



# Using AI to **Scale** Student Follow-Ups



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In about 20 minutes, you can explore the ways an intelligent text messaging automation platform can help you reach students, nurture conversations, and reduce the repetitive, tedious busywork that robs your admission team's time.

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# Texting Works—But Does It Work For You?

To reach your students or potential students most directly, there's simply no better means than text messaging to their phones. Compared to voice calls or emails, never mind physical mailers, texts actually get through, and get read, at astonishing rates—up to 98% of texts are opened.

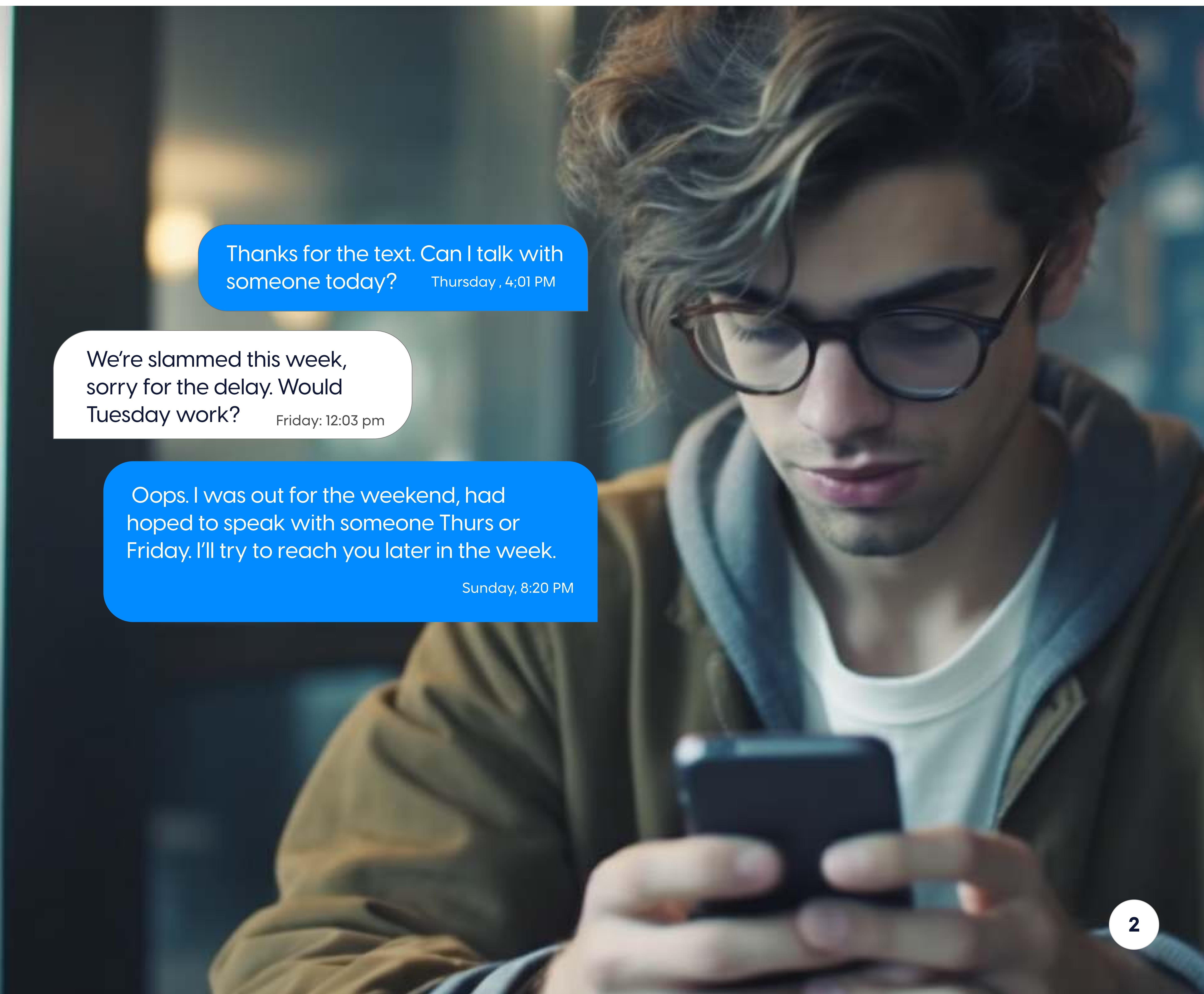
And students overwhelmingly prefer texting to other means of communication: it's immediate, action-oriented, and easy to respond to. Good text messages are crisp and compact.

However, if you're already using texting as an important means of communication with your students or prospective students, you know that there's nothing

simple about keeping track of text conversations, or replying with the right tone, at the right speed.

What happens when a student responds? On an average day, can your reps reply instantly, while an inquiry is fresh? What about when a reply arrives when your reps have all gone home for the day, or the term?

You can delegate many texting tasks to a messaging platform. But how well does that work, and what factors determine whether you end up reaching students, or only frustrating them?



# Why Text Automation Alone Isn't Enough

For one-off communications—to send a document, or to ask a clarifying question—members of your admissions team may text messages from their own phones. The result is a message stream that's untracked, and unconnected to your CRM unless followed up with manual data entry.

Automation solutions are a tremendous improvement over ad hoc texting from individual phones. If you're using texting to reach the students in your CRM, you've likely already discovered that automation is necessary, but far from perfect.

Despite the very high delivery and read rates for text messages overall, messages that are simply blasted to students are more likely to trigger spam detection systems, or be routed to the student's junk folder, at best.

The fact is, most text messaging automation can't handle<sup>6</sup> the complex tasks you'd like to use it for—and your admissions team is getting buried in follow-up tasks and replies.

That's why an automation platform is only part of what you need. **To respond quickly and thoroughly to inquiries, you need greater intelligence in the form of AI text messaging.**

This guide will show you ways that AI can help, and the contexts where deploying it makes the most sense. With conversational AI, you can eat away at the busywork that robs your admission team's time.



# Fighting Busywork Fatigue

The most important time to reply to an inquiry is *right now*. Being able to respond immediately, though, is always complicated by your staff's day-to-day action items. The tasks that prevent your admissions officers from spending more time directly interacting with their

- ❖ Answering common applicant questions
- ❖ Reminding students and applicants about approaching deadlines or document needs
- ❖ Nurturing a relationship, with offers to help or to answer questions

❖ Scheduling (or rescheduling) appointments

❖ Following up on aging inquiries

And because none of these tasks can simply be discarded to focus on today's inquiries, staffers suffer from busywork fatigue. When new inquiries come in, they have less time and energy to respond, and the overload persists. Inevitably, potential students miss out on applying or enrolling as a result.



# Putting Texting In Its Place

AI texting, and specifically conversational AI, can give your staffers back much of the time they spend on busywork. Conversational AI describes human-feeling (but automated) natural-language communications.

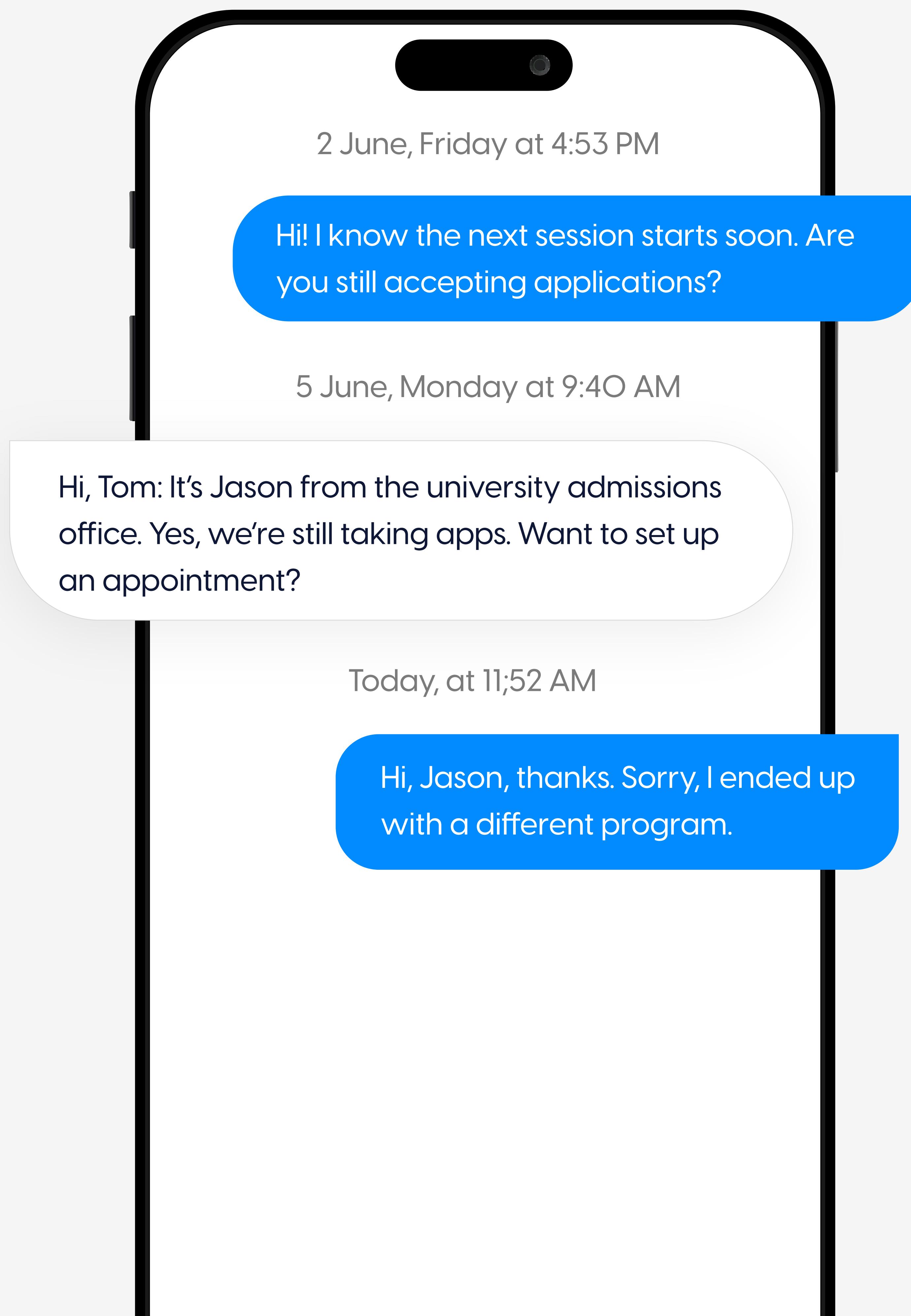
Over text, those conversations can reach as many people as you need, without the need to devote staff time to respond to messages one at a time. Just as importantly, because they're software driven, responses can be instant.

**Every major source of admissions team busywork can be mitigated by putting tasks into the hands of an AI texting platform, so you can:**

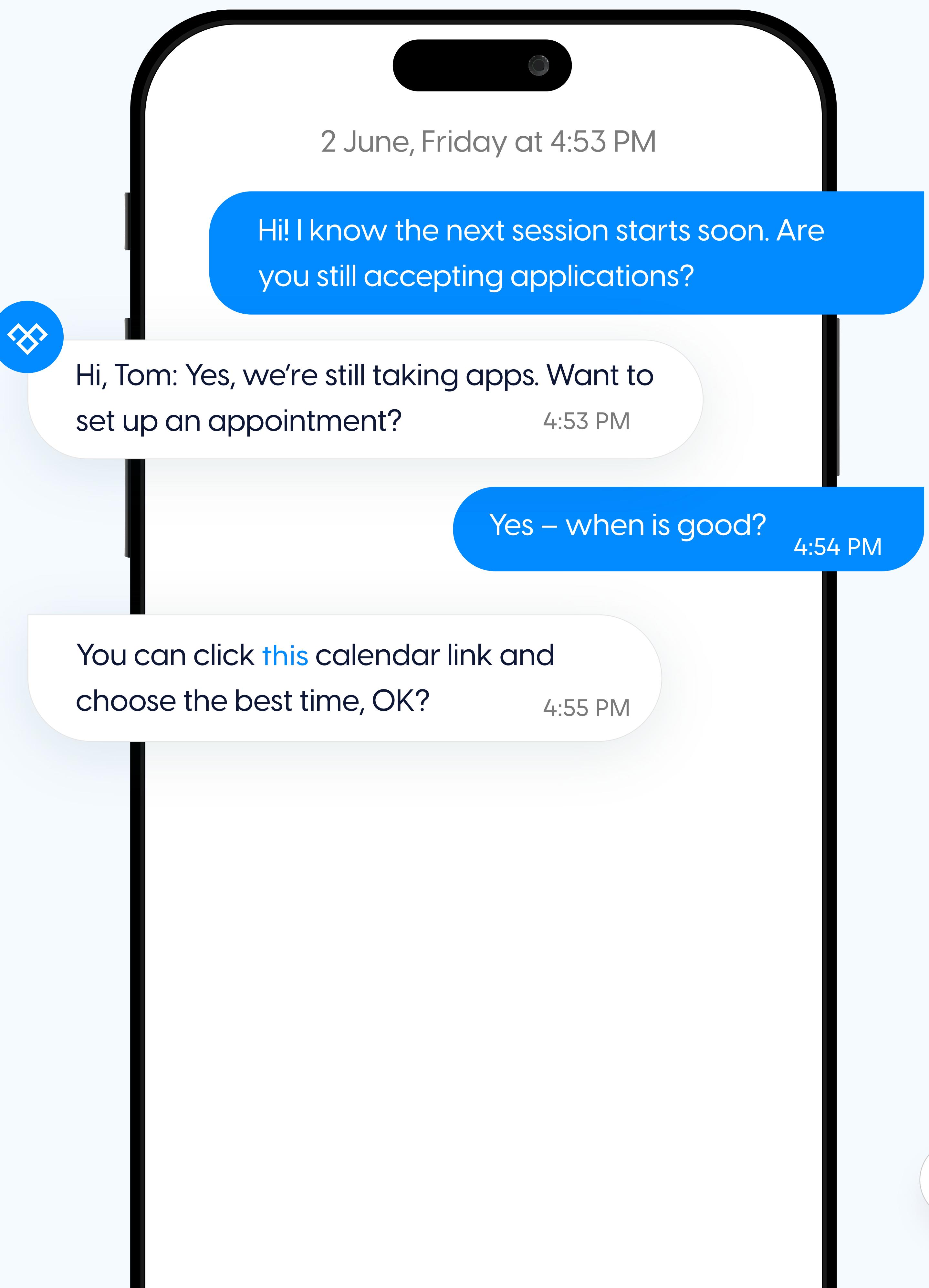
- ❖ Respond instantly to common questions
- ❖ Schedule an appointment or tour—and easily reschedule if necessary
- ❖ Invite potential students to on-campus or virtual events
- ❖ Send reminders about deadlines or document needs
- ❖ Elevate a conversation to an admissions officer

Let's look at how each of these can be implemented to cut down the fatigue.

## Manual



## With Meera AI Automation



# Any Questions? Instant Responses Mean Instant Engagement

Every inquiry is a chance to respond with general information about your school, but also to prompt a potential student to ask any other questions on their mind.

Many of the most common questions a student might ask are ones that your admissions team has answered hundreds if not thousands of times.

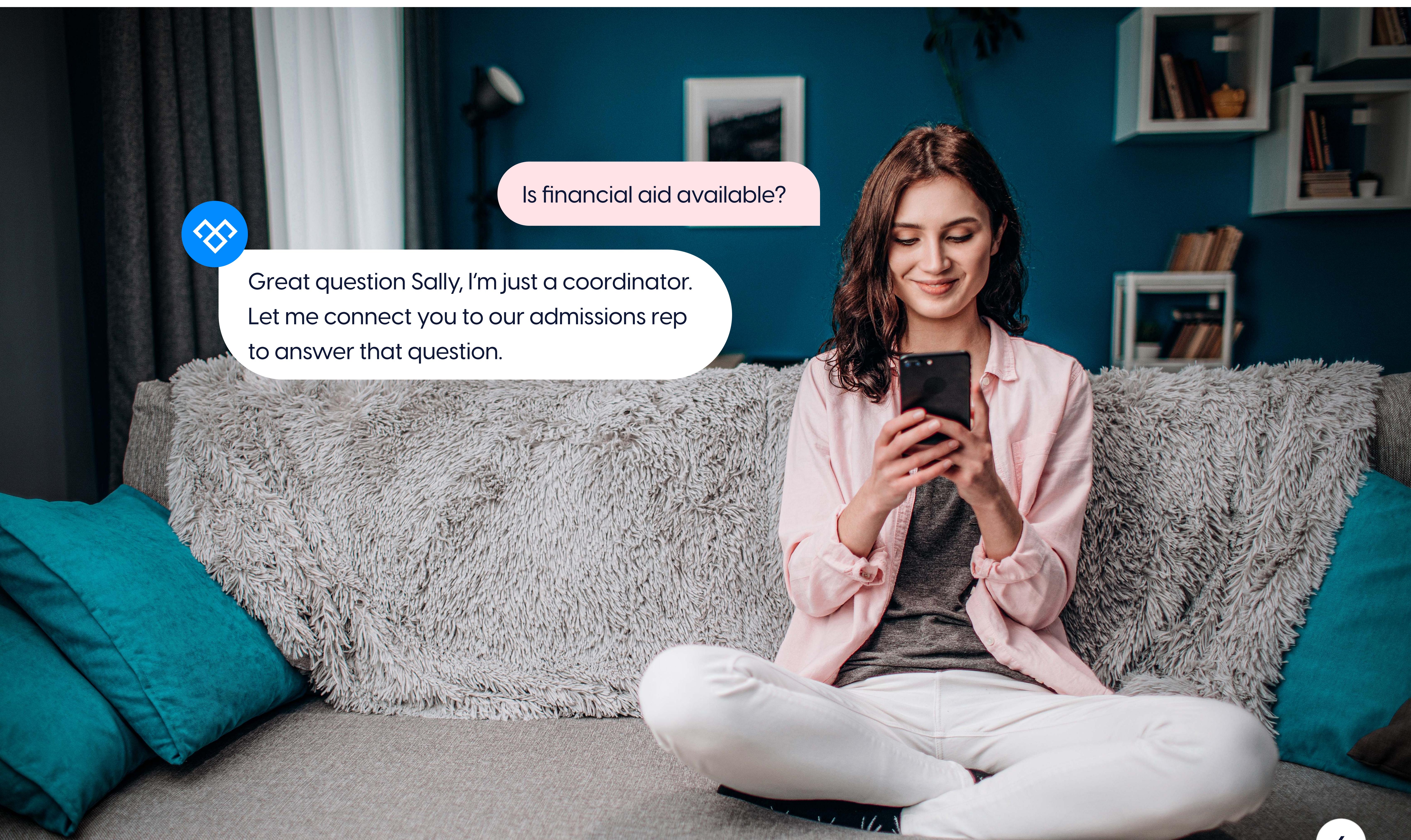
With AI texting, you can save time on voice calls or composing emails (or one-off text messages), by recognizing those common questions, and giving answers immediately.

You can populate an intelligent AI system's knowledge base with information about your location, opening hours, admissions requirements, upcoming deadlines, and more.

When an inquiry touches on any of these topics, your contact can have her questions answered in near real time.

Converting those queries into a learning system doesn't only save your staff time.

A student who inquires about any relevant information is demonstrating interest, and with a system that tracks engagement, you can know what kind of questions are asked most frequently, without requiring an elaborate debriefing or post-call form entry.



## Schedule a Tour, a Classroom Visit, or a Phone Call

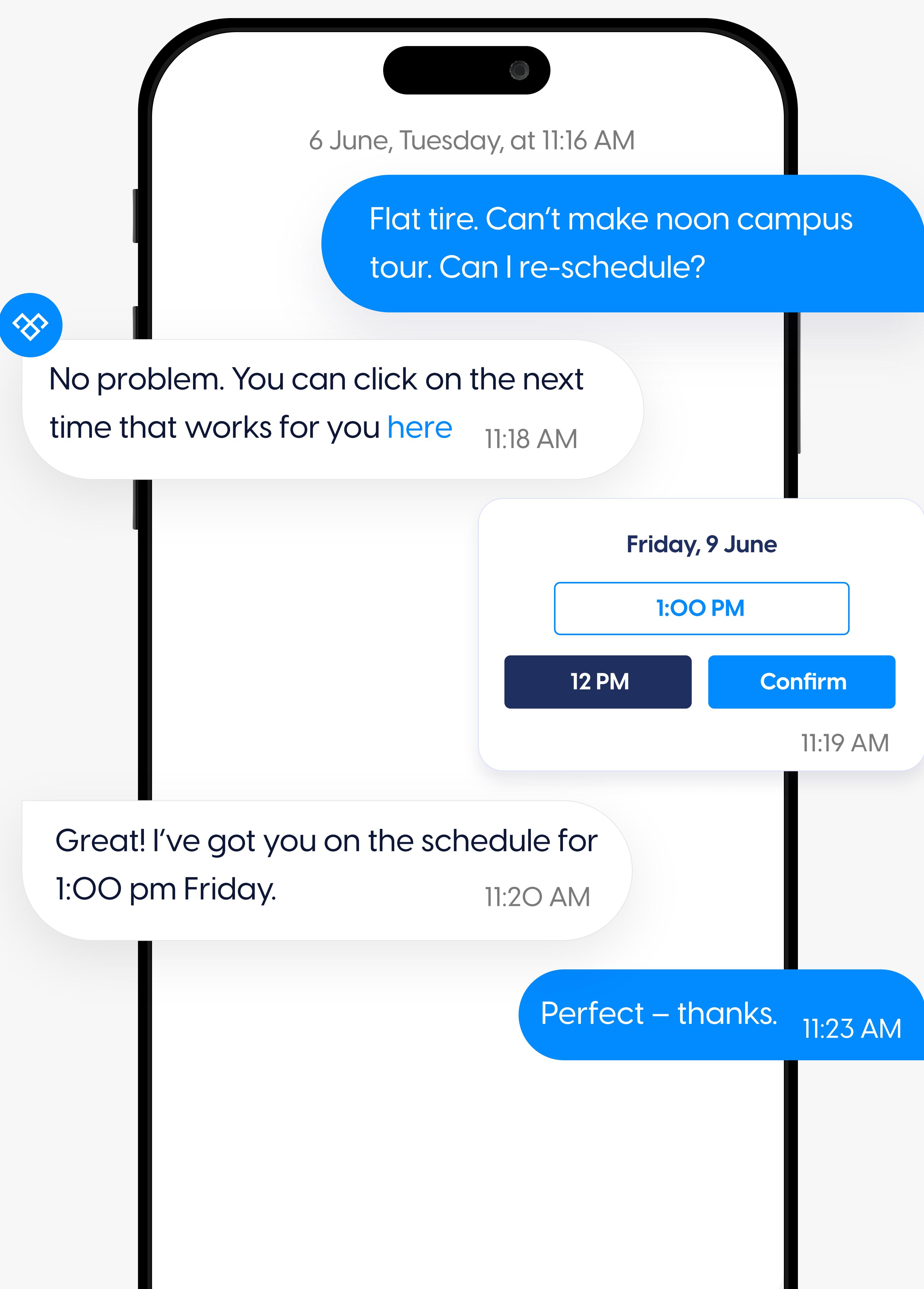
One busywork task that an AI texting solution can help you avoid is scheduling, whether for in-person campus tours, class walk-throughs, or one-on-one phone calls with an admissions officer.

Trying to figure out a time that works for a student over email or on the phone can be an awkward experience, and puts pressure on a student to commit to a date that he might not be able to keep.

On the admissions side, scheduling may mean consulting a chaotic group calendar.

An AI texting solution can sidestep all these problems, by giving students bounded options (for events that take place only on certain dates or at limited times), or by asking them to name their schedule preferences, and then finalizing only on dates that will work for everyone.

Rescheduling can be just as simple; an inquiring student can open the same text message and ask for a replacement appointment, with less friction than if appointments must be shuffled by your staff.



# Orchestrate On-Campus or Virtual Events

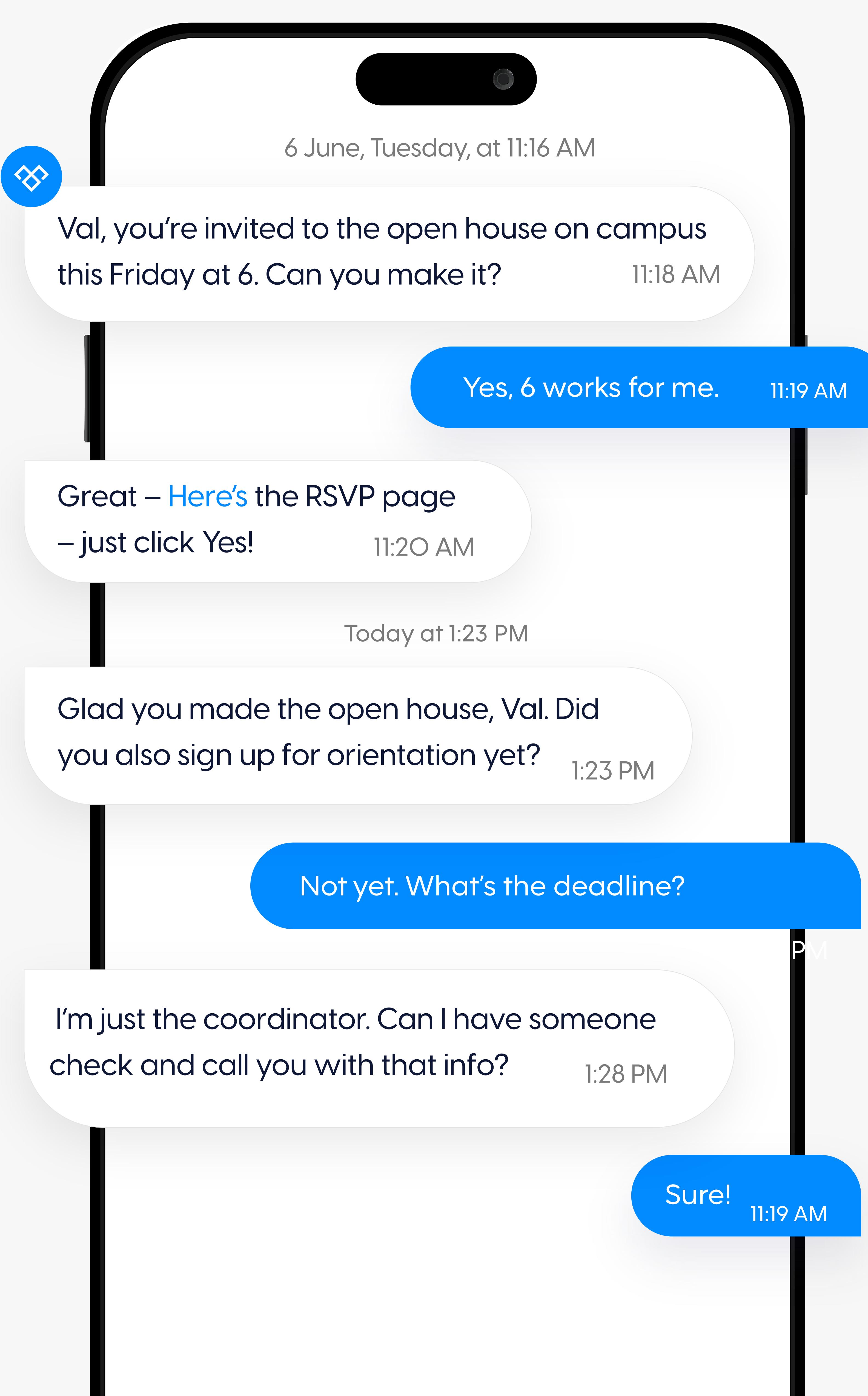
Part of nurturing student relationships is getting inquiring students involved with your events, whether they're primarily social, informational, or educational. Inviting students in a way that reaches them is a tough job for your admissions team—but a perfect role for automated texting.

An intelligent texting platform can even accept an RSVP right in the same text conversation.

Texting provides an inherently stronger, easier call to action than if you were to invite students via mailed invitation.

Why does it matter? Students apply to multiple colleges: You don't want to be surprised to find that a student you thought would start at your school isn't. You can evaluate how committed they are to your institution based on the number and kind of interactions you have with them.

That means open house events, orientation messaging (including confirmation), class registration, document submission, and more. These touchpoints give insights about an individual's commitment, and automation helps you examine the data.



# Keeping Students On Track, and On Schedule

Deadlines drive every educational institution, and that applies especially to applications and admissions.

Every inquiry is driven not only by your potential student's own availability to begin classes, but by a host of dates by which your school must receive eligibility documentation, transcripts, deposit information, and other vital data.

Without a text automation platform, you may rely on students to meet this list of deadlines as posted on a web page, transmitted in an email, or sent in paper

However, none of these forms are as immediate as a text, and none deliver the same degree of instant feedback. And if your platform has the built-in smarts for it, that feedback can be more than a simple note that a document was received.

You can gently remind students whether they've still missing one or more pieces, or point out when information seems off.

If an applicant has trouble finding the right form or the appropriate information, your platform can help connect them with a human rep who can guide them, rather than leave them feeling abandoned.



# Handoff From AI To Human

Texting, no matter how well done or how much work it saves, is a means to an end. You want to reach potential students, the likelier the better, and to help them reach you.

If a text conversation with an applicant or potential application has progressed into real interest, and the applicant wants to schedule a talk with an admission officer, an AI texting platform can help.

**Every admissions officer needs a wingperson—someone working tirelessly in the background to keep them on track with important tasks, not buried in followups. Let [Meera](#) be that wingperson**

With Warm Call Transfer, the platform can respond to a student who asks for a call by checking whether there are any staffers free, and having the system instantly connect both student and admissions officer in a voice call.

If a student inquiry arrives when the admissions team is unavailable, getting to a human voice is only one step removed: an AI texting platform can inquire when the right time for a call would be, verify admissions staff availability, and schedule a phone appointment then.



# What Should You Look For In a Smart Texting Platform?

## ❖ Avoid Texting Pitfalls

Whatever text messaging solution you select, you'll need to steer clear of some common problems that come with manual texting

## ❖ Slow information handling

If a student asks for a date, a form, or other information don't have handy, or inquires just before a weekend or other break, they may give up on getting it before you have a

## ❖ Scheduling confusion

Scheduling an appointment via manual texting can be confusing, and means transferring information to a calendar or CRM. A texting solution that can schedule appointments cleanly and clearly saves you time, data entry, and errors, and builds in reminders over the same channel.

## ❖ Late replies that miss your chance to connect.

If the platform incorporates a call transfer feature, you can arrange for it to call both student and representative automatically, for a zero-wait connection.

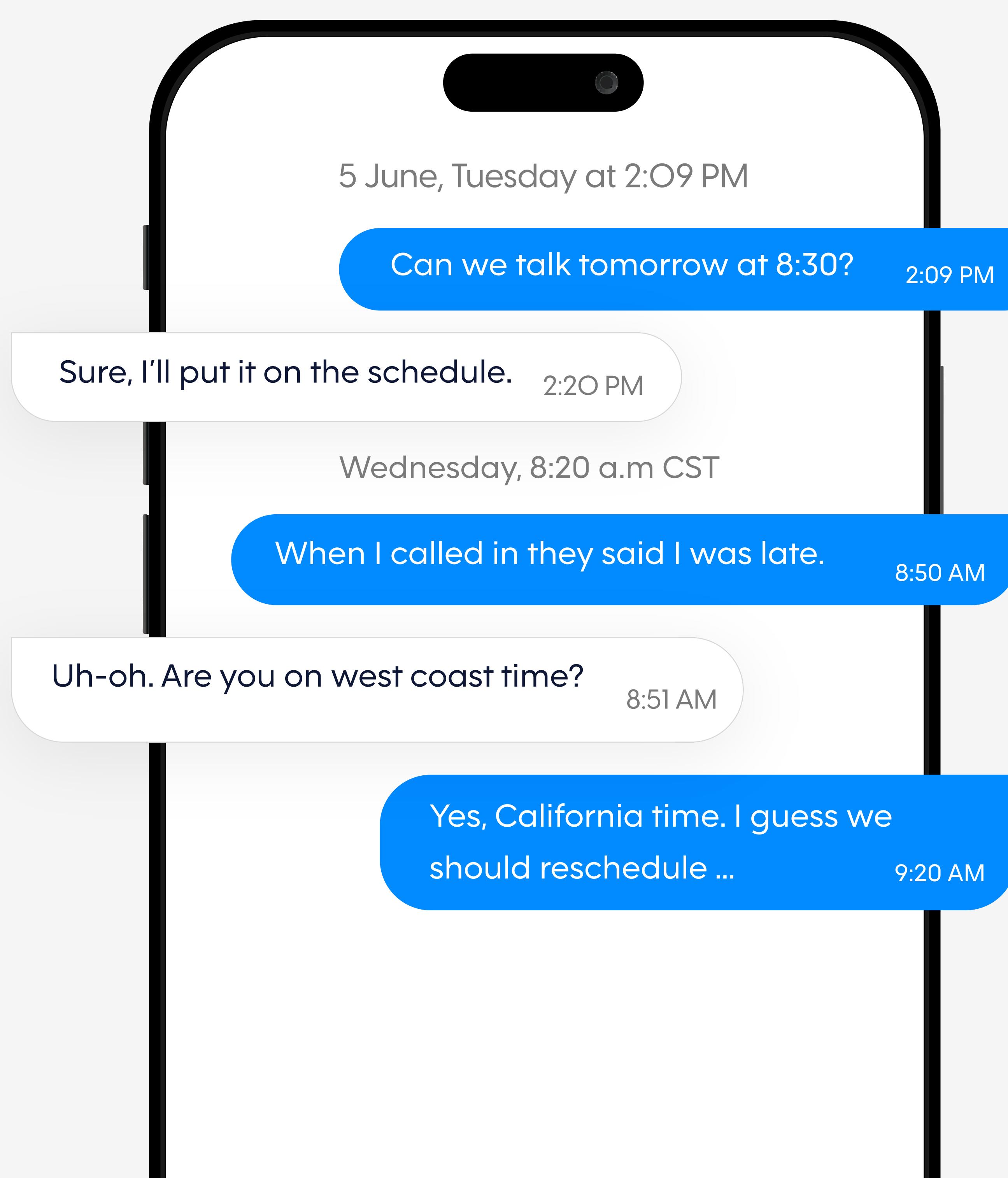
## ❖ Text conversations that never get

Even during office hours, a rep may be busy with other students, and can't start a one-on-one conversation. If the platform incorporates a call transfer feature, though, you can arrange for it to call both student and representative automatically, for a zero-wait connection.

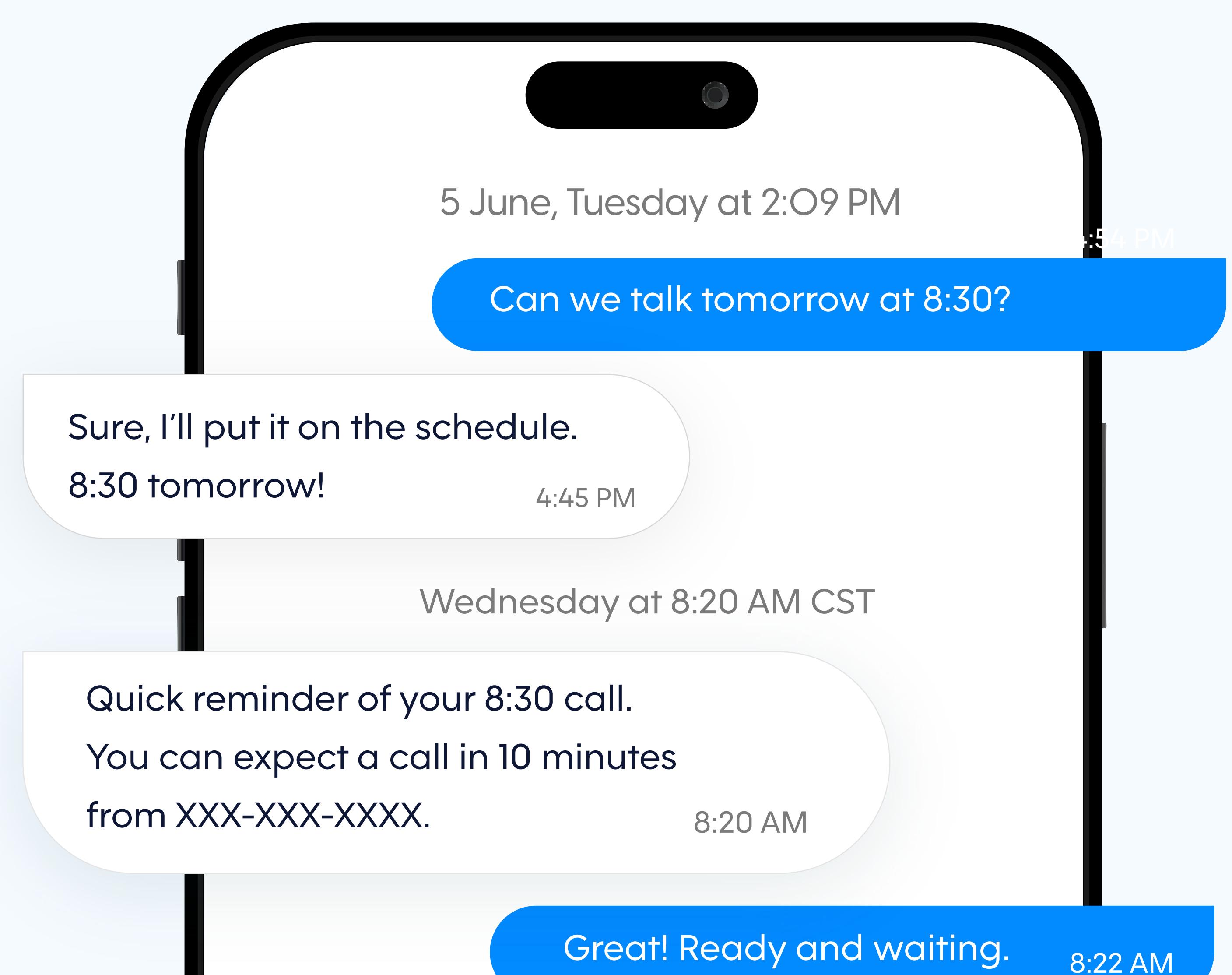
## ❖ Inability to scale

Manual texting means focusing on only one student, and one conversation, at a time. With texting automation, you can reach a wide range of students, or a focused range based on interests or demographics, without repetitive text entry by your reps.

## Manual



## With Meera AI Automation



## Case Study: Life Chiropractic College West

Life Chiropractic College West's Doctor of Chiropractic and Continuing Education faced what could have been a staffing crisis early in the COVID-19 pandemic: their small team of admissions officers was reduced temporarily from a handful of staffers to a single, overloaded admissions officer.

Some of the overload was directly traceable to the labor-intensive methods that were the school's primary channels for reaching out to students. Director of Admissions Dan Cardenas hoped to implement an outreach method that required fewer touchpoints, and fewer minutes per interaction.

Increased use of texting fit the bill, and meant that students were far less often called on to answer a voice call or an email.

By implementing the Meera text marketing platform, the school extended the capabilities of LifeWest's admissions staff with intelligent, unobtrusive follow-ups, appointment setting, and other important but tedious outreach tasks.

They gained the advantages of automated texting, without the need for humans to actually take over the conversations immediately. And astonishingly, the school achieved a conversion rate of more than 95% through these text conversations.



# Where The Right Texting Automation Solution Can Lead

Texting to students and prospects is an obvious channel of communication for the admissions team, but there are applications throughout every educational institution for texting that a complete, AI-driven platform can enable. The more ways you use text, the more you can integrate your communication with students. Your own school will have a distinct set of needs, but uses beyond new-student admissions include:



## Alumni relations

Staying in touch with former students, including those who may return for additional coursework



## Post-admission events

Invite students to seminars, instructional sessions, or masterclasses without the expense of printed materials or the need to manually track RSVPs



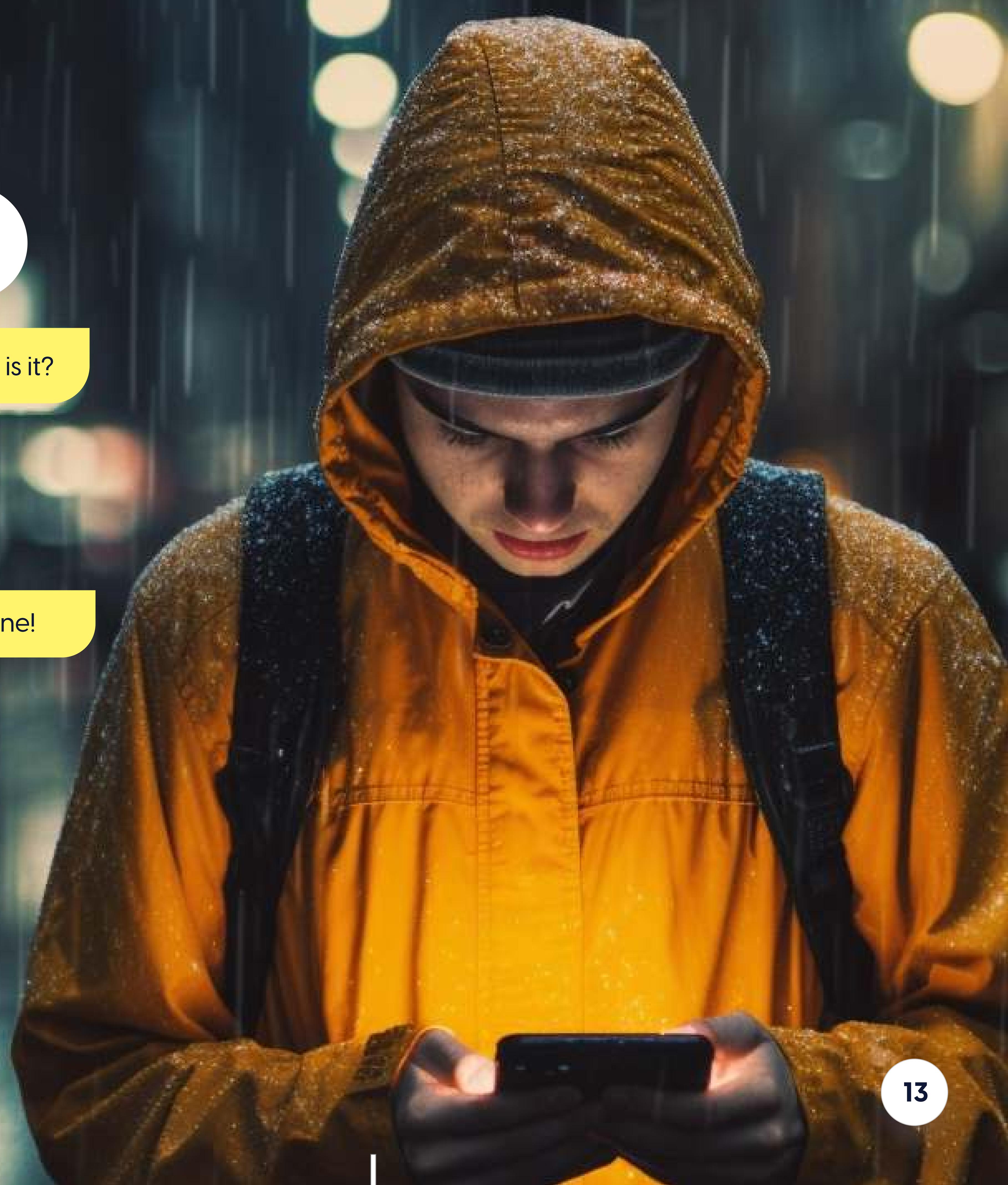
Hi, Jon – Any interest in a free followup EMS training event this week?

Sounds good. When is it?

There are sessions Wednesday and Friday. Can we call to explain more?

Sure. Now's Fine!

Great! Expect a call from XXX-XXX-XXX.



# Glossary

**Aged Inquiries / Leads:** Leads that are older than your admissions team typically has time to respond to. Depending on your school or program, the inquiries you consider aged will vary

**Conversational AI:** AI-driven, human-feeling interaction that uses natural language, and bases replies on intent analysis.

**Intent Analysis:** A systematic attempt to understand the desired outcome on the part of a party in a conversation or other multi-party communication

**New Inquiries / Leads:** Leads that are within the window of age that your reps are generally able to respond to.

**Manual Texting:** Conventional text conversations, where both sides of the conversations are people responding to messages one-at-a-time as they are able to.

**Scheduling:** All tasks related to setting in-person, phone, or video-call appointments, or re-scheduling them as necessary.

**Text Automation:** Any system that facilitates texting outside of a manual, one-to-one text conversation.