts and/or taken an action in their college process because of a message from ADVi?

Twenty-seven of the 30 students said they had responded to at least one of ADVi messages, the other three students did not provide an answer to the question.² 77% of students said they have taken an action in the college-going process because of an ADVi text. Most of these students referenced taking a concrete step towards completing the FAFSA or another financial aid step. Other examples of steps taken because of ADVi included checking their SAT scores, meeting deadlines, and finishing college applications.

² This is likely a higher-than-average engagement rate since students had to respond to a consent text from ADVi in order to be contacted for the interview, then respond to our team in order to participate in an interview.

ADVI CONTENT

What ADVi content did students like most?

Sixteen students thought the messages about financial aid, including guidance for filling out the FAFSA, were the most helpful. Smaller percentages of students mentioned other topics including information about scholarships, motivational messages that normalized stress, and guidance for filling out college applications and writing essays.³ About a third of students said ADVi's reminders and status checks – regardless of the specific topic – were very helpful.

What ADVi content did students like least?

40% of students said that most or all of ADVi's message topics were helpful and relevant to them. A third of the students said messages about steps the student had already taken were least helpful and irrelevant. Overall, students did not have consensus on a "least helpful"

³ All but one student opted into ADVi through the ApplyTexas application, so only a few students identified the college application process as the most helpful topic because they had already completed many of those steps by the time ADVi started sending them messages.

topic: for example, three students did not think check-in messages about how the student was feeling were helpful; one student did not like the reminders; one student did not like the message about the winter storm power outages; and another student shared that ADVi once instructed her to “ask someone else” when it did not have an answer to her question.

Were there any topics that students wish were covered by ADVi?

Seven students wanted more information about scholarships with links to specific scholarships the student could apply for.⁴ Five students wanted to know more about the steps that happen after getting into college, including choosing a college, registering for housing, appealing financial aid decisions, taking the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) test, and signing up for orientation.⁵ Four students wanted specific information about their college of interest, including advisors’ contact information, and information about the college-going process that was tailored to their circumstances. One student wanted information about virtual college tours due to the pandemic, and another wanted assistance with application essays. A third of the students did not have a suggestion for additional topics.

⁴ It is possible that some of these students were interviewed before scholarship information had gone out.

⁵ It is possible that some of these students were interviewed before this kind of information had gone out.

ADVI FORMATTING

Do students prefer messages that only include text compared to messages that include URL links?

67% of students preferred text-only messages, specifically the menu prompts, over texts that include links. Students said that text-only messages are shorter and easier to understand, the students may lose their focus if they click a link or may not be able to find the information they are looking for on the website. Another reason for this preference is because some students do not trust links, and a few students said if ADVi gave more information about the links with a screenshot of the website, they would have been more likely to click on them. Five students preferred texts with links because websites offer more information and lengthy texts can be overwhelming. Five students said their preference depends on the specific topic and the amount of related information. One student did not mind either way.

What other type of content (infographics, videos, pictures, etc.) would be a good resource?

Students were split about other media they would like to receive. One third of the students wanted to receive infographics because they could see all of the information in one place, it is more appealing, and they are more likely to look at an image than a block of text. One third of the students wanted to receive short videos about the college process, and one third of the students wanted pictures of some sort, including motivational images. A small percentage of students also felt that articles and step-by-step application guides would be helpful.



ADVI FEATURES

Had students ever texted with a human advisor?

With one exception,⁶ none of the students had texted with a human ADVi advisor, and 50% of the students were unaware of the feature. Almost all students who learned of this feature in the interview would be interested in texting with an advisor in the future.

Why are students interested in texting with a human advisor?

Four of the students who were interested in texting with an advisor felt this way because they thought the human advisors would know more about college than their high school counselors, or they liked having advisors as a “back pocket” resource. Two students liked the idea of sending human advisors their small, non-personal questions. Other

⁶ This student believed they texted with a human advisor because the ADVi text messages included emojis and comforting words. This describes the ADVi bot texts as well, so we cannot confirm that the student actually texted with an advisor.

interested students preferred to meet with the same advisor to avoid repeating information, wanted the hours to be flexible and outside of school hours, and liked the idea of talking to someone who was not involved in their daily life like their school counselors. One student said she would feel nervous talking to a human advisor but would do it if there were no other options.

Why aren't students interested in texting with a human advisor?

Three students said they did not need the additional assistance and three students thought texting back and forth with a human would take too long. The other three students either felt comfortable just texting the bot, did not want to “be bothersome” to the human advisors, or were uncomfortable sharing personal information via text and would feel better over video.

Would students be interested in talking with a human advisor in real time via video or phone?

More than 80% of students were interested in talking in real time with ADVi's human advisors through video or phone. Eleven students wanted to ask more specific, complex questions that are hard to do via text and nine students liked the idea of seeing an advisor and knowing it is a real person. Five students did not think the video chats with

human advisors were necessary either because they could go to their potential college for specific information, they had access to an advisor at school, or they preferred texting with the bot.

Did students know they could text their own questions to ADVi?

53% of students did not know they could text their own questions to the bot. Of the twelve students who were aware of this feature, there was a mix of students who remembered reading about the feature in an ADVi message and those who texted on their own based on curiosity or past experience with text bots. Several students who knew about this feature had not tried this out, and one student said she avoided texting her own questions because she felt nervous about being connected to a human advisor by accident.



EXPECTATIONS

Did students remember opting in, and what were their initial expectations?

Most students did not remember how they opted into ADVi, and 10 students had no understanding of ADVi when they first started receiving messages. A third of the students expected to receive college reminders, and a smaller number of students expected messages from the universities they applied to, answers to general questions, help with FAFSA and scholarships, or messages from College Board or Apply Texas. One student did not expect to be able to interact with ADVi.

Has ADVi met the students' expectations?

Almost two-thirds of the students said ADVi has met their expectations and seven students said it has exceeded their expectations because of the detailed messages and 24-hour access. Only one student said that ADVi had not met their expectations because they had not interacted enough with the text bot.

Would it have been helpful to receive an email that confirmed the opt-in and provided more details about ADVi?

Twenty-one students said getting an email with more information about ADVi after opting in would have been helpful, and as we discuss later, could have increased student trust and engagement. Several students were already checking their email inbox frequently to stay on top of college updates, so they would have received this introductory message in a timely manner. The students who did not think it would be helpful either strongly preferred texting or thought the email would get lost in their inbox.



PERCEPTION

What did students like the most about ADVi, overall?

A third of the students especially liked ADVi's personality. The tone of the texts made the ADVi "feel very human" and the check-ins to see how students were doing made them feel like someone else cared about them. One student specifically liked the humor and use of emojis. Seven students liked the reminders about financial aid and grades the most because it "took a lot of the stress away." Five students liked the quality of the information they received; five students liked the frequency, the quick response time, and the 24-hour access to the bot; and four students liked the texts with menu options. A smaller percentage of students liked the campaign timeline, the intention behind the program, that ADVi was able to answer specific questions, and that the messages were sent as texts rather than phone calls or emails which take more effort to open.

What did students like the least about ADVi, overall?

A third of the students said there was nothing they liked the least about ADVi. Thirteen students said ADVi's campaign timeline lagged behind their personal timeline. Seven students did not like the frequency and quantity of texts, specifically when ADVi sent more than one text at a time resulting in a burst of notifications that distracted them in class. Six students did not like when ADVi repeated questions without remembering their previous answers. One student said that when ADVi asked if he completed a step for the second time, he became unsure of himself and doubted that he had done it. A smaller group of students said some of the information was redundant, the texts were infrequent in that they would receive messages for two weeks then not receive anything for a month, and they wished they could have opted in earlier, preferably in the 11th grade. One student did not like being asked what stage he was in at the beginning of the process when there were factors outside of his control like waiting for an admissions decision and FAFSA results. There was no consensus on the preferred frequency of the texts, some students wanted to receive more texts, and some wanted fewer texts especially now that they are further along in the process.

Would students recommend ADVi to others?

87% of students would recommend ADVi to their peers most popularly because it sends great reminders and is a helpful resource, especially for students who do not have other resources or are too shy to ask for help. Other reasons for recommending ADVi were to keep their friends and siblings on track, help answer questions, and because the information from ADVi is more in-depth than other resources. Two students would not recommend ADVi to other students; the first student said he would if his friends were interested in college, but most of them are not, and the second student said her friends are very independent and have figured things out on their own. The last two students said they would recommend ADVi if their suggestions for improvement⁷ were implemented.

⁷ One student requested friendlier texts, increased frequency, improved campaign timeline, and an earlier opportunity to opt-in, and the other wanted more campaign topics because he had only received information about financial aid.

TRUST

Did students trust the information they received from ADVi?

All but two of the students trusted the information they received from ADVi. A third of the students trusted ADVi because of its connection to other organizations: five of these students trusted ADVi because of its association with ApplyTexas, and four trusted ADVi because they thought the texts were from UTSA.⁸ The last student said that because she found out about ADVi at a UTSA information session, she immediately trusted it. Four students trusted ADVi because they believed it would not scam the students it was designed to help. Four students trusted ADVi because it answered all their questions or confirmed information they already knew. Other reasons for students' trust included the authentic tone of the messages, the introductory

⁸ These students may have been misinformed because of UEI's involvement in this research or because they only applied to UTSA.

text, being able to research ADVi, knowing it gets its information from humans, and because ADVi did not ask for personal information and the links worked properly. Of the two students who did not trust ADVi, one student said she is generally not trusting of things that are texted to her, and another student sometimes trusted it and sometimes did not especially when links were involved.

Would the students' level of trust change if they received the information through email instead of text?

Six students said they would not trust the content more if it came through email either because text messages are more efficient or because emails would make the information more confidential and less casual. Seven students said they would have the same level of trust since the information is coming from the same source. Four students said they may trust the emails more if the messages were professional and came from a company address with contact information and proper formatting. Three students would trust emails more and one student said since she was already receiving emails from colleges, she would also trust that information. Although it is not a factor of trust, seven students mentioned that they receive too many emails or do not check their email frequently.

What could be done to increase students' level of trust in ADVi?

None of the students had heard about ADVi from school staff, and half of the students said they would trust ADVi more if their school promoted it. Five students would trust ADVi more if ADVi shared more information including what it is, who created and monitors it, and if the students had access to a website with more information. Students did not have consensus about other ideas for increasing trust, which included: more check-ins from the bot; content specific to the student's college(s) of interest and to their specific college-going status; reviews from past users; information about where student's responses and information go; and friendlier messages with easy-to-understand language. Eight students said there was nothing that could be done to increase their trust because they already fully trusted ADVi.



COLLEGE-GOING RESOURCES

What other resources did students turn to for information about the college process?

The most popular college-going resources used by students were family and friends, high school counselors, and the internet, specifically Google and social media. See Appendix C for a detailed table with the interviewees' college-going resources.

Which resources were the most important or helpful?

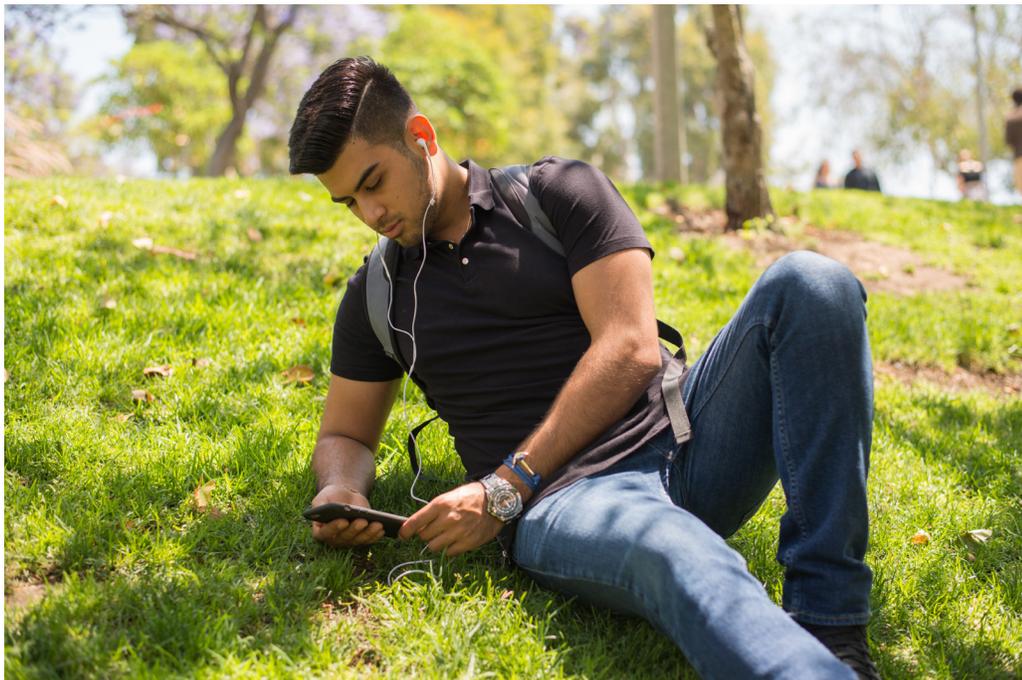
A third of the students said their most important resource was either their high school counselors, college and career programs, or other school-based resources. Five students said ADVi was their most important resource because of the versatility of information and the reassurance it provides; and the remaining students said university materials, the internet, and family and friends were their most important resources.

Which resources were the least important or helpful?

Six students said their high school counselors were the least helpful because of their lack of information and inability to attend to all of the students. Six students said ADVi was the least helpful because they had already completed the steps that ADVi sent them. Four students said their family members were the least helpful, and one student said the internet was the least helpful. Eight students did not consider any of their resources to be the least helpful.

Where does ADVi rank on students' list of resources?

Seven students said ADVi ranked highest on their list of resources (either on its own or tied with another resource), eleven students said it ranked in the middle, and nine students said that it ranked last. The other three did not answer the question.



STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE COLLEGE-GOING PROCESS

How confident did students feel when it came to knowing the steps to get into college?

Half of the students felt confident or somewhat confident and a little more than a third of the students felt very confident. Several students said they became more confident as they moved along in the college process. Other students were confident because they had multiple resources, submitted a large number of applications, or had a high level of determination.

What was the students' understanding of the college-going process?

Appendix D includes a detailed table with the interviewees' descriptions of college-going steps in relation to their level of confidence. Students

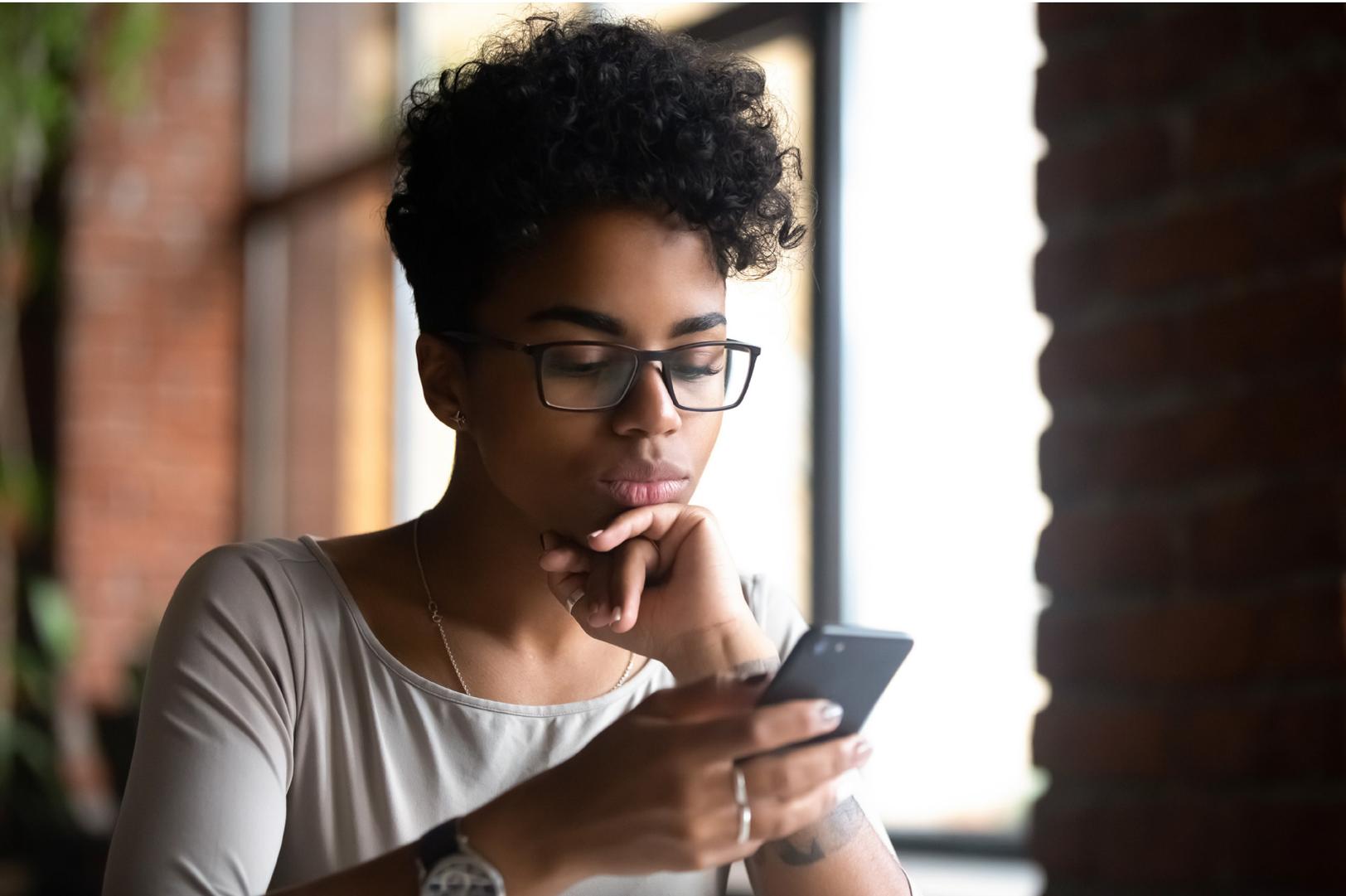
were asked to give advice to a high school student who did not know where to begin in the college process. Notable advice from the students included:

- “Apply as soon as possible and even though you may have your heart set on one school, you need to still keep your options open.”
- “Turn in applications before the priority deadline unless you have something you could add to your resume.”
- “Take your summer deciding what you want to major in and what is important to you, how far the school will be, how much will it cost, and what financial aid and scholarships you should or can apply for.”
- “Write an informational university essay so the university gets to know who you are...and apply to as many scholarships as you can.”
- “Do an overview of who you are as a student: check your GPA, test scores, and your habits.”
- “Focus on academics and become a well-rounded student early on in the high school process and join any extra curriculums.”
- “Get your FAFSA done because it’s going to take the longest to compile your parents’ tax documents.”

Overall, students seemed to have a good understanding of the steps they had already taken but offered few steps that are taken after a student is accepted. ADVi has the potential to fill these gaps in information since the campaigns will continue through August.

Are there any steps that students still felt uncertain about?

Half of the students felt unsure about their remaining steps including registering for orientation, housing, and classes, submitting their final transcript, and applying for scholarships. One student wondered how she will fit in at the college she chooses and how she will adapt to being independent. Another student said she had uncertainties, but she has time to figure that out and just wants to enjoy the rest of high school.



UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES

A third of the students were learning virtually and did not feel supported by their high schools in the college process, so they engaged more with ADVi. One student who is working asynchronously does not have consistent access to his teachers for assistance, let alone his counselors. The students who did feel supported by their schools clarified that it was specifically the college counselors (either in the traditional sense or through on-campus college centers and classes at one of the high schools) who assisted them. One student shared that he texted the bot a lot while learning remotely with little to no access to high school resources.

One student had learning differences and was unfamiliar with commonly used college-going terms like “waitlist,” and “2-year and 4-year schools.” He also struggled with wording of questions on his college applications and wondered about the availability of campus services to help with his academic success. This student shared that he is enrolled in special education classes and has found the college application and decision process to be particularly challenging.

One student is reenrolling at a community college. Although she is not a high school student, she still thought the texts were very helpful and relevant to her. ADVi was not able to provide information about submitting an appeal to reenroll in school, but she benefitted from the financial aid information.

One student applied for both in-state and out-of-state schools, and although she plans to go out-of-state, she still found ADVi to be helpful and relevant. She recommended that the team increase outreach to students who are solely applying out-of-state and therefore, would not be able to opt-in through ApplyTexas.



APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

BASELINE USER INFO, ENGAGEMENT LEVEL, COLLEGE STEPS AWARENESS

1. ***Gather/confirm the following information:***
 - a) Name
 - b) School

2. ***Do you know what your plans are after high school?***
 - a) If college, where are you in the process of getting to college?
 - b) If not college, are these texts still helpful for you?

3. ***Have you ever responded to one of the text bot's messages by*** participating in one of the challenges, selecting from the menu of options, or sending the text bot a message?

4. ***Can you think of a time when you took an action in your college process because of a message from the text bot? (Probing for worked on application, submitting something, etc.)***

CONTENT (UTILITY)

5. *Of the topics covered by the text bot, which have been most helpful?*

Which have been least helpful?

a) Were there any topics that seemed irrelevant to where you were in your college process?

b) Were there any topics that you wish were covered during a specific time in your college process?

6. *How do you feel about text bot messages that only include text compared to messages that direct you to a link for more info?*

a) What other type of content would be a good resource? What type of content do you think wouldn't be helpful? (Probing for video, infographic, etc.)

7. *The text bot does have a feature that allows to you to text directly with a human advisor. Have you ever texted with one of these human advisors?*

a) if no, did you know you have access to human advisors? Would you be interested in texting with a human advisor?

b) if yes, did you know you were texting a human? How was your overall interaction after speaking with the text bot and a human advisor?

c) What do you think about human advisors offering office hours or video chats? Would you be interested in this?

8. *Did you know that at any time, you can text your own questions to the text bot and it will respond back with an answer?*

9. Can you tell us about the other resources you turn to for information about the college process? (Probing for peers/friends, high school staff, family, the Internet/Google, after school program, etc.)

a) Thinking about all the sources of information you have on the college process, can you identify which one's are most important? Most helpful? Least important? Least helpful? Where does the text bot rank on your list of resources?

PERCEPTION OF THE TOOL

10. Do you remember how you opted into the text bot?

11. What was your understanding of the text bot when you opted in?

a) In addition to the original opt-in text, would it have been helpful to receive an email that confirmed your opt-in and provided more details on the text bot?

12. What kinds of information and messages did you expect to receive from the text bot?

a) Has the text bot matched your expectations in terms of content, method, and frequency? (Probing for less or more, opting out, #pause feature awareness)

13. Do you trust the information provided by the text bot? Why or why not?

a) Would your level of trust change at all if the information came through email?

b) What could be done to increase your level of trust in the text bot?

c) How much has your school promoted and encouraged you to opt-in and chat with the text bot?

14. What do you like most about the text bot, if anything?

- a) What do you like the least about the text bot, if anything?
- b) What would you change, add, or remove if you could?

15. Would you recommend this text bot to others? Why or why not?

UNDERSTANDING OF THE COLLEGE PROCESS

16. How confident do you feel when it comes to knowing the steps you need to take to get to college?

- a) Pretend I am a high school student who doesn't know where to begin. Based on what you know, can you share with me a step-by-step process for getting to college?
- b) What steps have you already taken?
- c) Are there steps that you aren't that sure about?

WRAP UP

17. Is there any other information that we haven't covered yet that you would like to share about your experience with the text bot?

18. Would you be willing to be contacted again by our team, if we have any other questions or want to follow up about anything?

APPENDIX B:

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT INTERVIEWEES

High School	District	Opt-In Month	Engagement Level
Alamo Heights HS	Alamo Heights	Nov 2020	Low
McCollum HS	Harlandale	Nov 2020	Low
Churchill HS	North East	Nov 2020	Low
International School of the Americas	North East	Dec 2020	Low
Legacy of Educational Excellence HS	North East	Nov 2020	Low
MacArthur HS	North East	Dec 2020	Low
Reagan HS	North East	Nov 2020	Low
Roosevelt HS	North East	Feb 2021	Low
O'Connor HS	Northside	Oct 2020	Low
O'Connor HS	Northside	Oct 2020	Low
Warren HS	Northside	Feb 2021	Low
CAST Tech HS	San Antonio	Dec 2020	Low
Edison HS	San Antonio	Nov 2020	Low
Edison HS	San Antonio	Dec 2020	Low
Highlands HS	San Antonio	Nov 2020	Low
Highlands HS	San Antonio	Nov 2020	Low
Lanier HS	San Antonio	Nov 2020	Low
Southside HS	Southside	Nov 2020	Low
Southwest HS	Southwest	Nov 2020	Low
Southwest HS	Southwest	Nov 2020	Low
International School of the Americas	North East	Oct 2020	Medium
Legacy of Educational Excellence HS	North East	Oct 2020	Medium
Clark HS	Northside	Nov 2020	Medium
Holmes HS	Northside	Nov 2020	Medium
Jefferson HS	San Antonio	Oct 2020	Medium
Southwest HS	Southwest	Jan 2021	Medium
Harlandale HS	Harlandale	Oct 2020	High
O'Connor HS	Northside	Oct 2020	High
Southwest HS	Southwest	Nov 2020	High
Southwest Preparatory School-Northwest	Charter	Nov 2020	High

*The UEI team categorized students into three levels of engagement by calculating the number of texts the student sent in per week of receiving ADVi texts. Low = less than .5 texts per week; Medium = between .5 and .99 texts per week; High = 1 or more texts per week.

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEWEE'S COLLEGE-GOING RESOURCES

Interview Number	School Counselors	College Advisors (At High School)	University Staff/Website	Personal Information (Checklists/Own Resources)	Internet (Google/Social Media)	College Prep Classes and Programs	Family/Friends	Other High School Resources (Peers/Library/Teachers)	ADVi
1		X		X	X		X		
2	X						X		
3	X	X			X				
4							X	X	
5						X	X		
6					X	X		X	X
7									
8						X	X		
9									
10									
11		X						X	
12						X	X		
13		X				X	X		
14	X		X		X		X	X	
15		X				X	X	X	
16	X	X			X				
17			X						
18	X					X	X		
19		X					X	X	
20	X	X			X		X	X	
21	X		X		X				X
22	X					X			X
23	X		X				X		
24	X		X			X	X		
25	X				X		X		
26	X						X		
27	X				X		X		
28	X				X			X	
29	X				X		X		
30	X				X	X	X	X	
Total	16	8	5	1	12	10	19	9	3

APPENDIX D:

UNDERSTANDING OF COLLEGE-GOING PROCESS

Interv. #	Self-Disclosed Level of Confidence*	Contact Counselors, Teachers, and/or College/Career Hub	Use Other Resources	Choose Major (Based on Interests)	Choose Schools to Apply to	Visit Schools (In Person or Admission Page)	Take SAT/ACT	Financial Prep (FAFSA/Scholarship)	Apply to Schools ASAP (Priority/Early Decision, etc.)	Write Essays	Get Accepted	Review Financial Aid Package	Commit	Register for Orientation
1	Confident			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
2	Very				X				X		X			
3	Very	X						X						
4	Very								X					
5	Very	X	X	X				X						
6	Confident	X					X							
7	Very			X	X			X	X	X				
8	Very			X	X			X				X		
9	Very	X		X	X			X						
10	Confident			X	X			X	X					
11	Not at All						X	X						
12	Somewhat			X	X			X	X					
13	Somewhat			X	X			X	X					
14	Very						X	X	X	X				
15	Somewhat				X	X			X					
16	Confident			X	X		X	X	X					
17								X	X		X	X		
18	Confident			X	X		X	X	X					
19	Somewhat							X		X			X	X
20	Confident	X						X	X	X				X
21	Very	X	X		X				X					
22	Confident	X			X			X	X					
23	Very				X	X	X		X	X				
24	Confident			X	X	X								X
25	Confident	X	X			X				X				
26	Confident							X	X					
27	Very				X			X	X	X			X	
28	Somewhat			X	X	X		X	X	X				
29	Very							X	X	X				
30	Confident	X		X		X		X	X					
Total		9	3	13	17	7	7	23	21	9	4	3	3	3

The following steps were only mentioned by one student: talk to current students (Interview 1), prepare for interviews (Student 7), choose roommates (Interview 19), get a job or internship (Student 25), ask for 3 letters of recommendation (Student 28).

Only two students mentioned evaluating yourself as a student (Interviews 16 & 25), creating a resume (Interviews 1 & 25), requesting a transcript (Interviews 14 & 16), checking email often (Interviews 8 & 15), and registering for classes (Interview 10 & 19).

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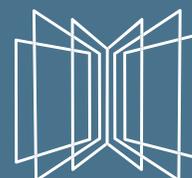
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