

How Carnegie Mellon boosted alumni responses by 170%

Overview

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), a global research university in Pittsburgh, has used Mongoose in Advancement since October 2023. Four teams, including alumni relations and annual giving, use it. Meagen Fekos, Senior Director of Advancement Communications & Marketing, leads the messaging, using images, GIFs, and creative prompts to make texting fun.

INSTITUTION	Private research university
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LOCATION	Pittsburgh, PA
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DEPARTMENT	Advancement
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TEAMS	4 advancement teams
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PARTNER SINCE	October 2023
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CHANNEL	Text
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The challenge

CMU's previous texting platform caused repeated technical issues and confusion. Meagen described texting as the odd one out in CMU's strategy, and her team needed to rebuild trust in it.

- Inaccurate data and duplicate messages
- A hard-to-use interface
- Needed to scale across teams with little training

Why Mongoose

CMU chose Mongoose for its easy-to-use design and strong support. Smart Messages, shared inboxes, and live typing indicators keep teams in sync during big campaigns, and picture messages with class-year graphics and GIFs get attention.

170%

more responses: 492 for Orientation, up from 182 for the prior Commencement campaign

4.8%

engagement rate on 9,739 texts sent

178%

more Instagram impressions (8,344 vs. 3,000)

156

link clicks

“My absolute favorite feature is seeing who's typing. It's been instrumental in helping multiple people respond without stepping on each other's toes.”

MEAGEN FEKOS · SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Campaign spotlight: Orientation Messages

In 2024, CMU welcomed the Class of 2028 while re-engaging alumni, especially 2025 Reunion celebrants, with one question: “What do you want this year’s first-year students to know about what it means to be a Tartan?” Everyone who answered could win one of four CMU t-shirts.

01

Alumni visible from day one

“We want to show students that the CMU community isn’t just your classroom. It’s global,” Meagen said. Responses became an Instagram Reel, an alumni website story, an Alumni Community feature, and orientation slides.

02

A low-cost, high-impact win

Four t-shirts were the campaign’s only cost. It more than doubled the response and reach of CMU’s prior effort, set a new internal benchmark, and will become an annual tradition.

03

A more agile advancement program

Automation and segmentation save time and tie texting into email, social, and print. “Even when our team is offline, Mongoose is still working for us. We’re all running at full speed during events. Mongoose gives us the support we need to keep things moving without manual effort,” Meagen said.

04

Next up: Commencement and opt-ins

CMU has brought the idea to Commencement, asking milestone-year alumni to share life advice with new graduates, and is testing event signage that invites alumni to opt back in to texting.

WHAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE

- **Picture messages and GIFs.** Visuals and animation in every campaign.
- **Shared inboxes and typing indicators.** Easy collaboration across departments.
- **Smart Messages.** Automation without losing the personal touch.
- **Segmentation and dynamic content.** Personal by class year, college, and reunion milestone.

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ADVICE FROM CMU

“If you’re looking for a texting tool that offers both technical and personal support, and texting is critical to your strategy, Mongoose is a great partner. The support we’ve received has made all the difference.”

Meagen Fekos

Want to see what creative texting could do for your advancement team?

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