

# **Students' Preferences for Receiving Communication from the University: A Report from the Student Life Survey**

Center for the Study of Student Life

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**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

## INTRODUCTION

This report explores questions on the Student Life Survey asking how students prefer to receive official university communication. This report looks at patterns in students' preferences over the past four years the Student Life Survey was conducted (2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017) to see if there have been changes over time. Furthermore, this report considers how students' communication preferences vary between student demographic backgrounds.

## METHODS

The Student Life Survey is administered annually by the Center for the Study of Student Life to examine trends in student engagement and sense of belonging, as well as to improve institutional practices and to address current issues affecting students at Ohio State. The data used in this report are from the 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017 Student Life Surveys.

The 2013 Student Life Survey was distributed to a random sample of 2,000 undergraduate students at The Ohio State University in October 2013. This survey received 778 responses (a 38.9% response rate).

The 2015 Student Life Survey was administered to a random sample of 5,000 undergraduate students at The Ohio State University. This survey received 1,039 responses (a 20.8% response rate).

The 2016 Student Life Survey was administered to random samples of 4,000 Columbus campus undergraduate students, 1,000 graduate/professional students, and 1,000 regional campus undergraduate students. A total of 744 Columbus campus undergraduate students (18.6% response rate), 209 graduate/professional students (20.9% response rate), and 176 regional campus students (17.6% response rate) participated in the survey.

The 2017 Student Life Survey was administered to random samples of 4,000 undergraduate students and 1,000 graduate and professional students on the Columbus campus. A total of 1,288 students responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of 25.8%. The response rate was 24.1% among undergraduate students and 32.4% among graduate and professional students.

Sampling strategies vary between years but this report focuses on Columbus campus undergraduate students across all years. See Appendix A for a summary of respondents' demographic and academic characteristics.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Students report similar patterns in their preferences for receiving official university communication over time. The vast majority of students prefer to receive communications via email (over 80%).
- Between 2013 and 2015, there was a decline the percentage of students who preferred to receive information about university events via social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook).
- There are statistically significant differences in communication preferences by students' race/ethnicity and international student status. Despite these differences, the majority of students prefer email as the primary method of communication from the university.

## FINDINGS

### TREND DATA

The following table shows trends across all four years of the Student Life Survey with regard to how students would most like to receive official university communication. Across all four years, students overwhelmingly say they would like to receive official university communication through email.

*How would you most like to receive official university communication?*

Type of Communication	2013 (n = 624)	2015 (n = 759)	2016 (n = 680)	2017 (n = 882)
E-mails	79.0%	86.4%	88.4%	82.1%
Phone calls	0.5%	1.3%	0.6%	0.0%
Text messages	4.8%	4.5%	5.2%	8.1%
Website content	2.2%	0.5%	1.5%	0.9%
Twitter	2.4%	0.9%	0.2%	0.3%
Facebook	1.6%	0.5%	0.6%	0.3%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	5.0%	2.9%	2.9%	6.8%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	3.5%	2.5%	0.6%	1.1%
Other	1.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%

The following table shows trends across all four years of the Student Life Survey with regard to how students would most like to hear about university events. Students varied in their responses across the four years considered, with students in 2013 less likely to say they preferred to hear about university events through email and more likely to say they would like to hear about university events through social media like Twitter or Facebook. From 2015 to 2017, a steady 70% of students said they would like to hear about university events through email.

*How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?*

Type of Communication	2013 (n = 635)	2015 (n = 757)	2016 (n = 673)	2017 (n = 878)
E-mails	41.9%	71.1%	70.0%	70.6%
Phone calls	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Text messages	4.1%	8.1%	6.4%	7.2%
Website content	5.5%	2.8%	2.7%	1.8%
Twitter	11.2%	5.0%	6.9%	6.5%
Facebook	10.2%	2.8%	4.0%	3.1%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	5.4%	3.3%	3.3%	5.4%

E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	9.0%	2.1%	1.0%	1.6%
Campus Events app	9.9%	4.0%	4.9%	2.9%
Other	2.2%	0.7%	0.6%	0.8%

## DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS

This section examines patterns in students' preference for communication by different demographic groups. Tables are organized according to five different types of student statuses: first generation status, race/ethnicity, commuter student status, class rank and international student status. This section uses data from the 2017 Student Life Survey.

### Official University Communication

*How would you most like to receive official university communication?*

Type of Communication	Non-First Generation Students (n = 622)	First Generation Students (n = 255)
E-mails	83.1%	79.6%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	6.6%	11.8%
Website content	1.3%	0.0%
Twitter	0.3%	0.4%
Facebook	0.2%	0.8%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	6.9%	6.7%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.3%	0.4%
Other	0.3%	0.4%

*How would you most like to receive official university communication?\**

Type of Communication	White (n = 638)	Asian (n = 104)	Black/African American (n = 33)	Latinx (n = 40)	Other Race (n = 17)	Multiracial (n = 39)
E-mails	83.9%	78.9%	87.9%	72.5%	64.7%	82.1%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	7.4%	5.8%	3.0%	12.5%	29.4%	15.4%
Website content	0.8%	1.9%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Twitter	0.3%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Facebook	0.3%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	6.6%	6.7%	6.1%	12.5%	5.9%	2.6%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	0.6%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%

How would you most like to receive official university communication?

Type of Communication	Non-Commuter Students (n = 46)	Commuter Students (n = 152)
E-mails	82.6%	82.9%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	10.9%	9.2%
Website content	0.0%	0.0%
Twitter	0.0%	0.0%
Facebook	0.0%	0.7%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	6.5%	6.6%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	0.0%	0.7%
Other	0.0%	0.0%

How would you most like to receive official university communication?

Type of Communication	First Year (n = 212)	Second Year (n = 210)	Third Year (n = 226)	Fourth Year or higher (n = 231)
E-mails	82.1%	83.3%	81.9%	81.0%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	6.1%	6.2%	8.9%	10.8%
Website content	1.4%	1.4%	0.9%	0.0%
Twitter	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%
Facebook	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	6.1%	8.1%	7.1%	6.1%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	2.8%	0.0%	0.9%	0.9%
Other	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%

How would you most like to receive official university communication? \*\*

Type of Communication	Non-International Students (n = 837)	International Students (n = 45)
E-mails	82.1%	82.2%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	8.1%	6.7%
Website content	0.7%	4.4%
Twitter	0.4%	0.0%
Facebook	0.2%	2.2%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	7.2%	0.0%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.0%	4.4%
Other	0.4%	0.0%

## University Events

This section includes tables that report on demographic differences in how students would most like to hear about university events.

How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?

Type of Communication	Non-First Generation Students (n = 621)	First Generation Students (n = 252)
E-mails	69.6%	73.0%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.8%
Text messages	6.3%	9.5%
Website content	1.8%	2.0%
Twitter	7.6%	4.0%
Facebook	3.4%	2.4%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	6.0%	4.0%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.8%	0.8%
Campus Events app	2.9%	2.8%
Other	0.8%	0.8%

How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?

Type of Communication	White (n = 637)	Asian (n = 104)	Black/African American (n = 31)	Latinx (n = 39)	Other Race (n = 17)	Multiracial (n = 39)
E-mails	70.3%	69.2%	74.2%	79.5%	64.7%	71.8%
Phone calls	0.2%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	6.1%	5.8%	6.5%	12.8%	29.4%	12.8%
Website content	1.9%	0.0%	3.2%	2.6%	0.0%	2.6%
Twitter	7.1%	7.7%	6.5%	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%
Facebook	3.3%	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	5.5%	6.7%	3.2%	5.1%	5.9%	2.6%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.3%	2.9%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
Campus Events app	3.6%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.8%	1.0%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?

Type of Communication	Non-Commuter Students (n = 46)	Commuter Students (n = 151)
E-mails	73.9%	81.5%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	8.7%	5.3%
Website content	0.0%	0.7%
Twitter	10.9%	2.0%
Facebook	2.2%	2.7%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	4.4%	2.0%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	0.0%	1.3%
Campus Events app	0.0%	4.6%
Other	0.0%	0.0%

How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?

Type of Communication	First Year (n = 212)	Second Year (n = 208)	Third Year (n = 224)	Fourth Year or higher (n = 231)
E-mails	71.7%	72.6%	71.4%	66.7%
Phone calls	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	8.0%	6.3%	6.3%	8.2%
Website content	0.9%	1.4%	3.6%	1.3%
Twitter	4.7%	6.3%	7.1%	7.8%
Facebook	1.4%	3.4%	2.2%	5.2%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	8.0%	5.8%	3.1%	4.8%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.4%	0.5%	1.3%	3.0%
Campus Events app	1.9%	3.4%	3.1%	3.0%
Other	0.9%	0.5%	1.8%	0.0%

How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?

Type of Communication	Non-International Students (n = 833)	International Students (n = 45)
E-mails	70.4%	75.6%
Phone calls	0.1%	2.2%
Text messages	7.3%	4.4%
Website content	1.9%	0.0%
Twitter	6.6%	4.4%
Facebook	3.2%	0.0%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	5.3%	6.7%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.4%	4.4%
Campus Events app	3.0%	0.0%
Other	0.7%	2.2%



## DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS AMONG FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

This section shows patterns in students' preference for communication by different demographic groups with a particular focus on first year students. Tables are organized according to five different types of student statuses: first generation status, race/ethnicity, commuter student status, class rank and international student status. This section uses data from the 2017 Student Life Survey.

### Official University Communication

This section includes tables that report on demographic differences among first year students in how students would most like to receive official university communication.

How would you most like to receive official university communication?

Type of Communication	Non-First Generation Students (n = 154)	First Generation Students (n = 55)
E-mails	80.5%	87.3%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	5.8%	7.3%
Website content	2.0%	0.0%
Twitter	0.0%	1.8%
Facebook	0.7%	0.0%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	7.8%	1.8%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	3.3%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	1.8%

How would you most like to receive official university communication?

Type of Communication	White (n = 149)	Asian (n = 30)	Black/African American (n = 10)	Latinx (n = 8)	Multiracial (n = 6)
E-mails	85.9%	66.7%	90.0%	75.0%	83.3%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	6.7%	3.3%	0.0%	12.5%	16.7%
Website content	0.7%	3.3%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Twitter	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Facebook	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	4.7%	10.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%

E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.3%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

How would you most like to receive official university communication?\*\*\*

Type of Communication	Non-International Students (n = 200)	International Students (n = 12)
E-mails	82.5%	75.0%
Phone calls	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	6.5%	0.0%
Website content	1.0%	8.3%
Twitter	0.5%	0.0%
Facebook	0.0%	8.3%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	6.5%	0.0%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	2.5%	8.3%
Other	0.5%	0.0%

### University Events

This section includes tables that report on demographic differences among first year students in how students would most like to hear about university events.

How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?

Type of Communication	Non-First Generation Students (n = 154)	First Generation Students (n = 55)
E-mails	71.4%	72.7%
Phone calls	0.0%	3.6%
Text messages	7.8%	9.1%
Website content	1.3%	0.0%
Twitter	5.8%	1.8%
Facebook	1.3%	1.8%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	7.8%	9.1%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.3%	0.0%

Campus Events app	2.0%	1.8%
Other	1.3%	0.0%

How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?

Type of Communication	White (n = 149)	Asian (n = 30)	Black/African American (n = 10)	Latinx (n = 8)	Multiracial (n = 6)
E-mails	72.5%	63.3%	70.0%	75.0%	83.3%
Phone calls	0.7%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Text messages	6.7%	6.7%	10.0%	25.0%	16.7%
Website content	0.7%	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Twitter	5.4%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Facebook	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	8.1%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	0.7%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Campus Events app	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.7%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

How would you most like to hear about university events (for example, OUAB concerts)?\*

Type of Communication	Non-International Students (n = 200)	International Students (n = 12)
E-mails	72.5%	58.3%
Phone calls	0.5%	8.3%
Text messages	8.5%	0.0%
Website content	1.0%	0.0%
Twitter	4.5%	8.3%
Facebook	1.5%	0.0%
Alerts or notifications on your smartphone	8.0%	8.3%
E-newsletters like Buckeye Net News or OSU Weekly	1.0%	8.3%
Campus Events app	2.0%	0.0%
Other	0.5%	8.3%

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

	2014		2015		2016		2017	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b>Total</b>	778	---	933	---	848	---	964	---
<b>Gender<sup>b</sup></b>								
Female	331	54.2%	391	52.6%	401	59.3%	589	61.6%
Male	278	45.5%	345	46.4%	268	39.6%	361	37.7%
Transgender/Self-Defined	2	0.3%	8	1.1%	7	1.0%	7	0.7%
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>b</sup></b>								
African American/Black/African	28	4.6%	28	3.8%	17	2.6%	40	4.2%
Asian	65	10.7%	89	12.1%	122	18.5%	118	12.4%
Latinx	15	2.5%	9	1.2%	19	2.9%	41	4.3%
White	465	76.2%	557	75.9%	447	67.9%	692	72.7%
Other race	7	1.2%	11	1.5%	19	2.9%	20	2.1%
Multiracial	30	4.9%	40	5.5%	34	5.2%	41	4.3%
<b>First-Generation College Student<sup>b</sup></b>								
First generation	178	29.1%	233	31.3%	81	12.1%	255	29.1%
Continuing generation	433	70.9%	512	68.7%	587	87.9%	622	70.9%
<b>Citizenship<sup>a</sup></b>								
International student	55	7.1%	54	5.8%	103	15.2%	59	6.1%
Domestic student	723	92.9%	879	94.2%	577	84.9%	905	93.9%
<b>Age<sup>a</sup></b>								
Traditional age (18-24)	717	92.2%	869	93.1%	782	92.2%	898	93.2%
Non-traditional age (25+)	61	7.8%	64	6.9%	66	7.8%	66	6.9%
<b>Academic Level (by credit hours)<sup>a</sup></b>								
First-year	107	13.8%	92	9.9%	71	8.4%	232	24.2%
Second-year	169	21.7%	195	20.9%	195	23.0%	230	24.0%
Third-year	185	23.8%	224	24.0%	178	21.0%	245	25.5%
Fourth-year+	317	40.8%	422	45.2%	404	47.6%	253	26.4%

a. Source: Student Information System.

b. Source: Student self-reported.