



WHITE PAPER

CREATING MORE CONNECTED CAMPUS COMMUNICATIONS



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Every interaction shapes how students, parents, alumni, donors, and the larger community perceive a college or university. Whether it's an admissions packet, school signage, an event program, or a commencement booklet, each communication reinforces the institution's brand and influences the overall campus experience.

As communication channels have expanded, so has the complexity of managing them—often across decentralized departments with their own priorities and timelines. While digital continues to expand, print remains essential to many high-value interactions because it creates tangible experiences that complement digital engagement rather than competing with it.

Production print and fleet management are no longer simply operational functions focused on equipment and output. When aligned with broader communication strategies, they help institutions deliver consistent messaging, improve efficiency, and create more meaningful experiences throughout the student lifecycle. This starts with visibility into where communications originate and which departments own them.

Communicating Across the Student Lifecycle

Higher education serves a broad and continually evolving community, including prospective students and their families, current students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and community partners. All of these groups are expecting timely, relevant information delivered in ways that fit their needs. Unfortunately, coordinating these interactions isn't easy. Admissions, advancement, athletics, and academic departments often develop materials independently, making it difficult to maintain consistent messaging and deliver a seamless experience from every touchpoint.

Figure 1: Important Printed Communications in Higher Ed

DEPARTMENT	COMMON COMMUNICATIONS
Admissions Offices	Annual Reports, Brochures, Campaigns
Athletics Departments	Programs, Promotional "School Pride" Materials
Campus Organizations	Event Banners/Posters, Community Signage

Many institutions are addressing this by viewing communications as part of the student lifecycle rather than individual departmental projects. They are mapping one journey end to end, often starting with admissions, to uncover gaps and duplications that become the blueprint for coordinating the next.

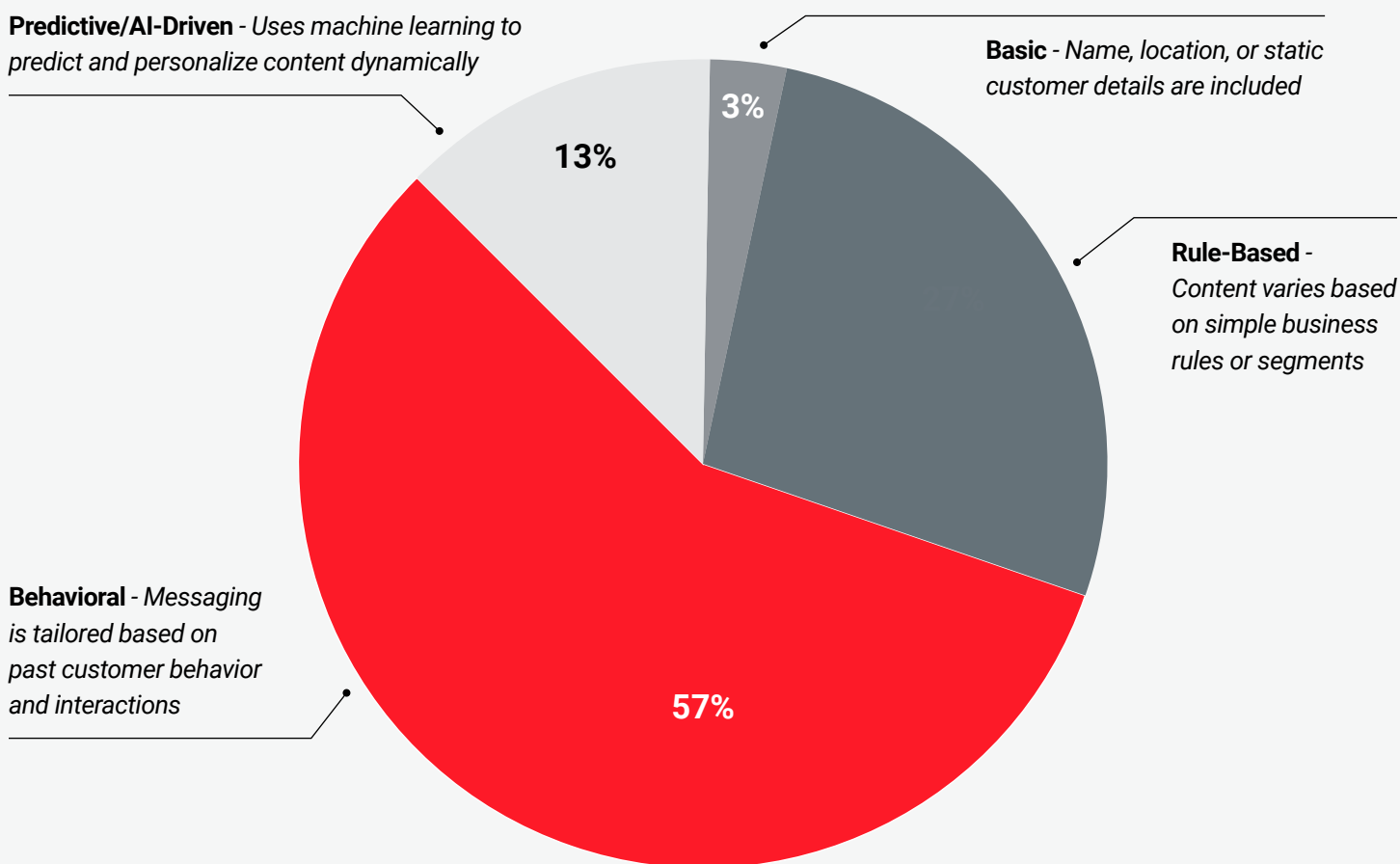
Relevance is the New Standard

Students, alumni, donors, and prospective families increasingly expect communications that reflect their interests and current stage in the student lifecycle. Generic messaging still has a place, but personalized outreach is a more effective way to capture attention and build relationships.

Keypoint Intelligence's research shows that nearly 70% of higher education organizations have moved beyond basic personalization, with most tailoring communications based on previous interactions and a growing number using predictive or AI-driven approaches.¹

Figure 2: Level of Personalization

How would you describe the level of personalization currently used in your direct marketing communications?



N = 30 Higher Ed Respondents

Source: *Customer Communications Transactional Business Survey*; Keypoint Intelligence 2025

Rather than personalizing everything, many institutions start with the moments where relevance has the greatest impact, like recruitment, student success, and alumni development. Using data they already have, such as application history or giving history, they apply it to a single campaign and then measure it against a non-personalized control group.



When Print Becomes Infrastructure

Delivering on that relevance depends on more than messaging; it often depends on the print environment behind it. Production printing often receives the most attention because of its visibility, but the larger print environment plays an equally important role in supporting campus operations. Throughout many colleges and universities, hundreds or even thousands of devices support everything from administrative workflows and classroom materials to student services and departmental communications.

Effectively managing that environment involves more than reducing device counts or controlling operating costs. Print resources should align with how work gets done across the university. Some departments depend on high-volume production, while others require secure printing, specialty media, or convenient access for faculty and staff. A one-size-fits-all approach will rarely meet those needs.

Successful institutions periodically evaluate how print resources support operational goals rather than simply determining where devices are located. Understanding utilization patterns, departmental requirements, and workflow demands helps identify opportunities to improve service, reduce unnecessary duplication, and ensure that work is performed on the right equipment. When viewed this way, fleet management becomes less about managing printers and more about supporting the people, processes, and communications that keep the campus running efficiently.

A practical starting point is a device utilization audit—tracking what's printed, where, by whom, and how often—within a single building or division before expanding campus-wide. That type of audit typically reveals the clearest opportunities first: Underused devices that can be consolidated, departments whose specialty needs are being underserved, and jobs that would be better routed to production equipment. From there, fleet management platforms can automate the ongoing monitoring so the assessment doesn't need to be repeated manually.

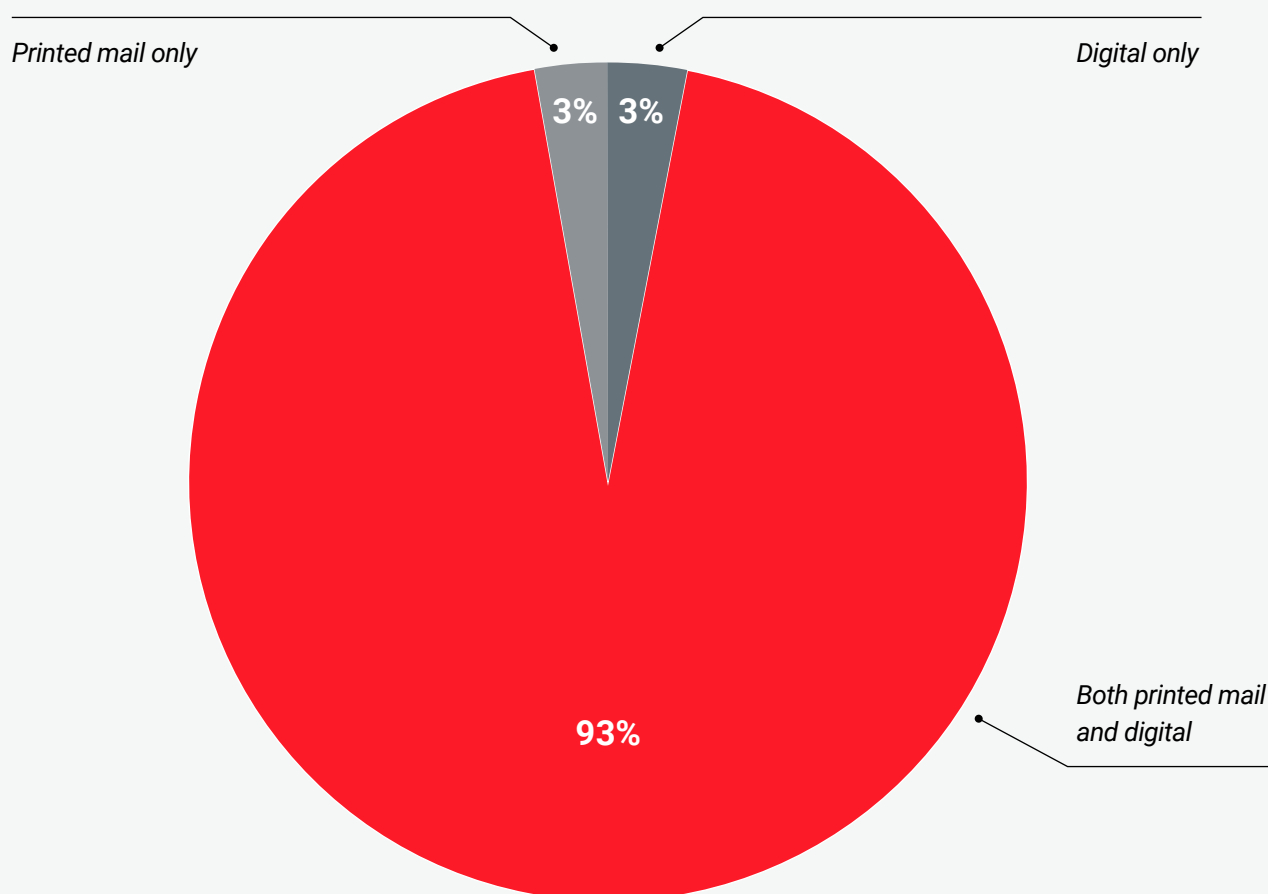
Creating Connected Experiences

The most effective communication strategies aren't built around channels; they're built around the audience. Print, email, web, mobile, and social media each play different roles, but together they create a more complete and consistent experience throughout the student lifecycle.

Keypoint Intelligence® research reflects this approach. Nearly every higher education organization surveyed uses both printed mail and digital channels to deliver transactional communications, demonstrating that print continues to complement, rather than compete with, digital engagement.²

Figure 3: Delivery of Transactional Communications

How are most of your transactional communications currently delivered to customers?



N = 30 Higher Ed Respondents

Source: *Customer Communications Transactional Business Survey*; Keypoint Intelligence 2025

Coordinating the two channels doesn't mean redesigning every communication at once. Pairing a printed piece with a QR code linked to a personalized landing page, or following a direct mail appeal with a scheduled email sequence, connects both channels around one moment (e.g., an admissions deadline, a giving campaign) without a lot of extra effort. Tracking the response rates of both touchpoints shows which combinations resonate before the approach is extended to other audience journeys.

Every Interaction Shapes Perception

Each communication reflects on the college or university that's behind it. Recruitment packets, campus maps, event programs, donor appeals, and commencement booklets may serve different purposes, but together they help shape how students, families, alumni, and the broader community perceive the institution.

Ensuring consistency can be challenging with decentralized operations where multiple departments develop materials independently. Without shared standards and coordinated processes, messaging, branding, and quality can vary from one interaction to the next. Many campuses are addressing this by establishing common templates, brand standards, and production workflows that provide departments with greater flexibility while maintaining a unified identity. The goal isn't to eliminate creativity; it's to help ensure that every communication reinforces the same values, quality, and experience. This builds recognition and trust with every audience the institution serves.

Bringing Print Closer to the Point of Need

None of these things are possible without having the right print resources in the right places. Production print and office printing serve different purposes, but they're most effective when they're viewed as complementary resources rather than separate environments. High-volume recruitment materials, fundraising campaigns, event collateral, and school publications often benefit from centralized production, while classroom materials, administrative documents, and day-to-day communications may be better suited for distributed printing closer to the people who need them.

Rather than evaluating devices or production capacity alone, institutions tend to get more value from asking which approach — centralized or distributed — best fits each type of work, then routing accordingly. Viewing print through the lens of workflow and audience need, rather than device count, typically uncovers opportunities to simplify processes, cut unnecessary costs, and improve turnaround times where it matters most.

Success Looks Different Today

For many years, print operations were measured primarily by output, turnaround times, and cost. Those metrics still matter, but they no longer tell the full story. Today's communications are increasingly judged by how effectively they support recruitment, strengthen engagement, and contribute to institutional goals. That means pairing operational metrics with outcome-based ones, such as:

- Tracking whether a redesigned admissions packet correlates with changes in acceptance rates.
- Determining if a personalized fundraising appeal supports increased donor participation compared to a control group.
- Assessing whether coordinated print-and-digital touchpoints help improve event attendance.

Institutions don't need to overhaul their measurement approaches all at once. Starting with a single campaign and comparing it with the previous year's version is enough to build a case for tracking other outcomes.



Putting Strategy into Action

Communications will continue to evolve as expectations change and new technologies emerge. While the tools may look different over time, the objective remains the same: Delivering relevant, engaging, and meaningful communications that help strengthen relationships throughout the student lifecycle.

Institutions that are ready to act don't need to tackle everything all at once. A practical sequence looks like this:

- **Start with an audit, not a redesign.** Map where communications originate, which departments own them, and where print and digital channels already overlap. This typically takes a few weeks and helps pinpoint the clearest opportunities before any new investment is made.
- **Pick one high-visibility journey to pilot.** Admissions, orientation, or a single fundraising campaign are common starting points. Personalization, channel coordination, or centralized production can be tested on a single journey before scaling further.

- **Measure the pilot against a baseline.** Compare response rates, attendance, or participation to the prior cycle's results, using a control group where possible, so the case for expansion is built on evidence rather than assumptions.
- **Extend what works, department by department.** Use the pilot as the template for the next journey, rather than mandating a campus-wide rollout all at once.

Print will remain an important part of higher education because some interactions are simply more effective when they create a tangible and lasting impression. The greatest opportunity lies in using print intentionally, integrating it with digital communications, and ensuring that every interaction supports the institution's overall mission.

If you're ready to take the next step, connect with Canon to explore what's possible for your organization.

¹ Source: Keypoint Intelligence, 2026 Digital Transformation Survey, U.S. Higher Education respondents (n=30).

² Source: Keypoint Intelligence, 2026 Transactional Communications Survey, U.S. Higher Education respondents (n=30)

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