

10

**Email Campaigns
Universities Should
Send This Fall**



emma[®]

Introduction

Welcome, higher education friends.

In the midst of COVID-19, we recognize this upcoming year presents new and unknown challenges for you and your students. Because we know you're spending a lot of time navigating important decisions that impact public health, as well as student success and your institution's wellbeing, we want to make communicating those decisions as easy as possible. Here's what you can expect from this guide:

What it is

- ✓ Practical ideas for campaigns you can send right away
- ✓ Insight from current students on what they wish you were telling them and how
- ✓ A helpful resource for all departments, from admissions to alumni
- ✓ Relevant examples from leading universities, regardless of your university's plan for the fall semester

What it isn't

- ✗ A sales pitch
- ✗ A reminder of how "unprecedented" these times are (Dare us to say it again—We won't!)
- ✗ Tech-heavy details that only your IT team will understand
- ✗ Overwhelming or stress-inducing "should-have"s and "must-do"s

We hope it will be a resource you can continue to refer back to as your communications plan evolves over the semester and beyond.



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Emma + Universities

How can we help?

Your fall semester plan

If there's one thing we do know about the fall semester, it's that your plans have changed several times, and they'll probably continue to do so. Regardless of your university's approach to the upcoming semester, establishing a reliable means of communication should be at the top of your priorities list.



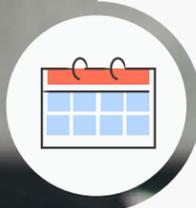
In-person

Even if you're planning for students to return to campus this fall, it's likely the experience will still be far from "normal." You'll need to prepare them for these differences, appropriately communicate new policies to faculty, and be able to release ongoing updates or changes as quickly as possible.



Online

As you probably know from last semester, shifting from in-person teaching and campus life to a completely virtual semester creates far-reaching challenges for every university department. You'll need a comprehensive plan for translating every real-life interaction—everything from alumni initiatives to admissions events to advisor meetings—to a digital format.



Hybrid

A schedule that includes a combination of in-person and virtual teaching requires flexibility not only from your students and faculty but also from your communications plan. As everyone adjusts to this unique schedule, having a trusted go-to for sending and receiving messages will be necessary.



Why you can rely on email

Acknowledging that schedules and plans for the fall will continue to evolve, it's important to choose a medium you can rely on. Here are a few reasons why email is the most effective channel for your university to use during COVID-19 and beyond.

It creates one reliable source of truth.

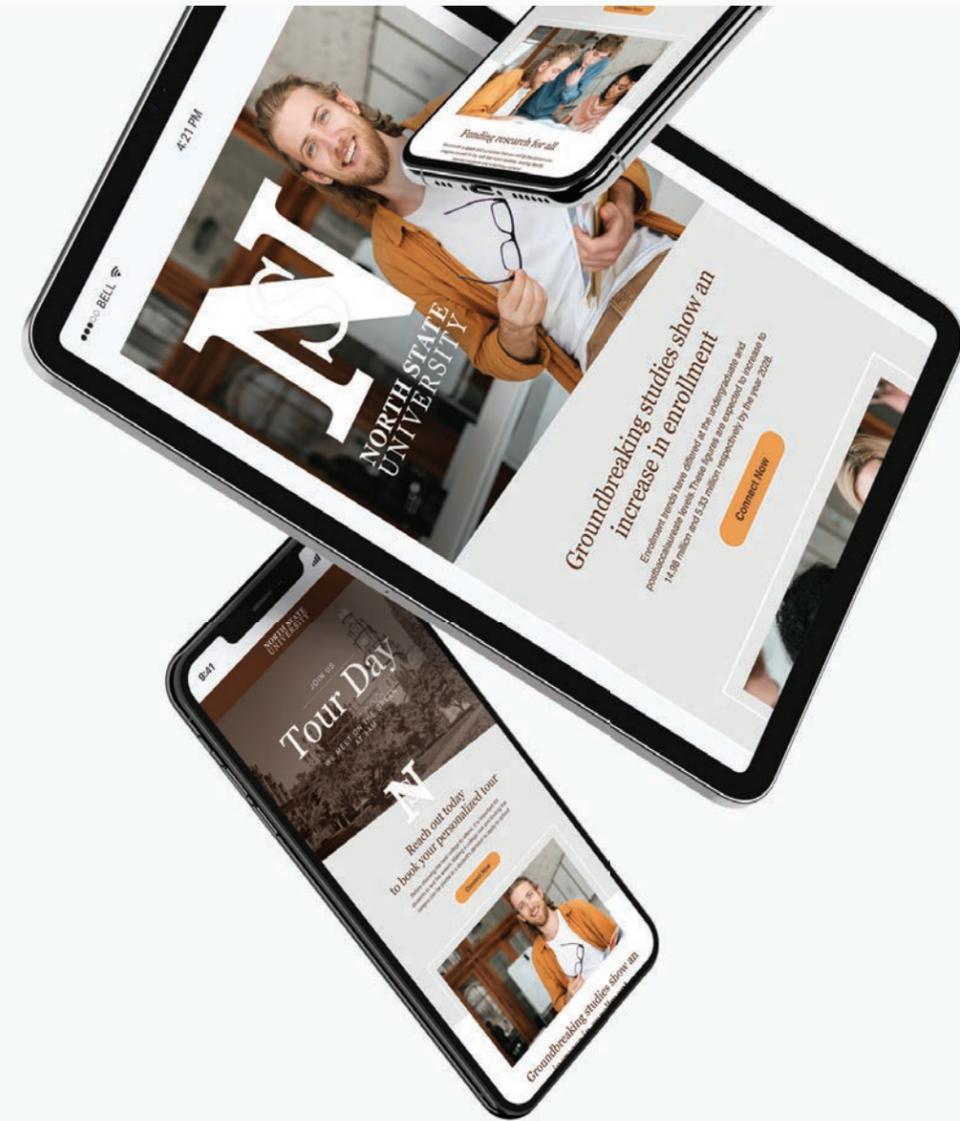
Okay, so let's say you've just made a lot of important decisions about the fall semester. Now what? Thinking about all of the channels and people you need to communicate those changes with can be overwhelming.

However, the best solution is to choose one reliable channel to be the always-updated source of truth. Choosing email takes the stress out of how you'll communicate and who will receive your message, leaving you time to focus on the important stuff, like what you need to say.

It's the only true 1:1 digital marketing channel.

While there are so many ways available to communicate digitally, email marketing is the only channel that transmits a message from one person to another single person. Using tools like dynamic content to personalize your message and segmentation to target the correct audience ensures that your message is relevant to the recipient.

Think about it: Would you be more likely to trust a message from a friend, or a one-size-fits-all message from a large company? Email provides a personal touch not available on other channels, like social media.



Email stays with you, wherever you go.

If there's anything we learned from the spring semester of 2020, it's that we can't exactly count on being on campus, in residence halls, or the office every day. However, the one thing we always have with us? Our inboxes.

Not only will students always have access to email, decision-makers and those sending your emails will, too.

Did you start the semester on-campus but need to pivot to distance learning? Maybe you began with a hybrid schedule but are making the switch to fully on-campus learning. Regardless of your evolving plans, email remains reliable and will be something you can continue to count on.



10 email campaigns universities should send this fall

We scoured our inboxes, interviewed current students, and asked university staff about their most effective email sends to collect your fall semester inspiration in one place. To give you a practical starting point, we also considered how you can bridge the gap between this semester and a “typical” college experience through email.



Emma user pro-tip:

Already using Emma? Amazing! Be on the lookout for this icon for some special tips for our current Emma clients.



The welcome email

Typical experience

New students usually attend campus tours, orientation, move-in day, and welcome events. Returning students typically reunite with friends, attend “Welcome back” events, and meet new professors on the first day of classes.

Email experience

Regardless of if you’re kicking off the semester on campus or virtually, the personal touches of a warm welcome are essential for the relationships you’ll continue to build this year. Sending an email welcome series is a great way to show your students you’re there for them and want them to succeed, no matter where they are.

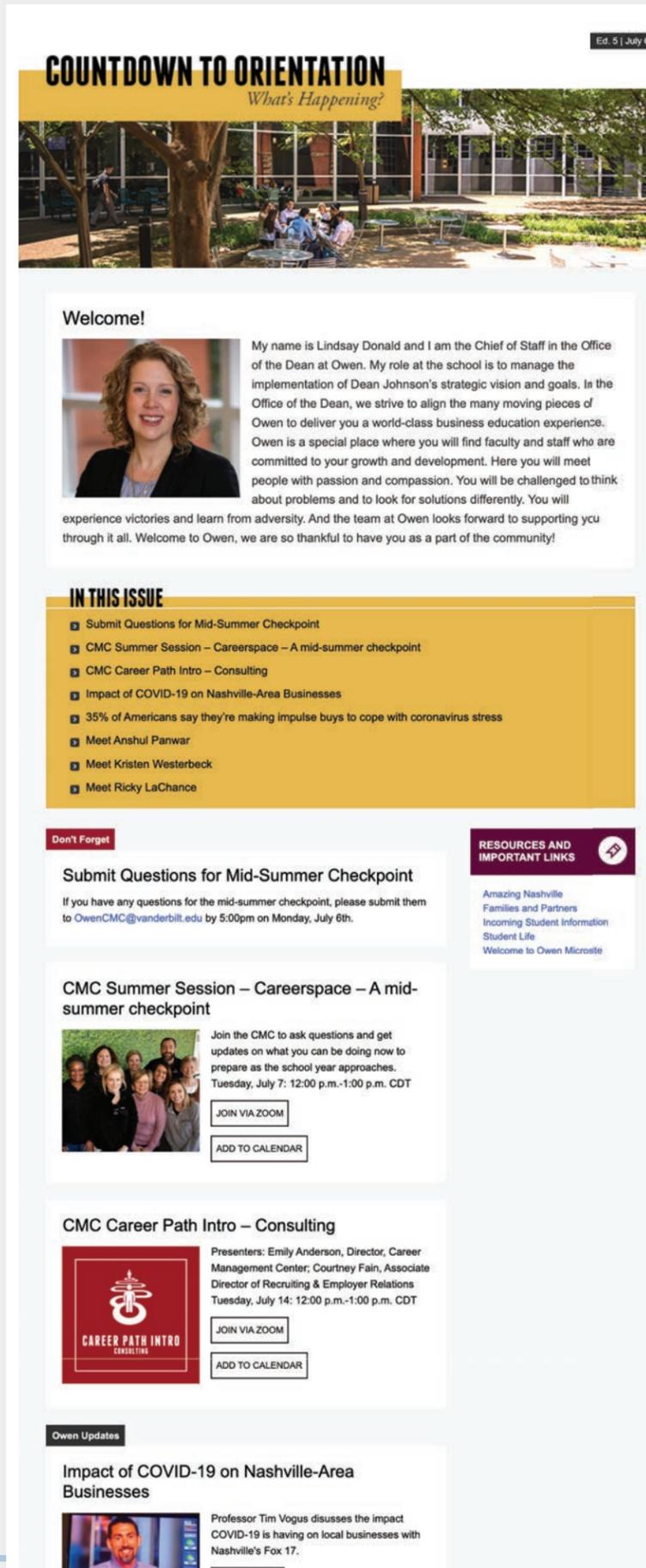
Make it your own:

- ✓ Include pictures of faculty and staff students will be interacting with during the semester. Share a fun fact to get to know them, and a form of contact.
- ✓ Consider creating a welcome series tailored to each student year (one for freshmen, one for seniors, etc.)
- ✓ Ask student icebreaker questions or feature incoming students to help build community.



Emma user pro-tip:

Begin a **welcome series** using the automation workflow builder. Create and name a new workflow, choose your audience, and select the triggering event. (This could be something like signing up for an admitted-students email list.)



CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

Vanderbilt University

We love this email Vanderbilt University sent to their incoming students in the Owen Graduate School of Management because it begins by addressing the question that’s most likely on their minds: “What’s happening?”

It goes on to lead with a human element, introducing the school’s Chief of Staff, allowing students to feel more comfortable putting a face with the person sending the message. Pictures of professors and current students can help incoming students to imagine themselves in the fall semester—whether they’ll be on campus or online—and put them at ease by explaining what’s to come.

It’s clear that Vanderbilt has a lot of information to share, and they share it in this email by providing external links to webpages with more details. This is a great way to ensure your emails aren’t overwhelming while also providing information essential to a successful semester.

2

The parent and family member email

Typical experience

Parents and families usually send their students away, hear about their experiences from afar, attend parents' weekend, and see students during holiday breaks.

Email experience

While you have to be careful about following HIPAA regulations and what you share with parents and family members, keeping them in the loop about your university plans and policies, especially during an unpredictable year, it's in your best interest to communicate well and often to others who care most about your students.

Make it your own:

- ✓ Provide tips for parents to support their students in virtual learning, and make sure they're aware of all health measures your university is taking if students are returning back to campus.
- ✓ Create a support hub of articles specifically for parents and link to it in your email.
- ✓ Personalize university updates for family members and share information that specifically pertains to them. (Example: They may not need to know about dining hall updates on campus, but need to know about changes to the holiday schedule or school closures.)

Emma user pro-tip:

Set up **dynamic content** to send the same email to both parents and students, but each with personalized images or messages to improve your engagement.



Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

After weeks of analysis and consideration, and in consultation with the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to report that the Columbia campus of the University of South Carolina will resume in-person instruction in mid-August.

One month ago, I called together a **Future Planning Group (FPG)** – an interdisciplinary gathering of public health, clinical medicine, academic and staff experts from across the university – to examine how to implement a safe return to campus in August. The FPG has gathered and analyzed data from every operational aspect of this institution and it works closely with public health experts on campus and throughout the state and nation to monitor COVID-19 trends and recommend appropriate measures to implement on-campus going forward. **Every step of the way, our top priority is your health, safety and wellbeing.** The in-depth, tireless work of the FPG has given me a new level of understanding and confidence that in-person instruction can safely begin this fall.

This decision has not been made lightly. It is informed by the science of our excellent epidemiologists and health care specialists in our planning group, as well as the CDC and the SC Department of Health and Environment Control. It is also made with the understanding of the cost of interrupting or postponing the education of tomorrow's leaders for another semester or year. **We have listened to the increasing number of students** who have expressed their desire to be back on campus to experience the fullness of academic and student life. Many of these students, if faced with no option other than prolonged remote learning, will elect to postpone or discontinue their education. Finally, as has been the case with all of our actions up to this point, **this decision is made with a genuine concern for our community** and an absolute commitment to mitigating the future risks to Columbia and our surrounding communities.

As we prepare for August, **we are embarking on a new normal that will demand from each of us a commitment to public health and safety.** Our epidemiologists remind us that the risks associated with COVID-19 will remain a reality for the foreseeable future, simply because we have neither herd immunity nor a vaccine. With that reality, our purposeful efforts to reduce the spread of the virus through recommended public health protocols will continue as we also bolster our ability to respond to any potential resurgence of cases. Our excellent healthcare facilities and capacity on campus, and the top tier hospitals and available healthcare resources in the Columbia area will enable us to effectively address the needs of our campus community as we move forward. **The success of the fall and the continued safety of our community depend, however, on the resolve of each student, staff and faculty member to comply daily with safety and health protocols.**

We will begin by phasing in an increased presence on campus this summer of selected populations of students and faculty, even as summer courses remain online. This transitional, phased approach will allow us to **test our mitigation measures, pilot our initiatives and further build our confidence** and capacity to open our doors to the University community safely in August.

While we would like as many students, faculty and staff members as possible to return in person, doing so would not be mandatory, as we recognize that some would be uncomfortable coming back to campus in August. **We respect each person's decision to either return or delay their return,** and we will expand our online course offerings to accommodate those who choose to remain away.

For those who are returning to campus, plans for academics, housing, dining and every aspect of student and campus life for the fall semester are being meticulously formed by the FPG and an increasingly broad group of campus leaders. Plans include the following:

- We will have the **capacity to test every** Student, Faculty and Staff member for COVID-19 upon return the campus
- We have the **capacity to sustain a robust testing program** throughout the entire semester
- We are reviewing **several comprehensive tracing and tracking apps** for early and thorough identification of at-risk contacts
- We have designated ample student housing for those who may require **isolation and quarantine,** and we are putting in place the support services to provide for their meals, education, and other needs

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

University of South Carolina

In this message from The University of South Carolina, the Office of Parent and Family Programs forwarded an important message from the university president to their email lists. But they didn't just forward it without context— They used segmentation to include a message specifically for families at the top, notifying them of the message's importance.

We like this approach because it's making sure all parties involved are receiving the same information (It would be confusing if the Office of Parent and Family Programs sent out their email with conflicting information), yet in a format that's tailored to them. It contains a lot of text and details, so it's helpful that this email also mentions an opportunity to ask follow-up questions right away.

3

The internal staff newsletter

Typical experience

Faculty and staff are used to in-office interactions, face-to-face meetings, social outings, and large team meetings.

Email experience

It's important to remember that faculty and staff have their own concerns and uncertainties about the upcoming semester. In a time that may include furloughs, health, and familial concerns, keep empathy and humanity at the forefront of your communications.

The more equipped and stable your faculty and staff feel, the better they can show up and support students. While you consider how to communicate externally, also think about how you can maintain team camaraderie and create a safe place to communicate internally.

Make it your own:

- ✓ Create a reliable email cadence, like an internal newsletter that goes out at the same time every week. This will help reduce uncertainty and manage expectations.
- ✓ Have fun with it! Allow your team to stay connected socially by featuring their colleagues' hobbies, work-from-home setups, or family updates.
- ✓ Share your back-up plan for university procedures and the back-up plan to your back-up plan.

Dome to Den
June 3, 2020
Notre Dame Research works from home

LAB REOPENINGS BEGIN IN PHASES

Notre Dame has begun the phased reopening of its laboratories. Now in Phase 2b, McCourtney Hall has partially reopened. Other research buildings will phase-in over the coming weeks. To learn more about the reopening, including to review the full playbook, [please click here](#).

So far, nearly 150 labs have applied to reopen. However, as was noted in a letter to lab-based faculty earlier this week, Notre Dame is very much in ramp-up mode and a conservative approach is being applied in order to balance health with productivity. To stay up-to-date about the lab reopening process, please [click this link to join the Google Group](#).

As always:
Stay home. Stay healthy. Stay in touch.

[Join Lab Reopening Google Group](#)

LAST CHANCE: MAKE A REF-IE NOMINATION



Do you know a Notre Dame Research faculty or staff member who successfully meets the NDR guiding principles of being **R**esponsive, **E**ffective, and **F**riendly? [Nominate them](#) for the REF-ies! Nominations are due by **this Friday, June 5th at 5 p.m.**

GREEN THUMB CORNER



[Sharon Stack](#), Director of the [Harper Cancer Research Institute](#) is back with more gardening tips and tricks now that the threat of frost is now safely gone.

- Don't have a lot of space for a garden? Try underplanting (also known as interplanting). This is where you surround slow-growers (like tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant) with smaller fast-growers, like lettuce, spinach, radishes, kale, carrots, etc. A bonus of this technique is that it also helps to keep weeds from taking over.
- For weed control in a large garden space, consider mulching. It makes the initial planting a lot more work, but the return is far fewer weeds to pull all summer long. Sharon prefers an organic biodegradable paper mulch, such as Weedguard Plus, but landscape fabric or other mulch material also works. Note that weed pulling can be quite therapeutic, so she decided to skip the mulch this year and opt for a healthy outdoor way to release some angst!
- Set your veggies free! Don't limit yourself to the backyard or back deck. Veggies and herbs look great in among your flowers and shrubs in the front yard.

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

Notre Dame Research

To keep their employees connected while apart, Emma customer Notre Dame Research at the University of Notre Dame began sending a weekly internal newsletter that focuses on community building, logistical updates, and personal updates.

Notre Dame Research shared they're getting an average of 70-80% open rates each week, and they're enjoying this new way to stay updated on things happening within their team.

"It's been fun to pull together," said Joanne Fahey, Director of Communications at Notre Dame Research. "[We've enjoyed] searching for things happening in the community and getting different people to contribute who normally wouldn't write things like this." (Check out the Green Thumb Corner written by the director of their Cancer Research Institute –We love this idea!)

4

The student and alumni spotlight email

Typical experience

Admissions and alumni departments typically have In-person recruiting and school visits, where they feature prestigious programs, and share current student and alumni successes.

Email experience

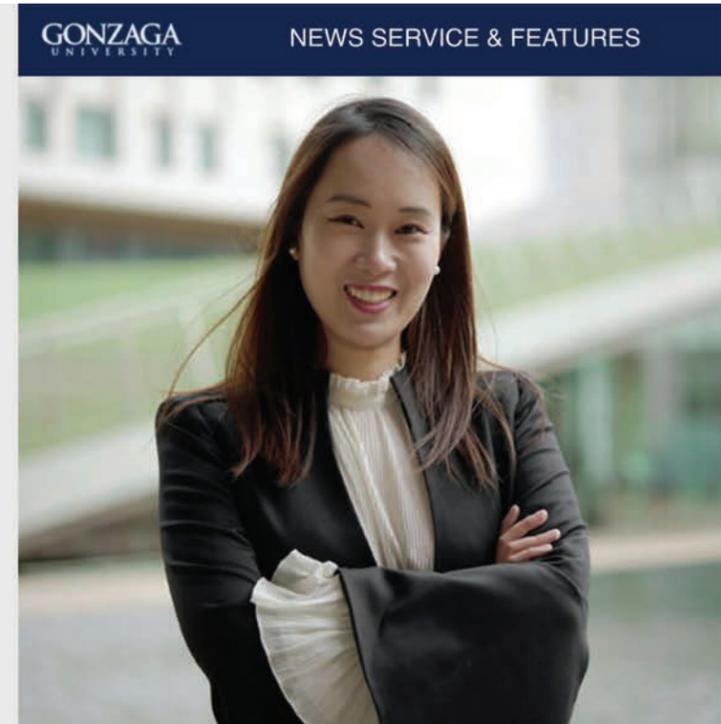
Even if traveling is limited this semester, it doesn't have to stop you from sharing how incredible your university is with people near and far. Focusing on the exciting initiatives your students and alumni are taking, even in a pandemic, will not only give a sense of routine and normalcy to prospective students, but will also inspire them to attend your institution when the time comes.

Make it your own:

- ✔ Spotlight current student research, awards, or ways they're staying successful amid the uncertain circumstances.
- ✔ Feature alumni or faculty who play a pivotal role in current events, like COVID-19 research, or are serving the community creatively.
- ✔ Collaborate across departments to discover interesting stories in your university community. (Example: By keeping in touch with academic and alumni departments as an admissions professional, you'll always have many relatable stories to share with prospective students.)

Emma user pro-tip:

Share student pictures or quotes across departments using the **Asset Manager** feature of Emma HQ. No more waiting for your coworkers to share images or blurry screenshots!



Shuying Li

June 3, 2020

Award-Winning Composer Shuying Li to Join Gonzaga's Music Faculty This Fall

Gonzaga University News Service

SPOKANE, Wash. — Shuying Li, an award-winning composer with advanced degrees in musical composition, and a research faculty member at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, will join the Gonzaga University music faculty this fall as an assistant professor of composition and music theory.

Shuying said she was welcomed and impressed by Gonzaga's students, faculty and staff during a campus visit in January.

"Gonzaga's commitment to quality education, community well-being, and leadership cultivation is truly exceptional and inspiring, and it brings me so much pride and excitement that I will get to be a part of this vibrant community," Shuying said.

As a sophomore at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in her native China, Shuying won a scholarship to continue her undergraduate studies at The Hart School at the University of Hartford in Connecticut, where she earned a bachelor's degree in music composition (2013). She earned Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in music composition from the University of Michigan.

Shuying made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2017 with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra for the premiere of the commissioned work "Out Came the Sun." The next season, Orpheus commissioned an arrangement of Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 for a collaboration with Japanese pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii that was performed more than 20 times in America and Asia. Also

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

Gonzaga University

This email from Gonzaga University celebrates the addition of an accomplished new faculty member to their School of Music. Through quotes about the new professor's decision to join the university, Gonzaga affirms their respected reputation and commitment to maintaining a team of passionate and talented faculty.

You can use a similar format to feature current students or alumni, too. Including click-worthy pictures and quotes from the featured individual will give subscribers a sense of connection to your university.

5

The student engagement email

Typical experience

Students have the opportunity to participate in on-campus student organizations, Greek Life recruitment, intramural sports, and social events.

Email experience

While it may not be an ideal scenario, you have the opportunity to get creative with what it means to have student engagement, regardless of if their learning is happening virtually or on-campus. Rethink traditional events to include social distancing or hold them online—All details communicated via email, of course.

Make it your own:

- ✔ Spotlight a student organization week and share the ways they are pivoting this semester. Turn the limited capabilities for in-person meetings into an opportunity for broader student awareness.
- ✔ Think about how students' needs for social interaction have changed and will continue to do so. Set up opportunities for students within a certain major to connect on a Zoom call, or host a virtual talent show with video submissions.
- ✔ Ask for participation! Whether it's asking a question for students to respond to in each newsletter or featuring photos from a certain hashtag in your email, there are many ways to give a sense of community digitally.



Emma user pro-tip:

From your Emma HQ admin account, **lock brand styles and templates** to maintain brand consistency throughout every department or organization.



Wear black and gold to spell U-C-F

This year's incoming class is invited to take part in our favorite campus tradition: the Welcome Week Photo!

To keep safety top-of-mind, this year's welcome photo will be done virtually. To be a part of this special event, [please submit a photo](#) of yourself (just you!) wearing **black** and **gold** attire. **Photos are due by Monday, August 3, 2020.**

This year's welcome photo reveal, hosted by [4EVER KNIGHTS](#), will take place on Sunday, August 23, 2020. If you choose to participate, the photo mosaic and commemorative poster download will be sent to you on the day of the reveal.

Go Knights, *Charge On!*

Submit your photo



"We're learning a lot about when to speak, when not to, and when we do, who should receive the message. Targeting has become huge for us."

-Kelsey Moscatier

*Assistant Director of Communication Strategy for Advancement,
University of Central Florida*

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

University of Central Florida

Every year, the University of Central Florida takes a "Welcome Week" photo of students in school gear spelling the letters "U," "C," and "F." Instead of forgoing the tradition this year, they decided to pivot to a digital mosaic and requested photos via email. We love the spirit of continuing traditions where possible and can't wait to see how this year's photo turns out!

While they're finding success with these student engagement email sends, the University of Central Florida is also learning that it's not just about what's in the message or when you send it, but who you send it to.

6

The crisis or emergency-related email

Typical experience

Campus leadership usually makes important announcements through press conferences, printed letters and brochures, and messages are distributed using multiple channels.

Email experience

Email is the ideal way to communicate important updates because it's naturally socially distanced, reliable, and fast. No more waiting for printed resources or worrying about updating all of your social media channels at once —Email is your one and done.

Make it your own:

- ✓ Embed videos of university leadership into your emails to share relevant updates in real-time.
- ✓ Provide a clear place for email recipients to ask follow-up questions.
- ✓ Create emergency messaging templates to save time and get messages out faster.



Emma user pro-tip:

Create templates that can be ready for your next on-the-fly send. This allows you to send consistent emails without rebuilding them each time.



To help ensure the health of our community, the **UCF College of Nursing's 40th Anniversary Gala has been postponed until the fall**. We are currently in conversation with the Rosen Shingle Creek to select a new date. Once that date is selected, we will be in touch to share it with you.

As you know, we are in extraordinary and uncertain times, and our collective health is of the upmost importance. Please look out for an update in the weeks to come and in the meantime, we hope you and your families remain healthy and safe. Please accept our apologies for the inconvenience.

We appreciate your understanding and have provided FAQ's below.

If I've purchased my ticket(s) already, what do I do?

If you plan to still attend the gala on the new date, once announced, you do not have to take any action. Your ticket(s) will be directly transferred for you to attend the gala on the new date.

If you are unable to attend the gala on the new date, please reach out to nursingevents@ucf.edu to request a full refund. Alternatively, you may request the ticket amount be donated to support the College of Nursing's 40th Anniversary Innovating our Future fund.

If I've made hotel accommodations through our group rate at the Rosen Shingle Creek, what do I do?

You will receive a new confirmation email from the hotel once the new date has been selected. At that point, you will have the option to: either confirm your room reservation for the new date or cancel the room reservation.

When will tickets become available if I haven't yet registered?

Once the new date is shared, we will also provide additional information on ticket purchasing options and early-bird deadlines.

For any other questions, feel free to email: nursingevents@ucf.edu.

UCF College of Nursing
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32826
407.883.0671 | nursingevents@ucf.edu

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

University of Central Florida

Local mandates and policy changes can affect every part of a university, leaving you with not much time to pivot to another option. In this example, the College of Nursing at the University of Central Florida had to cancel its annual gala due to current events. With a simple header that's consistent with university branding, they communicate clearly and address some potential questions upfront.

7

The athletics email

Typical experience

Athletics departments typically send updates about, year-round sporting events, schedule updates, ticketing, homecoming, player features, and upcoming championships.

Email experience

For many students, athletic events are a huge part of their college experience, and they're probably grieving the loss of sports as we knew them. Whether your sports schedules are delayed, rescheduled, or canceled, you can maintain fan excitement and team spirit via email.

However, these updates may have to completely pivot from what you're used to sending if sports events aren't happening like we're used to.

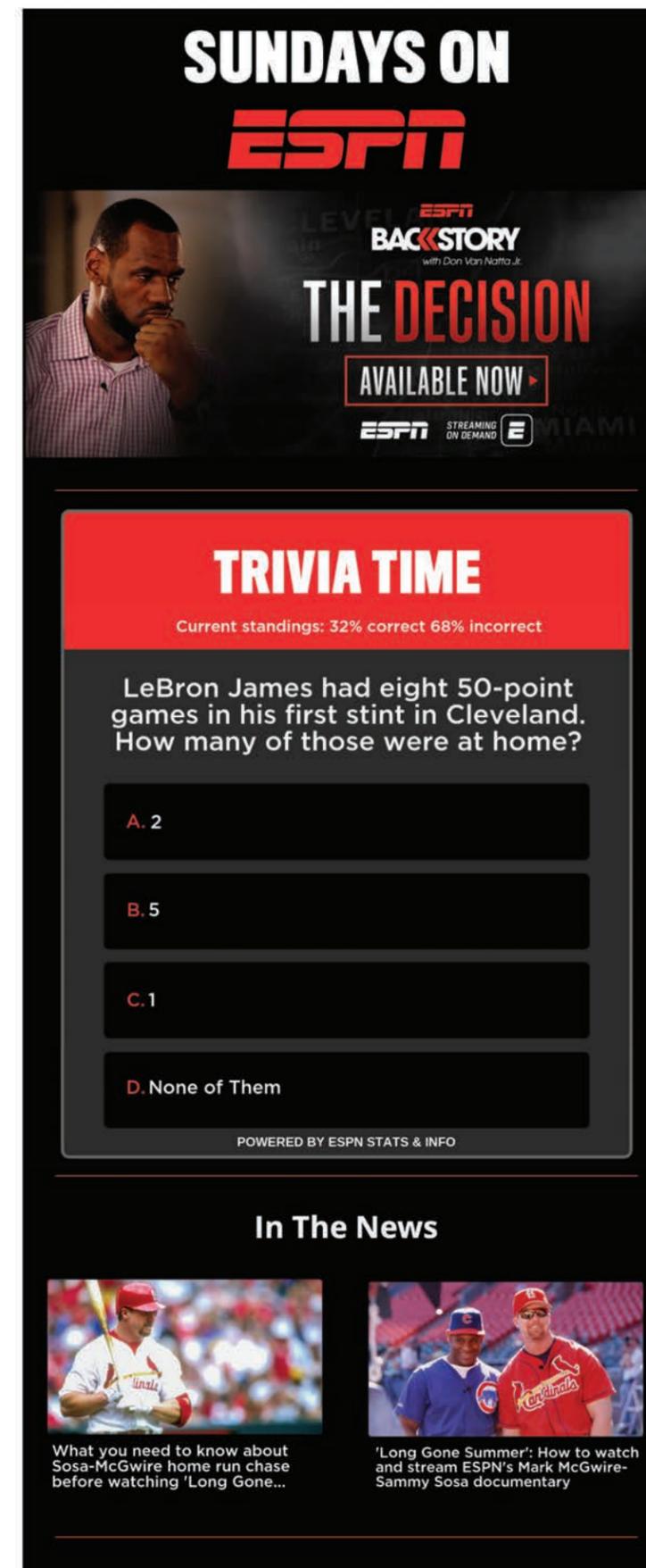
Make it your own:

- ✓ Create fan challenges and competitions from home.
- ✓ Start a "We miss you" campaign and share videos and stories of what players have been up to during quarantine.
- ✓ Start competitions between your school rivals for good—See who can collect the most donations for coronavirus relief.



Emma user pro-tip:

Use the **drag-and-drop editor** to create beautiful and on-brand emails. No coding knowledge required!



EMAIL SPOTLIGHT ESPN

When it comes to sharing the latest in college athletics, ESPN is the leader in sharing sports moments, player updates, and division rankings. But what happened this summer when sports weren't happening? They continued to share the joy of the game anyway.

In their summer email sends, ESPN featured other forms of sports content—Podcasts, videos, replays of past games. But the thing we specifically love about this email is the trivia aspect. Find a way to keep your fans engaged, and they'll remain loyal, regardless of what the sports season brings.

8

The annual giving email

Typical experience

Annual giving events usually take place during one or more days of the year when alumni and those connected to the university are asked to give back monetarily.

Email experience

While it may appear that not much has changed for this year's fundraising events and they can easily pivot to digital, it's important to be sensitive to the current economic climate. Because the pandemic has left many without jobs or increased healthcare costs, it may not be the best time to assume they can give financially. However, your university, its students, and staff may need more than ever before—How can you balance the two?

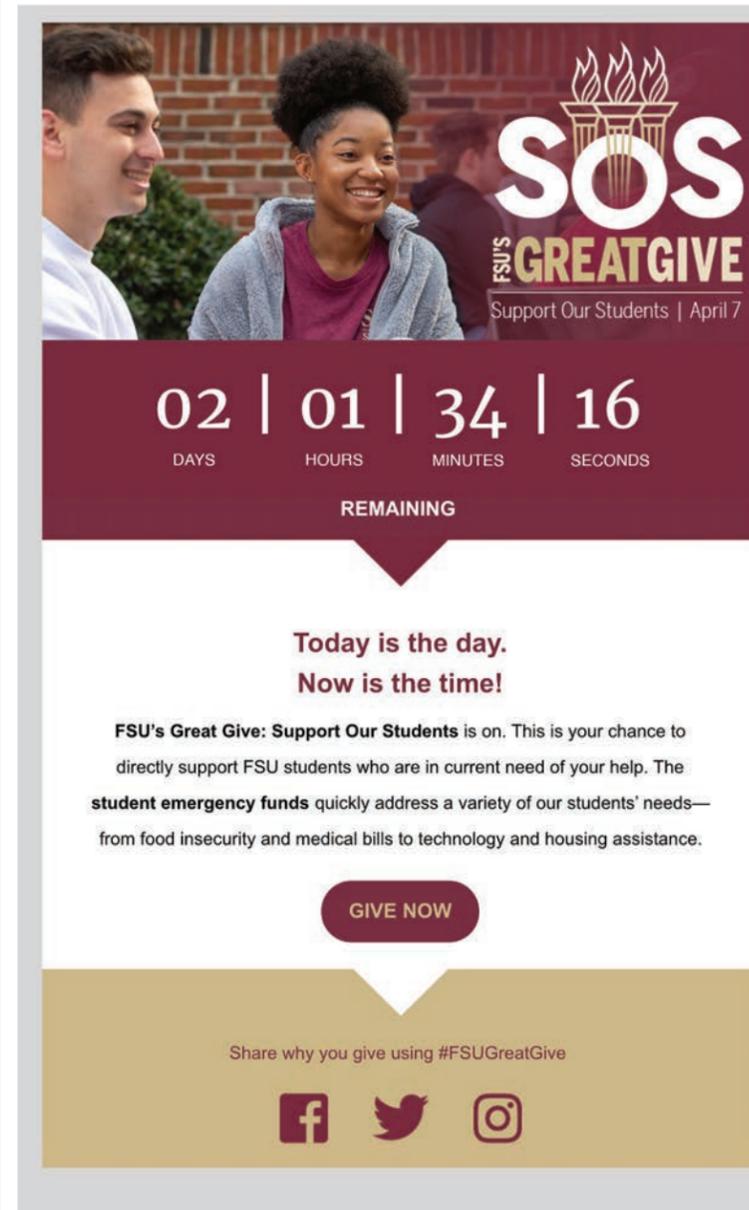
Make it your own:

- ✓ Acknowledge the hardships many may be facing and express no expectations.
- ✓ Articulate needs and where any donations will be going, making sure to reinforce how human needs will be tangibly met.
- ✓ Note any ways recipients can participate that aren't monetary—Can they donate their time or expertise?



Emma user pro-tip:

Use Evertrue or another giving tool? Use [Emma's integrations](#) to sync your data and power your automation and segmentation.



EMAIL SPOTLIGHT

Florida State University Foundation

The Florida State University Foundation sent many sensitive emails around their annual “Great Give” that expressed empathy and understanding. We love this one in particular because, when they did make the ask for financial support, they clearly stated that it would be given to student emergency funds. This not only is a relevant and helpful thing to do, but it allows those who can give to feel like they can positively impact others in a tangible way.

Previously, FSU relied on many forms of communication, but 2020 has brought a more intentional and focused effort on email.

“There has been a lot of concern about the length of time it takes to produce a printed piece, as well as what will be going on the world when that does happen. When factoring this into our budget, we decided to pivot our in-person strategies, direct mail pieces, and emergency needs messaging to an email format.”

-Amanda Wood

Sr. Director of Communications, Florida State University Foundation

9

The student feedback email

Typical experience

Usually, a semester typically goes largely according to plan, and students are asked for their opinions and feedback at the end of the semester or year.

Email experience

This is not a year you can afford to not ask for student feedback. As plans evolve, you'll need to work together to find solutions to keep everyone happy and healthy. Email is a great way to ask for their feedback and gain insight into how they're feeling, especially if learning is happening off-campus.

Make it your own:

- ✓ Ask a variety of situational questions, everything from "What is hardest about being a student during COVID-19?" to "Do you think our proposed plans will work? What hesitations do you have?"
- ✓ Ask specific questions that pertain to mental health. Do whatever you can to make sure students are safe and have the resources they need during this time.
- ✓ Look for your blind spots. What things would only a student know or care about? Continue to ask these questions and be truly interested in the responses.

On how they felt at the end of the spring semester:

"I was very sad that this year had to come to an end so soon. Online school does not provide the same college experience and the skills that I believe are important to entering into the real world."

-Carolyn Diez,
Junior at Western Carolina University

Takeaway: Your students don't just view this as a semester, but as part of their future. Don't minimize their feelings by sending robotic-sounding emails.

On the financial burden:

"One of the hardest parts of being a student during COVID-19 is the financial burden it has caused. I worked part-time for the university, but when we switched to online learning, I lost my job. I received no stimulus check, but was still expected to pay rent at the apartment I lived at."

-Maggie Phillips,
Junior at Cleveland State University

Takeaway: Be sensitive. If your students have serious financial concerns, it's probably not the best time to ask them for more money.

On uncertainty:

"The hardest part of being a student during COVID-19 is the uncertainty of everything."

During the Spring 2020 semester, it was the uncertainty of how the rest of the semester would play out, then over the summer, it was whether or not we would go back in the fall, and what "being on campus" would even look like.

Going into my senior year, I want to make sure I still get that "college experience" out of these next two semesters."

-Sam Sternstein,
Senior at Indiana
University-Bloomington

Takeaway: Your students are grieving many losses, just like you. Remember that you're not writing to inboxes, but to humans.





On their biggest fear about the fall semester:

“My biggest fear about the fall semester is that my school will go back to in-person classes, especially as Lawrence [the city our campus is in] is experiencing a fairly significant spike, and that it will just lead to **many students getting sick.**”

They’ve attempted to address the issue of cross-contamination of everything on campus by creating an app that won’t allow you in a building unless you’ve washed your hands.

However, I don’t believe that students will actually use the app, but instead learn what needs to be done to allow them in the buildings and lie to the app. **I would like to be considered, to be consulted by our provost about what we [as students] would want to do.”**

-Emma Goodrich,
Senior at The University of Kansas

Takeaway: Listen to your students! Remember that your best plans will only work if they’ve bought into them first.

On their ability to complete assignments:
“I am very routine based—Attend class, homework at the library, work at the rec center. It was hard to have those **core parts of my routine flipped and still be expected to have the brainpower/emotional capacity** to produce adequate work from home.

Also, I received accommodations at school for chronic pain including absences and special furniture in classrooms. Staying quarantined only increased my pain level, but because we were all at home, I felt like I couldn’t take advantage of my accommodations.”

-Lily McClung,
Junior at Cleveland State University

Takeaway: Be patient and understanding about all of the changes they’re going through. Don’t expect them to engage with every email in the ways you’re used to. Test the content and your send time to see what they like best.



On how their school has been communicating:
“My school has been mostly sending emails. A lot of emails. It’s nice that they have been keeping us in the loop with all of their changes, however, given the uncertainty of COVID-19, I feel giving us detailed plans every week that will probably change is a little much. Also, I think **people have stopped reading the emails since there are so many of them and plans keep changing.”**

-Mary Diez,
Senior at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Takeaway: Your students don’t just view this as a semester, but as part of their future. Don’t minimize their feelings by sending robotic-sounding emails.

What they would do differently if put in charge of their university’s emails:
“I would be specific about the changes happening on campus, and break each aspect of student life down explicitly, without sugar-coating the fact that the semester will not be “normal.”

I think my school did a good job at first of providing initial routes that they would take depending on the progression of the crisis, but it was too general and mainly regarding classes and whether or not students would be able to live in dorms.

I would have provided a similar breakdown of possibilities for various aspects of student life (Extracurriculars, clubs, intramurals, school-sponsored events, performances, etc.) that students look forward to every year and also pay for in their tuition.

I would also provide this information one area at a time, so students wouldn’t get overwhelmed with an email containing contingency plans for everything with outside links to provide more information, taking them away from the email itself.

Overall, I think students and parents both want clear messaging that includes specific changes being made, and additional alternatives being added that justify the increase in tuition.”

-Sam Sternstein,
Senior at Indiana University-Bloomington

Takeaway: Specific, bite-sized content is key to preventing overwhelm.

The “We’re listening” email

Typical experience

Changes in response to feedback are not typically made immediately, and students hear from campus leadership about a few times a year.

Email experience

This semester, communication between students and leadership needs to be an open and ongoing conversation. By crafting campaigns based on student feedback, you can answer their questions quickly and create a deeper sense of stability. Without the opportunity for office hours or on-campus forums, students want to know that an effort is being made to hear and understand them.

Make it your own:

- ✓ Create an ongoing FAQ section in your newsletters that students can submit questions to.
- ✓ Send visual representations of student opinions and question responses. (Example: Graphs to represent student feelings about campus safety over time.)
- ✓ Whenever you make a change in response to feedback, make that exceptionally clear.



Emma user pro-tip:

Create list segments for students in different departments or organizations. This helps increase your engagement by only sending to the people the content is most relevant to.

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