



Student Conversations Have Changed

How conversational AI is reshaping engagement
for career schools and driving action

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How are you using AI for student engagement at your institution?



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Waiting for participants



Students don't fit yesterday's enrollment model

Today's students expect convenience, clarity, and choice



Working Adults

Can't take calls during business hours



Caregivers

Research happens in fleeting moments

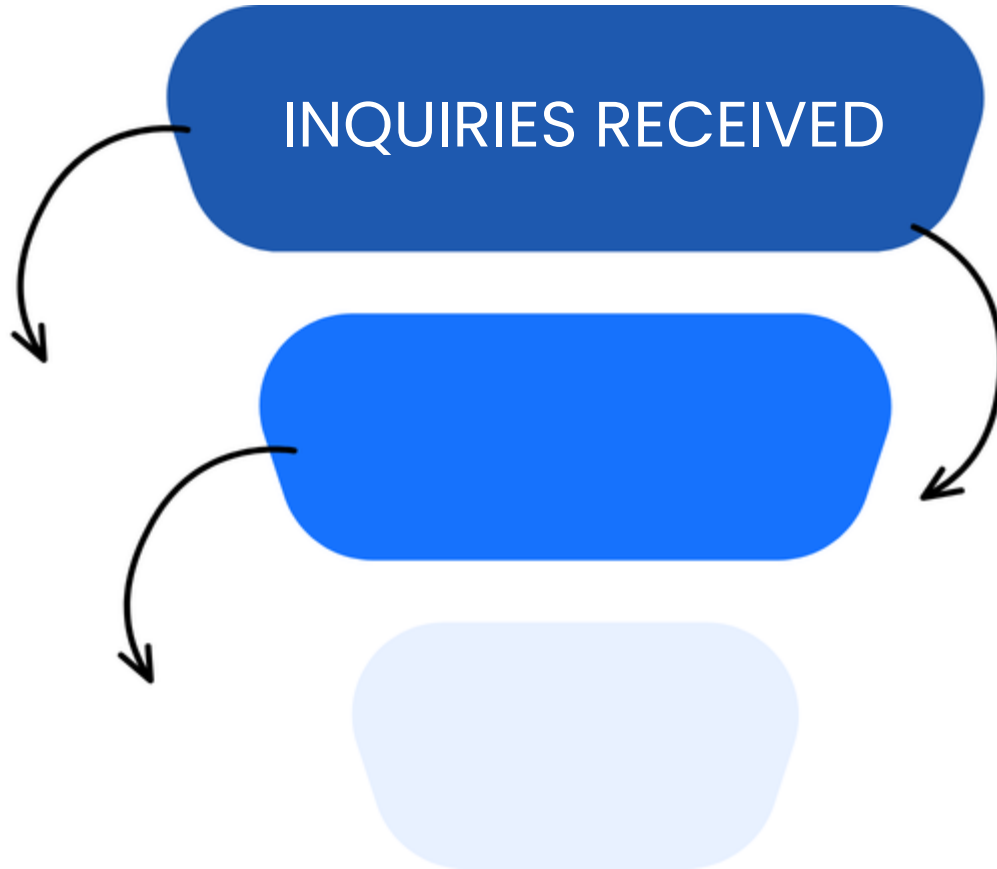


Urgent Decision-Makers

Ready to act, but only when it's convenient

The funnel is leaking at first contact

It's not a lead problem, it's a response problem



40–44% of inquiries go unanswered

UPCEA, Enrollment Process Review: Secret Shopper Analysis, December 2025

Nearly 1 in 2 inquiries receive no reply

UPCEA, Enrollment Process Review: Secret Shopper Analysis, December 2025

First response can win the enrollment

Speed-to-lead is the edge, and it's slipping away

11h 47m

2021 Average

Response times were
already slow

7h 22m

2023 Average

The fastest response time
on record

14h 23m

2025 Average

Enough time for a
competitor to respond first

Every hour of delay is a window for a competitor to respond first

2025 median response time was 3h 18m — medians stayed far more consistent across years than averages

Source: UPCEA, Enrollment Process Review: Secret Shopper Analysis, December 2025 (n=1,000 inquiries, 182 institutions)

AI is changing the rules

But not all models are created equal



Deterministic

Recommended for regulation

- **Predictable by design**
Transparent & auditable
- **Built for accountability**
Full control, no guesswork
- **Fits rule-bound work**
Compliance stays in charge



Generative

- **Strong with ambiguity**
Great for first drafts & content creation
- **Variability trade-off**
Needs review — outputs vary
- **Human-in-the-loop**
Fast draft, not final word



Agentic

- **Goal-driven** Strings tools & steps together
- **Processes stay moving**
Keeps moving, less waiting
- **GenAI creates outputs**
Coordinates outcomes, not just outputs

AI begins the conversation for you

No matter the date, time, or circumstance



Immediate Acknowledgment

Confirm the RFI the moment it's submitted



Common Q&A

Answer program, cost, and schedule questions instantly



Appointment Scheduling

Books calls with admissions counselors at a time that works



Intent Qualification

Identifies serious prospects and escalates to human staff



Amplify counselors, don't replace them

Create a human + AI partnership

Where to use AI

AI

-  Speed
-  Persistence
-  Personalization
-  Availability
-  Scale

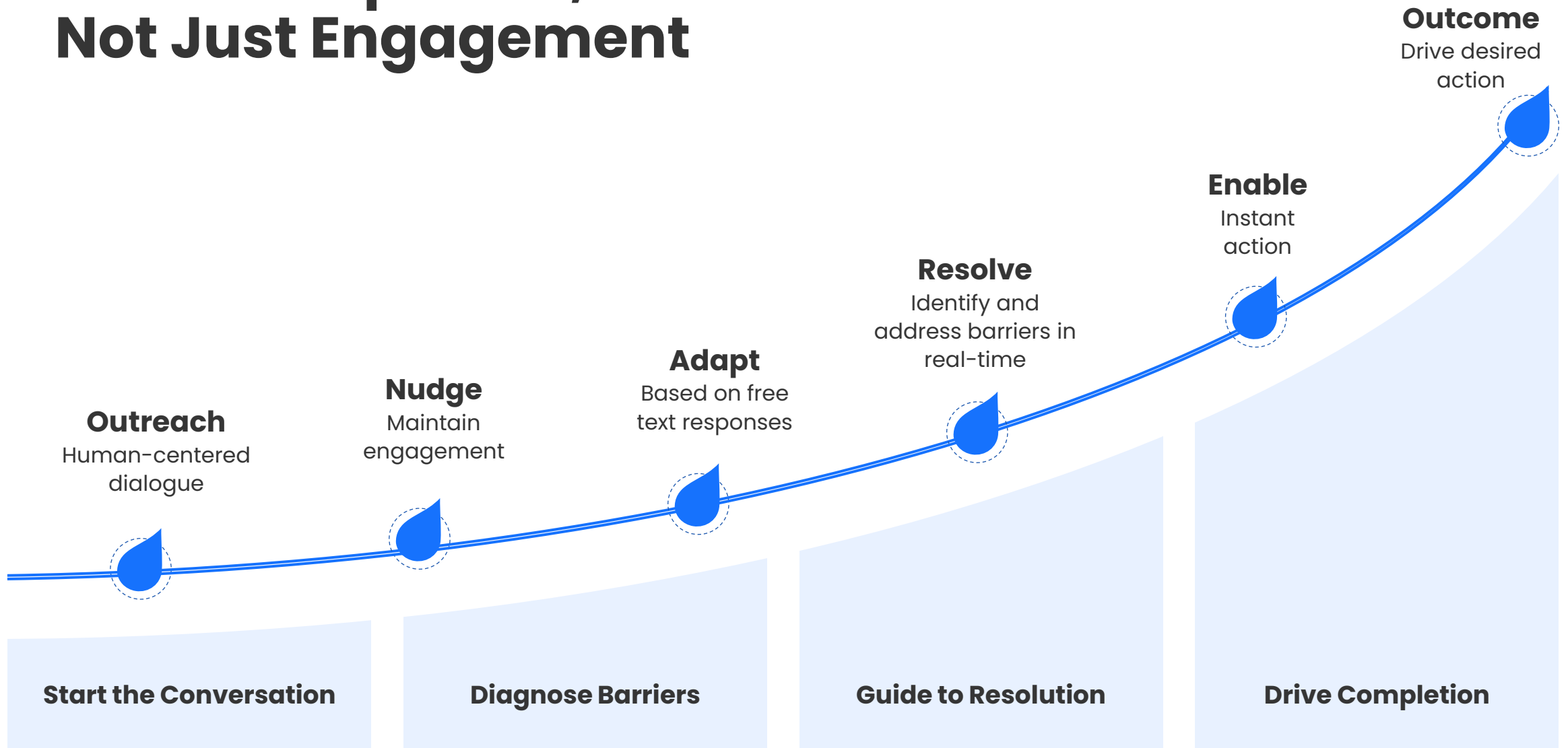
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Where to use humans

HUMAN

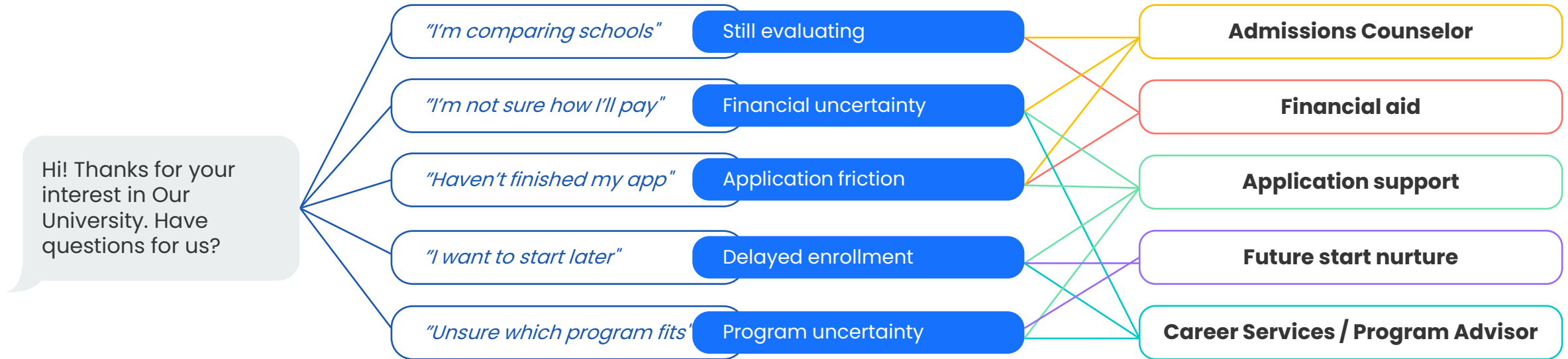
-  Advising
-  Coaching
-  Relationship building
-  Complex decisions

Drive Completion, Not Just Engagement

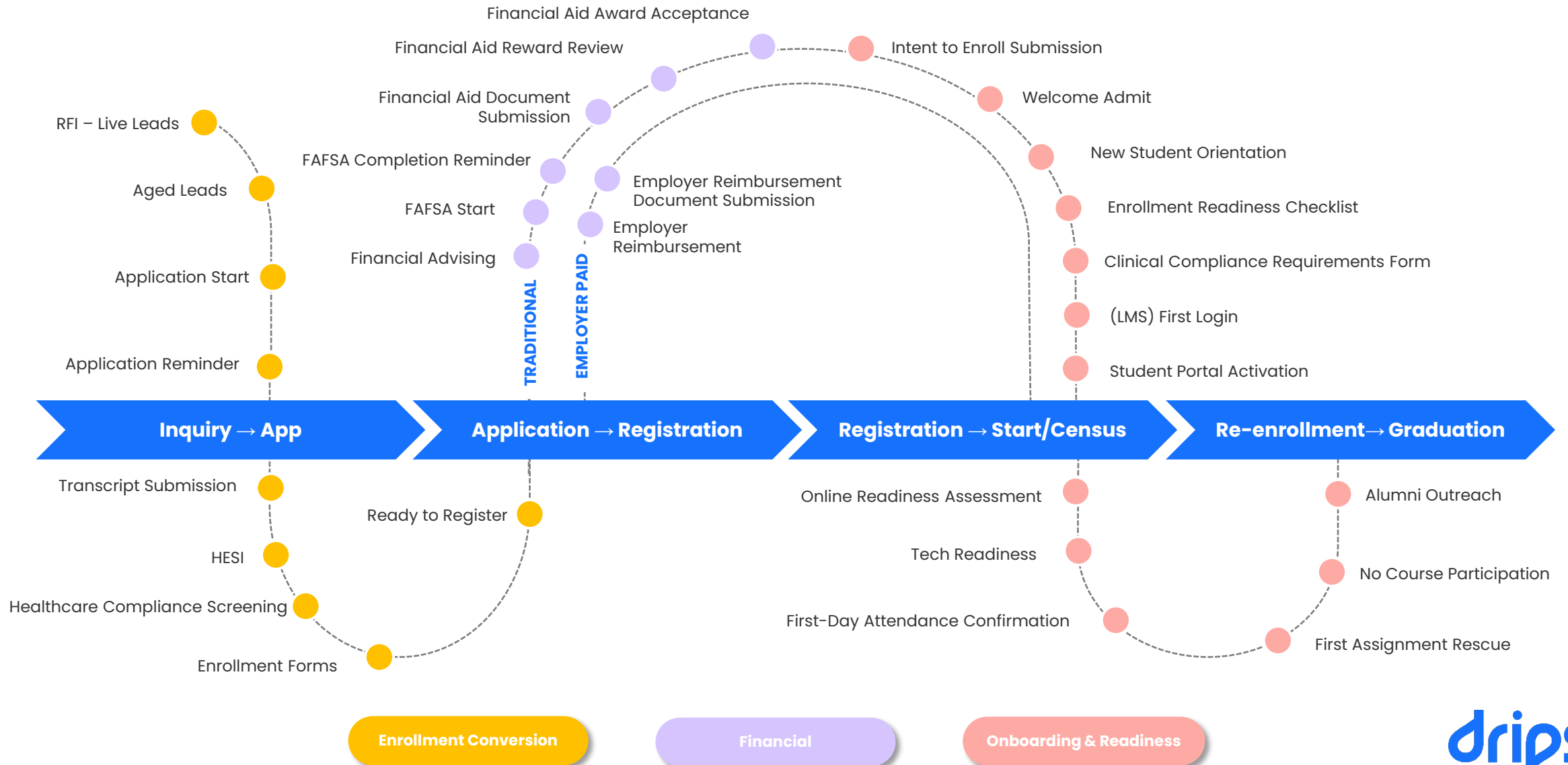


One message, different signals, different next steps

The hidden complexity behind every outreach conversation



Transforming Student Lifecycle



Governance isn't optional

Deploying AI responsibly requires guardrails at day one



Consent & Opt-Out

Explicit SMS consent at point of inquiry; every message includes a clear opt-out path

Non-negotiable for every outbound message.



FERPA-Safe Content

AI conversations must never expose student data or create compliance risk

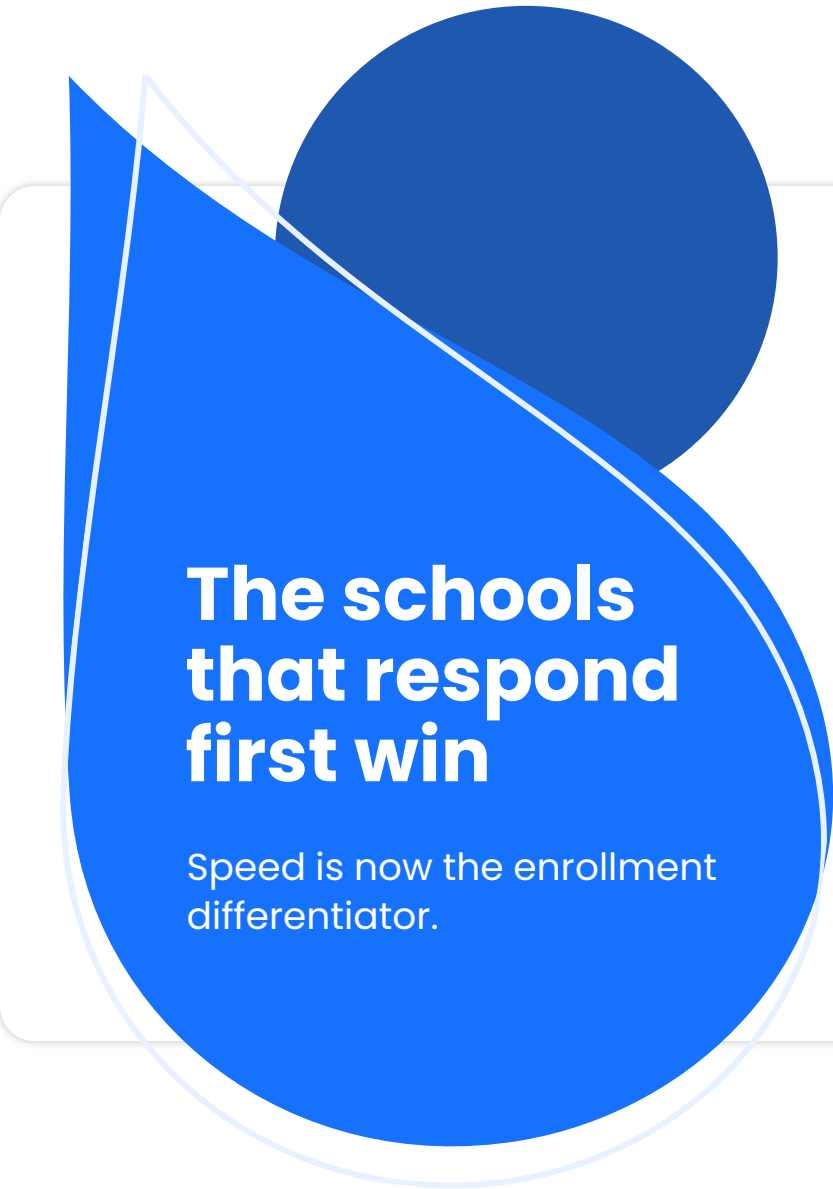
Zero tolerance for student data exposure.



Escalation & Audit Trails

Clear rules for when AI hands off to humans, with full conversation logs for review

Every handoff is logged, every time.



The schools that respond first win

Speed is now the enrollment differentiator.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Acknowledge every inquiry quickly

No more 40% of inquiries going dark after first contact

2. Compete on response time, not just reputation

Close the 7-hour gap before a competitor does

3. Empower your counselors with warmer leads

Let AI do the triage; let humans do the relationship

**Where do you see the
biggest opportunity to use
AI for engagement across
the student lifecycle at
your institution?**

Let's Keep in Touch



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Thank You!