

KEY
TAKEAWAYS



Student Success in a Time of Remote Learning

WITH
SUPPORT
FROM



AdmitHub

THE CHRONICLE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Engage Your Students at the Intersection of Technology and Empathy

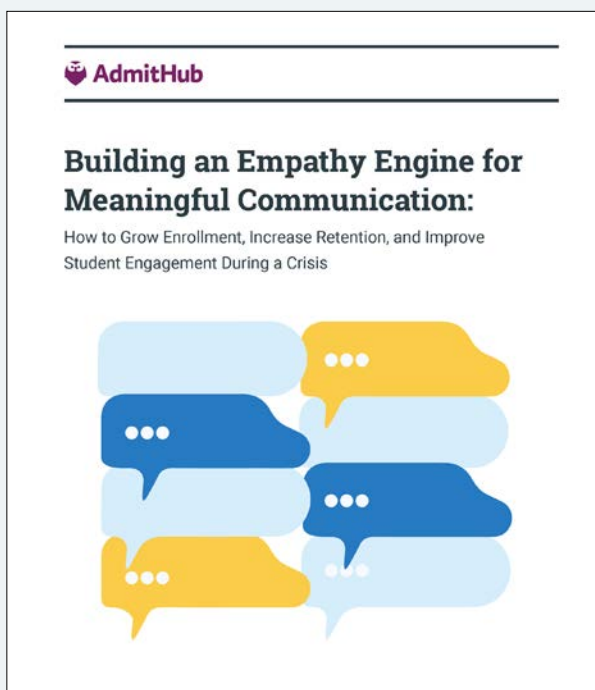
Drive Your Institution's Empathy Engine With AdmitHub

Fostering meaningful, personalized interactions between your students and your institution is critical to student success.

That's why higher education institutions like yours are increasingly adopting technology to streamline communications with students – from recruitment all the way through to graduation and beyond. Evidence proves that student engagement, when done well, leads to trusting relationships between students and their schools and ultimately improves student success rates.

Are you ready to **build an empathy engine** that will help you develop meaningful relationships with your students at scale? AdmitHub makes it easy.

Powered by artificial intelligence designed specifically for student engagement, AdmitHub's behaviorally intelligent chatbot platform enables you to reach the right students with the right message at the right time, all through the channels today's students prefer to use. It also empowers students to access the answers they need on their own terms and without judgment – so they can make fast, informed decisions and overcome challenges throughout the higher education journey.



GET YOUR FREE WHITE PAPER

AdmitHub's white paper, "Building an Empathy Engine for Meaningful Communication," examines how you can play a critical role in your students' lives by harnessing the power of behavioral intelligence.

To explore real-life use cases and key results from colleges and universities that have implemented empathy engines of their own, **download the white paper** for free today.

[GET MY COPY](#)

Of all the elements of higher education that have been disrupted by the pandemic, the student experience has perhaps suffered the most. Many students feel disconnected from their colleges and isolated from their classmates. Student success, never an easy puzzle for colleges to solve, has now been made even more difficult. Should professors be more accommodating and more lenient? Are they nudging their students too much? Not enough? What current best practices can be applied after the pandemic is over?

To help colleges ensure that their students thrive in this unprecedented time, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently hosted a virtual forum, with support from AdmitHub, called “Student Success in a Time of Remote Learning.” The forum, moderated by Beckie Supiano, a senior writer at *The Chronicle*, included Monica Brockmeyer, senior associate provost for student success at Wayne State University; Katharine Meyer, a postdoctoral research associate in the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University; and Brian R. Mitra, dean of student affairs at Kingsborough Community College.

The following comments, which have been edited for clarity and length, represent key takeaways from the forum. To hear the full discussion, access the archived version [here](#).

Beckie Supiano: The pandemic has created conditions that are incredibly difficult for both students and instructors. What do we know about how the pandemic has affected learning?

Monica Brockmeyer: Most places have had some kind of academic forgiveness, whether it’s pass/fail or credit/no credit. And so our retention numbers look a little bit better than we might have feared, but our GPA numbers and the credits that have been obtained by our students aren’t going to tell us as much as they did before. Especially when we have curricula with sequences, we’re going to have to be concerned with how



Beckie Supiano

senior writer,
The Chronicle

students fare as they move forward. I'm guessing we're going to see things are just not quite what we had hoped and that we're going to be making repairs, whether it's pedagogical repairs, curricular repairs, or policy repairs. We're actually going to be rewiring higher ed for some years to come.

Brian R. Mitra: It's interesting to hear from our students in terms of what the learning looks like. In some of these conversations, it's clear they are really having a challenge with online learning. It's just not for them, especially at a community college, where they're looking for that high-touch engagement. The opportunity for our students to be self-directed in their learning has been challenging for them. How does it work with their jobs and taking care of their families? Our faculty and staff try to approach each situation and each student as unique and to provide needed support. Our university system has pushed the withdrawal date back, and we have a credit/no credit option, but those all come with ramifications as well.

Supiano: What is a usual best practice in student success that you had to adjust because of pandemic conditions?

Katharine Meyer: A great example is around some of these important tasks like renewing your financial aid or course registration, where you could have this in-person awareness, something like drop-in hours to get assistance. We can try to replicate that in a virtual experience as a Zoom classroom, but we should also think creatively, maybe doing an Instagram Q&A or using a different platform to answer questions.

Brockmeyer: We had so many peer mentors and study-skill coaches in a very wonderful physical, centralized space right in the middle of our undergraduate library. And so we had quite a bit of deliberation over figuring out how to use virtual tools to really try to create that notion of a space where students know where to go.

Supiano: How do we know that we're not being too paternalistic with students by nudging them? Shouldn't they learn how to do these things on their own?

Meyer: I think of the dentist office as a prime example of behavioral science being applied to get people to follow through on important tasks. You go to the dentist, and at the end of that appointment, you sign up for your next one in six months. At my office we get a sticker that I can put on my agenda. A week before



Monica Brockmeyer

*senior associate provost
for student success,
Wayne State University*

my appointment, I get an email asking me to confirm. Two days before my appointment, I get a text message asking me to text back and confirm. And I don't think anyone's looking at that and saying, Gosh, Katharine, what's wrong with you? Why haven't you learned to manage your own dental health? Particularly in the middle of a pandemic, we should do everything we can to help people follow through on hard activities. We need to recognize that students are living busy lives and they have a lot of other things going on. They care about education, and they want to succeed. But there are other things going on with their families and society that are keeping them from doing that. It is the role of a college to support students on that journey.

Supiano: Some students will try to abuse their professors' flexibility during the pandemic. How do you walk the line between trying to be empathetic and flexible and maintaining quality?

Mitra: If there is no flexibility just because of what the rigor of the coursework is, for example if it's a nursing program or something like that, then there are bars we have to set. You might need to say to the student, "You're not going to benefit from this right now because you need to do X, Y, and Z. And if you don't get that experience, it's not going to help you moving forward." And those are the tough conversations we're going to have to have.

Meyer: It's hard to anticipate every situation, but be clear with students. For example, "I want to be flexible. I want to work with you. And here are the four ways we can be flexible if this happens." So if a student misses an assignment: "We understand that things are hard right now. Alternative 1, you write this one-page summary. Alternative 2, you have an office-hours conversation with me." Lay out what the flexible options are at the beginning so students know what the response is going to be if they need to take advantage of it.

Supiano: What do you do in this remote time if students are having problems with devices? Some people are really cut off from college and the world right now.

Mitra: When we transitioned to remote learning, we assumed a lot of things. We assumed that every student had a device. And if they did, we assumed they had access to Wi-Fi. That really was a big challenge for us. The university system itself purchased over 30,000 devices for students. There are still requests today, and



Katharine Meyer

postdoctoral research associate,
Annenberg Institute for School Reform
at Brown University

the resources and trainings have to be continuously revisited. Whether it's how to use Blackboard or your email, it's not just a one-time thing.

Brockmeyer: Most universities spent a lot of money in the fall getting computers, hot spots, calculators, and then they had to distribute them. But all of us should be mindful of the technology that students actually need. A Chromebook doesn't help a student if a needed program doesn't run on Chromebook. It's important to be very explicit in thinking through what technology you need and what is the likelihood of your student having access to that technology.

Supiano: What, if anything, are you planning to do differently to support students in the spring?

Brockmeyer: We learned that that students liked synchronous classes and depended on the connections from them more than we anticipated. We're going to have more synchronous sections than we had in the fall. We have to constantly listen to our faculty, staff, and students and be flexible enough to make adjustments.

Meyer: One of the most important things to do this spring is to really prepare for the summer and the fall and the fact that eventually we will revert back to more in-person learning. Psychologically it was a difficult transition to being home based, but people have adapted to that. It's going to be an equally difficult transition back to more in-person learning. We need to alleviate fears people have about changes they made in their lives as a result of their remote status, for example around child care.



Brian R. Mitra
dean of student affairs,
Kingsborough Community College

This "Key Takeaways" was produced by Chronicle Intelligence. Please contact CI@chronicle.com with questions or comments.

©2021 by The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inc. All rights reserved. This material may not be reproduced without prior written permission of The Chronicle. For permission requests, contact us at copyright@chronicle.com Browse other titles at store.chronicle.com

**THE CHRONICLE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**