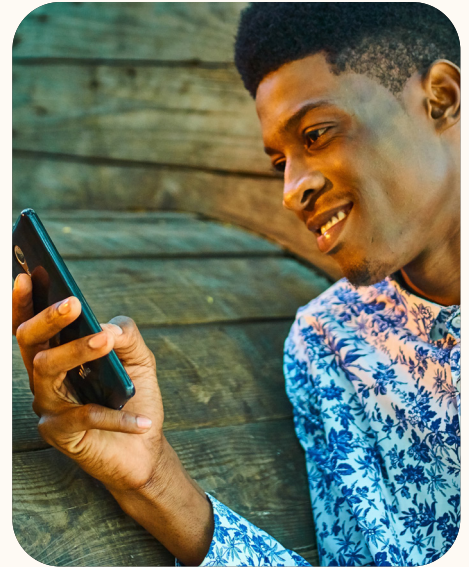


# Blending cultural responsiveness and emotional intelligence



Student engagement is a necessary part of higher education institutions' efforts to boost persistence, retention, academic performance, and college completion – yet it is one of the biggest challenges that institutions face today.

The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, Norfolk State University, and the Partnership for Education Advancement collaborated with Mainstay on a study to answer one question: “Can student engagement increase when chatbot messaging is more culturally responsive and emotionally intelligent?”

## How to make messaging emotionally intelligent?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions to communicate effectively, empathize with others, relieve stress, and overcome challenges.

Yale worked with us on a rubric and reviewed all our messaging for Student Engagement techniques, and provided 10+ new techniques that we use today.

When using emotional intelligence in messaging, it's key to keep an emotional mindset, which requires the following principles:

- Emotions are (useful!) information
- Welcome the full range of emotions - not just about pleasant emotions
- Normalize, validate, and attend to emotions
- Pleasant and unpleasant emotions can help and hinder

Examples of emotional intelligence in messaging can look like:

### Avoiding assumptions

**Without emotional intelligence**

“I know this is stressful”

Vs.

**With emotional intelligence**

“This might be stressful”

### Using validating language

**Without emotional intelligence**

“FAFSA can be overwhelming”

Vs.

**With emotional intelligence**

“It's okay if you feel overwhelmed by FAFSA”

### Keep communication open-ended

**Without emotional intelligence**

“Try self-care activities like...”

Vs.

**With emotional intelligence**

“Consider what kind of self-care activities you enjoy”

# The importance of cultural responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness is the use of students' customs, characteristics, experience, and perspectives as tools for better communication.

To uncover culturally relevant messaging, we held focus groups with students to review messaging, and consulted with a cultural relevance expert.

## Examples of culturally responsive messaging can look like:



Happy College Decision Day! This is the time for you to commit to a school. No matter where you decide to go, I know you'll go on to do amazing things. Once you decide, share your decision on social media with the tag #decisionday.

Original messaging

Happy College Commitment Day! This is the time for you to choose your home for the next 4 years. No matter which school you commit to, I know you'll go on to do amazing things. Once you decide, share your decision on social media with the tag #imcommittingto.

Culturally responsive messaging

## Study results

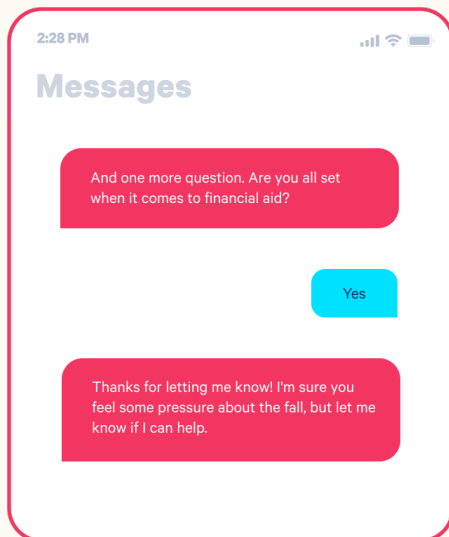
After engaging with students across 22 historically black colleges and universities it was found that making the chatbot messaging more culturally responsive and emotionally intelligent had a powerful impact on the percentage of students who engaged with the bot.

# 7,000

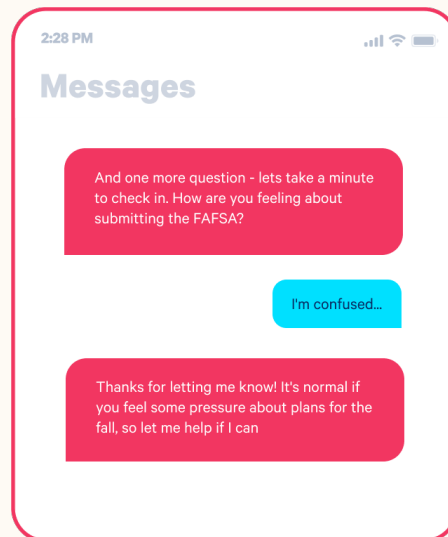
more students responded to the AI-powered bot due to the small changes in the language used to provide information to students.

## See the difference

Understanding its impact on student engagement, Mainstay embeds culturally relevant and emotionally intelligent messaging in every touch point



Original script



Updated script

## Acknowledgments



Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence



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