Pathways Text Messaging Policy

Overview

The Pathways platform offers text messaging functionality that can be used on a case-by-case basis to communicate with students and/or across the board for appointment reminders. Because we recognize that texting students supports a holistic advising approach, we have developed this policy governing the use of text messaging to (a) create uniformity in how Pathways users communicate with students and (b) ensure that students are not inundated with text messages from the Pathways platform. It is important to note that students can opt out of receiving text messages, but those who do will continue to receive messages from Pathways to their Pitt email address.

Below we outline general recommendations to help optimize the use of text messaging in Pathways as well as specific recommendations governing appointment scheduling and messaging with students.

General Recommendations

- When advisors meet with students, explain the types of communications that Pathways users might send and ask how the student would like to receive these types of communications, noting that the method of communication might depend on the type of communication. Add a “Note” to that student in Pathways about their preferred method(s) of individual communication.
- Keep the message short. You only have 160 characters. But it is important to identify yourself, so students will know from whom the message is coming. For example, at the beginning of the message write, “This is your advisor, Amanda Brodish, from the Provost’s Office.”
- When possible, use the student’s name in the text message.
- If you will be texting several students at once, allocate time to immediately respond to students directly within the Pathways platform. When you respond to students directly in the Pathways platform, you can choose to reply with a text message, which can be helpful for quick communication with students.
- The content of a text message is part of the student’s educational record and would be subject to a FERPA request. Accordingly, be sure to follow the Pathways documentation guidelines in writing text messages.

Recommendations for Appointment Scheduling & Reminders

- For advisor-scheduled appointments (via appointment campaigns or individually scheduled appointments), appointment reminders (sent one hour before the appointment) should be sent via text message and/or email, based on advisor choice.
- For student-scheduled appointments, the default is for students to receive appointment reminders (sent one hour before the appointment) via text. However, students can opt-out of receiving reminders via text message (by replying “STOP” to the text message) and/or opt-in to receiving these reminders via email.
- For early morning appointments or when a student is a few minutes late to an advising appointment, consider sending the student a text message reminding them of the appointment.
Recommendations for Sending Messages to Students

- For topics that are not time-sensitive, Pathways users should first use email functionality in Pathways to reach out to students. If students are unresponsive to email, Pathways users can consider using text message functionality. But consider referring students to their email for more information about the topic at hand.

- For time-sensitive issues, Pathways users may use the text messaging functionality to communicate with students. Examples of time-sensitive issues include failure to enroll in classes for the next term, a missing item left in a classroom or office, or a missing piece of information for an upcoming appointment.