

# Jacksonville State University Scales Graduate Recruitment Communication with Mongoose

## Overview

Jacksonville State University (JSU), a regional public university in Alabama, uses Mongoose to provide students with timely, human support through text messaging across undergraduate, graduate, and dual enrollment recruitment efforts. In March 2025, the university introduced two new roles under **Associate Director Roxanne Stancil** to strengthen recruitment communications—one supporting Undergraduate Admissions and one supporting Graduate Studies. This marked a pivotal step as JSU continues to grow, recently surpassing 10,000 students for the first time in Fall 2025. **Madison Willingham, Coordinator of Graduate Recruitment Communication**, works closely with Roxanne and the Graduate Admissions team to lead communication planning and campaigns that make outreach feel personal, consistent, and easy to respond to—especially for busy adult learners.

## Challenge

Before adopting Mongoose and partnering with EAB at the undergraduate level, JSU's enrollment teams faced declining enrollment and low response rates to traditional channels. Emails were easy for students to overlook, and phone outreach didn't always align with their schedules, making it difficult to keep students engaged and moving forward in the process. The team needed a modern, scalable way to connect with students quickly and effectively.

## Solution

With Mongoose, JSU built a texting-first strategy that supports both high-volume outreach and high-touch conversations. Graduate Admissions uses campaigns, personalization fields, scheduled messages, auto-responses, and the Conversation Intelligence dashboard to send timely nudges, welcome messages, and event follow-ups—without sacrificing a human tone. Madison shared,

“ We've seen strong success using Mongoose with our graduate and doctoral students. Once an application is started, several multi-modal communication campaigns through our CRM help keep applicants engaged and moving through the process to completion. Texting has been one of the most effective ways for us to reach busy adults.

MADISON WILLINGHAM

## Implementation & Impact

### More Relevant Touchpoints for Adult Learners

Madison brings a dual perspective to communication planning—she supports graduate recruitment while also being a graduate student herself. That helps her spot moments where a quick text can reduce confusion and keep students moving forward.

One recent example: a first-day-of-class message sent to students registered for spring courses—both as a friendly check-in and a way to surface last-minute questions. Madison explained,

“ Spring '26 was the first time we sent new graduate students a message on the first day of classes. The responses were very helpful and allowed me to identify areas where we can add more information and support into the accepted student communication plan I am building for graduate students.

### Campaigns That Increase Replies

Graduate Admissions has increased campaign usage and uses campaign performance data to iterate and improve. Madison shared response rate benchmarks across several active efforts:

- ~11% average response rate across active graduate campaigns
- 21% response rate on the initial general inquiry text
- 5% response rate on a graduate program fair invitation
- 10% response rate during a free application week campaign

She also emphasized that different messages perform differently—and that the team is learning what resonates most with graduate and doctoral audiences.

## Time Savings for a “Small But Mighty” Team

With a lean graduate admissions team, automation helps maintain responsiveness during high-volume periods. Madison said,

“**Mongoose saves us significant time and effort by allowing us to build texting campaigns that answer common questions before students even need to ask. Our graduate admissions team is small but mighty, with five team members total, including myself.**

MADISON WILLINGHAM

One feature Madison called out repeatedly: auto-responses—especially during free application weeks, when inbound volume spikes and not everyone can be in the inbox at once. Auto-replies help the team respond quickly and consistently, even during the busiest times.

## Personalization That Feels Like a Real Person

Madison explained that Mongoose helps remove the “robot” feeling by making outreach feel truly one-to-one—especially when messages are signed by recruiters. Madison added,

“**I really feel that by leaning into our brand, the Friendliest Campus in the South, Mongoose texts never feel robotic. The messages stay warm, personal, and inviting, which encourages students to reply and start a conversation.**

She also highlighted the impact of simple personalization fields (like first name and program), because they reinforce that students are talking to a real person—not a generic office. Madison said, “It seems very simple, but those are so beneficial... It’s nice when we’re able to say, ‘hey, Madison,’ instead of, ‘hey, future student.’”

## Relationship-Building Moments That Stand Out

Madison shared a story from her time as an undergraduate recruiter: she scheduled a simple “come say hi” text while she was working a college fair—and students actually showed up, even if they didn’t have questions. Madison shared, “The number of students that came up to me was surprising... they just simply came up to say hi.”

In graduate recruitment, she implemented a new check-in text for in-person events. When attendees check in, they receive a welcome message signed by the recruiter staffing the event—helping students connect a name to a face and prompting more meaningful conversations onsite. Madison summed up the broader impact like this:

“**Wrapping it all up with the personalization and hitting those touchpoints that they really care about—that matters. And we really couldn’t do it without Mongoose.**

## Better Visibility With Conversation Intelligence

Madison manages communication across three shared inboxes and relies on the dashboard to keep everything visible in one place. She uses trending topics to identify what students are asking about most, and to generate new outreach ideas.

Madison said, “I love the dashboard... I’m a visual person. It’s nice to get a true sense of how the students are feeling. Plus, the trending topics definitely sparked different ideas where I realized, I could do a whole plan about this.”

She also called out conversation resolution as especially helpful for managing follow-ups across multiple inboxes: “It’s so beneficial to have everything in one spot in Mongoose’s dashboard.”

## The Mongoose Difference

- **Personalization at scale** that feels human and recruiter-led
- **Campaign analytics** that support continuous improvement
- **Scheduled messages** that keep outreach timely and consistent
- **Auto-responses** that reduce inbox load during peak times
- **Conversation Intelligence** (dashboard, trending topics, resolution) for better visibility and prioritization

“**Whether it’s a message sent to a segment in Mongoose or one triggered through the API integration with our CRM, Ellucian Recruit, the platform is incredibly efficient and makes it easy for us to send timely communications.**

## Future Plans + Conclusion

Since stepping into the role in April 2025, Madison has helped revamp or create 22 communication plans for the Graduate School. As these strategies have been implemented, JSU has already seen encouraging momentum, including an increase in Spring 2026 first-time graduate and doctoral enrollment compared to the previous cycle.

Looking ahead, she is focused on implementing effective communication plans at every stage of the graduate enrollment funnel—nearly all of which include Mongoose Text as a key touchpoint.

By scaling friendly, personalized texting, JSU’s Graduate Admissions team is improving responsiveness, saving staff time, and building stronger student relationships without adding more hours to the day. As Madison shared:

“**Mongoose has become an essential part of how we communicate with students. We genuinely couldn’t do this work as effectively without it.**