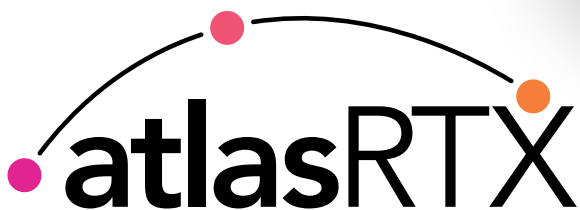# Empower the student

A Guide to Using AI Chatbots to Increase Enrollment, Student Engagement, and Student Success

atlasRTX

A comprehensive, AI-powered platform continually improved by expert higher education knowledge engineers

Today's students have come of age in a world where near instant gratification is ubiquitous. On demand service, what we call Real Time Experience (RTX), isn't a plus, it's expected. Sixty percent of visitors to college and universities do so on nights and weekends when there isn't staff available to provide this Real Time Experience.

Just a few years ago, very few people were aware of chatbots. Today, many institutions have heard of chatbots and are hopeful that they can be part of their student engagement strategy, but all chatbots are not created equally. If you deploy a basic chatbot, not only will students not have a Real Time Experience that addresses their needs, but they will have a negative experience that adversely impacts how they feel about your institution.

What type of chatbot is suitable for higher education? The simple answer is one that can handle upwards of 80% of users' questions, 24/7/365, in over 100 languages, and in multiple channels. With integrations into the CRM, SIS, and LMS, chatbots can personalize engagements allowing students access to individual assistance in real time. However, the overwhelming majority of chatbots on the market do not do any, let alone all of these important jobs.

60%
of Higher Ed website visitors do so after normal business hours

Dan Gaines
Associate Director of Marketing
Purdue University
Krannert School of Management

"To manage the round-the-clock global coverage of our AtlasRTX chatbot and the volume of conversations, we estimate that we would have to hire three staff members."

Not all chatbots are created equal

It is important to understand the various levels of autonomy and sophistication in chatbots, as the user experience can be drastically different depending on the bot with which they are engaging.

LEVEL 4

Autonomous Dynamic Bot
Able to use other systems and resources in real-time to personalize the dialog flow itself as well as the answers providing the most up-to-date information available.

LEVEL 3

Guided FAQ Bot
Asks questions and guides visitors without human help to the right resources along with answering questions.

LEVEL 2

FAQ Bot
Answers a number of pre-defined questions with answers prog rammed in. All other questions block for a human. Manually updated.

LEVEL 1

Traffic Bot
Most basic assistance targeting 1-2 questions then blocking to wait for a human to become available.

LEVEL 0

Human Live Chat
No autonomy.

AtlasRTX chatbots are Level 4 Autonomous Dynamic Bots, capable of integrating directly with third party systems, understanding intent, and providing the most up-to-date information possible for each conversation.

Support for the entire student journey – From exploration, to application, to graduation

Chatbots can improve the student experience throughout their entire journey. That improved experience can be profound for "non-traditional" students that have work and family obligations that make it difficult to engage with campus staff during standard business hours. Rather than being cut off from student services, those students can engage with their schools any time through an autonomous chatbot.

20%

Growth in applications from chatbot engagements

Recruiting & Admissions

For all but the most elite and well resourced institutions, enrollments have declined year after year, and the looming demographic cliff ahead approaching beginning in 2024 creates an additional challenge. At the same time, the pool of potential college students is becoming vastly more diverse with more potential students from populations that higher education has historically struggled to recruit and retain: low income, first generation, underrepresented minority, and adult students. Chatbots provide an opportunity to meet these students where they are when they are exploring schools and programs (your website) and to engage with them in their language. Furthermore, an autonomous chatbot that's highly skilled in admissions criteria and financial aid provides a judgement free zone where students can ask questions about sensitive topics free from embarrassment or shame.

Over 60% of college and university website traffic comes after hours and on weekends, which means for every 100 conversations that your human staff have with website visitors, there are nearly 200 missed opportunities to engage because there's no one there. Purdue's Krannert School of Management has experienced a 22% increase in applications since deploying an autonomous chatbot on their website that is focused on admissions.

Enrollment

Once the student has applied, it's up to your institution to admit the student. Chatbots aren't doing that yet, and that's probably as it should be. Most students have applied to 5 to 10 institutions and may get admitted to all of them.

A SMS text based chatbot can allow you to stay engaged with admitted students. Text based chatbots can ask admitted students about their level of interest in enrolling, allowing your enrollment staff to focus on those that have indicated the highest level of interest.

The chatbot can engage in two-way communication with the student that also brings in your human staff to handle the highest value tasks. Once a student has made her deposit, the chatbot can then focus on staying connected over the summer to keep the student excited about beginning classes in the fall and help stave off summer melt.

Independent researchers at UC Santa Barbara have published peer reviewed research findings of up to 21% decrease in summer melt when conversational artificial intelligence is used.

21%

Decrease in summer melt with use of an AI-powered chatbot

Financial Aid

Everything in the classroom should be challenging, and everything related to getting to class should be easy. The complexity of the financial aid process could not be more contrary to the preceding sentence. The byzantine process and numerous deadlines trip up millions of potential college students, particularly those from low-income and first-generation backgrounds who often lack support in navigating their way through the financial aid labyrinth.

Nearly half of low-income students who are accepted to college never show up for the first day of class, and for many the difficulty of completing the financial aid process was the final roadblock. Even for those students that managed to complete the initial process and complete year one, the annual re-application process is hardly any easier and many students drop out as a result. A chatbot can profoundly change this process for students.

The chatbot isn't going to judge a student who doesn't understand how financial aid works. The chatbot isn't going to judge your family's adjusted gross income (AGI) or assets. The chatbot will guide a student through the process, free of judgement, and assist in demystifying the process and thereby removing the barrier that financial aid can be.

50%

Low-income students who are accepted into college but never show up on the first day of classes
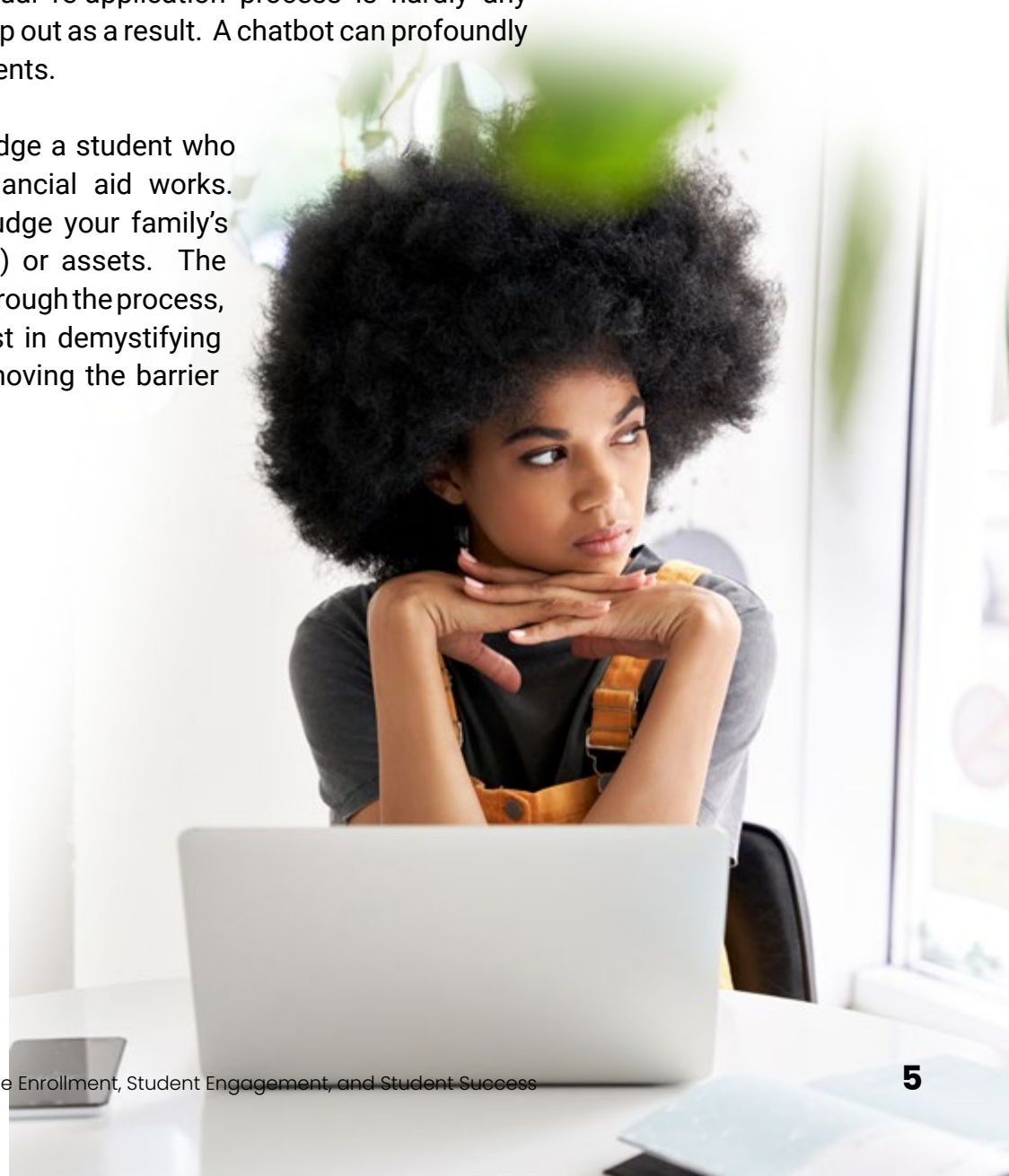
Academic Counseling and Advising

Academic counselors and advisors are essential to helping institutions achieve their retention and graduation goals. At many institutions, the ratio of students to advisors exceeds 350 to 1. Of course many of the questions and issues with which students need help are routine and can easily be handled by a chatbot, freeing up advisors for high level activities.

Perhaps more importantly, many students due to work and family obligations simply can't come to campus during standard business hours and are thus cut off from student services which jeopardizes their academic progress. A chatbot that is available 24/7/365 that speaks over 100 languages with integrations into your SIS can provide personalized support for the majority of questions.

At first glance, it may be counterintuitive to think of AI as an element of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Artificial intelligence, technology, chatbots are terms that are devoid of humanity, after all. If instead, you describe a chatbot as a tool that opens up access to student services to "non-traditional" students, that helps them with their academic progress, creates an environment where it's safe and comfortable to ask sensitive questions, and speaks in the student's chosen language; it's quite clear that it fosters DEI.

350/1

Average ratio of students to academic advisors

Student Engagement

It's widely known and empirically proven that engaged students have significantly higher retention and graduation rates than less engaged students. Students most in need of engaging in student groups and clubs are often the most difficult to reach. They aren't the ones attending student group and club fairs, and hardly any students are going to open emails. Chatbots can breakthrough that wall by using what they know about the student to recommend engagement opportunities that are tailored to the student.

Support your students and staff with an AI-powered chatbot solution

AtlasRTX chatbots help you deliver engaging real-time experiences at the right points in the student journey—allowing your staff to focus on high value tasks only they can perform.

AtlasRTX isn't just a point solution aimed at solving a single problem, it's an end-to-end platform built to transform the way you connect with prospective and existing students in whichever channels they prefer.
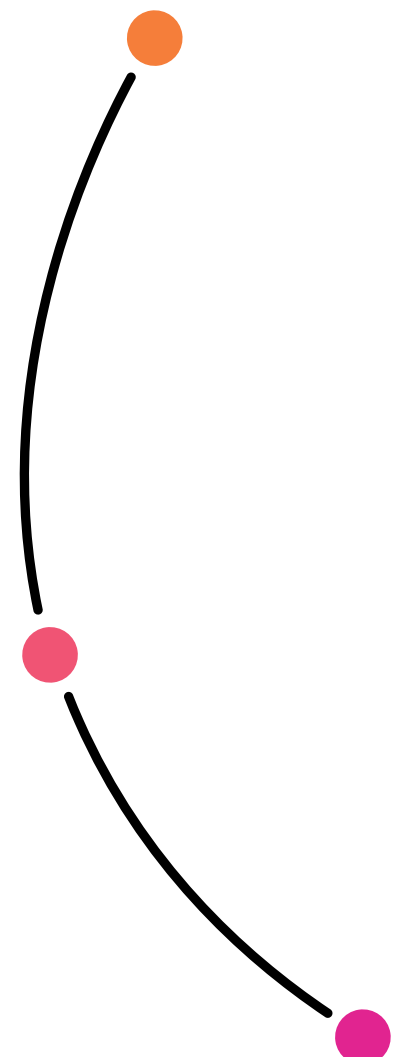
Ready to modernize the student journey?

Email us at hello@atlasrtx.com

Want to know more?
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