



## **Overview of Up Next Mobile Messaging Campaign**

### **Campaign summary**

Up Next is a mobile messaging campaign that will provide millions of students and families across the country with personalized reminders, encouragement, and connections to assistance with education and civic engagement. Campaign topics will include college search and application, financial aid, loan repayment, and voter engagement. Up Next will both build on a strong foundation of rigorously-evaluated, large-scale text messaging campaigns in education and public policy, and will push the frontier of mobile campaign design by incorporating new media and facilitating connections to one-on-one advisers through interactive technologies.

### **Campaign motivation and background**

A college degree remains the surest path to economic stability in America, yet the share of American citizens with a college degree has remained stagnant for decades and socioeconomic inequalities in college completion have widened over time. A cornerstone of the Obama Administration domestic policy has been to expand college opportunity for all Americans, through increased college affordability, more transparent information about college and financial aid options, and increased commitments from colleges and universities to diversify their campuses.

In support of the President's college opportunity agenda, First Lady Michelle Obama launched her Reach Higher Initiative and Better Make Room campaign to families, schools, and communities to support all students to pursue rewarding postsecondary opportunities. Reach Higher has featured a robust social media campaign and a series of high-profile events, including a school counselor of the year celebration and a national college signing day to celebrate high school seniors as they decide which college to attend after high school. The most recent College Signing Day, held on April 26, 2016, featured over 1,000 events across the country and garnered over 500 million social media impressions in a single day.

### **Up Next – personalized mobile messaging at a national scale**

The Up Next campaign capitalizes on the First Lady's connection with young Americans and amplifies it through mobile messaging. Up Next will provide students and families across the country with personalized information and encouragement to complete important college and financial aid milestones and tasks. Up Next campaign topics include:

- Encouragement for high school juniors to take college entrance exams
- Encouragement for high school seniors to apply to a broad range of colleges and universities and to apply for financial aid (taking advantage of recent policy changes that allow students to start applying for federal financial aid in October of their senior year in high school).
- Information for high school graduates of pre-matriculation tasks they need to complete to successfully enroll in college
- Reassurance for students as they transition into college and navigate new cultural environments and relationships.
- Support for students to make informed decisions about their student loans—both at the point of initial borrowing and when they are considering repayment options.

Up Next builds on a growing body of evidence-based text messaging campaigns in education which have improved students' outcomes from pre-K through higher education. Specific to the context of college, researchers have demonstrated that large-scale personalized text messaging campaigns can substantially increase the share of students that enter or persist in college, often at an investment of only several dollars per student served. Recent campaigns illustrate the potential of personalized text messaging to be implemented at a national scale. For instance, in winter 2016 The Common Application partnered with researchers to implement a texting campaign that provided 450,000 lower-income and first-generation college students with personalized encouragement to apply for financial aid early in the calendar year to maximize how much aid they receive.

### **Up Next functionality**

The Up Next campaign design will feature the following core functionality:

- **An interactive, SMS-based intake process.** Students will be able to text in to sign up for Up Next, and will be prompted to respond to simple screening questions that route them to campaign topics that are appropriate to their stage of education. The screening questions will also collect basic information (e.g. name, date of birth, state of residence) that make it possible to enroll students in campaigns specific to their geographic region.
- **Message customization and automated message branching.** Content will be customized to students based both on the responses they provide to the initial screen process and based on responses they give to automated message prompts during the campaign.
- **Behaviorally-informed content.** Up Next will draw on expertise from leading behavioral researchers, the White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (SBST), and from first-in-class design agencies to ensure message content is student-centered and engaging to young people.
- **Rigorous evaluation.** Working with research partners and SBST, Up Next will rigorously evaluate the message campaigns, identifying which message strategies and content students are most responsive to. This analysis will inform future Up Next campaign design and implementation.

Up Next will also pilot campaign functionality designed to more deeply engage students and connect them to one-on-one mobile advising. These innovations include:

- **Embedded images and video.** This multimedia content will build on the tremendous success the First Lady and Reach Higher have had using new media to connect with and engage young people.
- **Opportunities to ask personal questions and receive one-on-one college advising:** At critical junctures in each campaign target groups of students will be able to text in questions and receive individualized college advising from a college or financial aid professional.

### **Reach**

Based on young people's engagement with other Reach Higher initiatives the First Lady has championed and promoted, we project that millions of students and families across the country will sign up for Up Next. The First Lady and her partners have demonstrated particular reach to traditionally underrepresented student populations, and we anticipate they will comprise a substantial share of Up Next enrollees.