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This report investigates the relationship between email engagement and admissions yields, including applying and submitting the Statement of Intent to Register (SIR). To investigate application yield, we looked at engagement (defined as opening, clicking, viewing, or interacting) by contacts with emails sent prior to the application deadline. To examine SIR yield, we looked at engagement of admitted students with emails sent after the application deadline, and prior to the SIR deadline. We found that students who had click and interact activity had higher yields than those who only opened or viewed emails, and the number of clicks or interactions were related to SIR yield rates, but not application yield rates.

Background

The Office of Undergraduate Admissions sends multiple emails to prospective students during the application cycle and was interested in whether engagement with admissions emails was associated with higher student yields. Specifically, we investigated two questions:

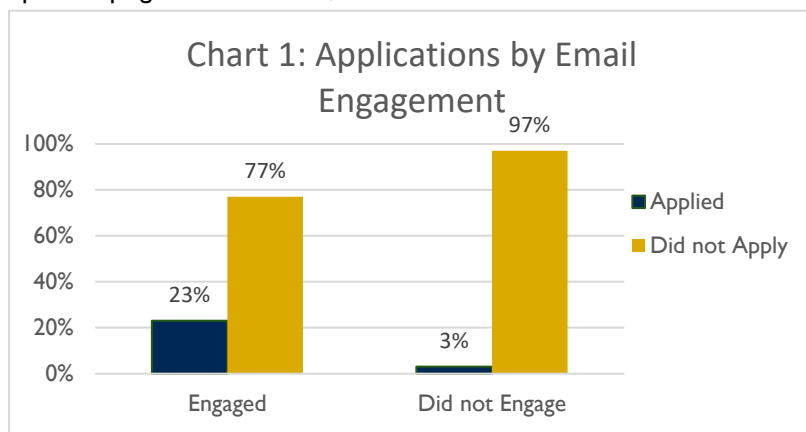
- 1) Is pre-application email engagement associated with higher application rates? and
- 2) Is pre-SIR email engagement associated with SIR rates?

Application Yields

To investigate application yield, we considered emails for the 2021 Admissions cycle that were created prior to the application deadline (e.g., prior to January 8, 2021), and applications with a start term of Fall 2021. Note that we removed a 'test' student from the data, and only looked at emails sent to prospective students from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

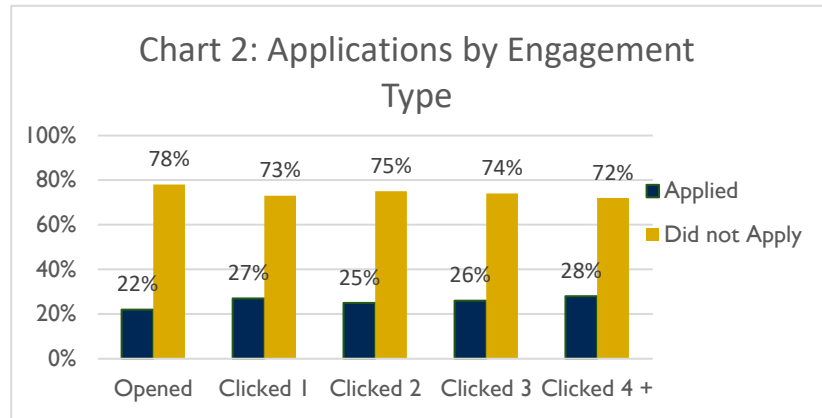
Marketing cloud data: Most pre-application email data was located within the Marketing Cloud data; a total of 27 pre-application email campaigns were sent to between 163 and 55,883 contacts per campaign. A total of 585,587 individual emails were sent to 169,811 distinct contacts. Of those contacts, the majority - 98,937 (58%), engaged with at least one pre-application email, and the other 70,874 (42%) did not engage with any pre-application emails. Overall, 18% of prospective students who were sent pre-application emails applied (30,429 applications).

Prospective students who engaged with pre-application emails were more likely to apply (27%) than students who did not engage (5%). If we exclude the email titled '202130 Applicants Happy Holidays 2020 Message' which was sent only to applicants at the time, **students who engaged with pre-application emails were significantly¹ more likely to apply (23%) compared to students who did not engage (3%); see Chart 1, to the right:**



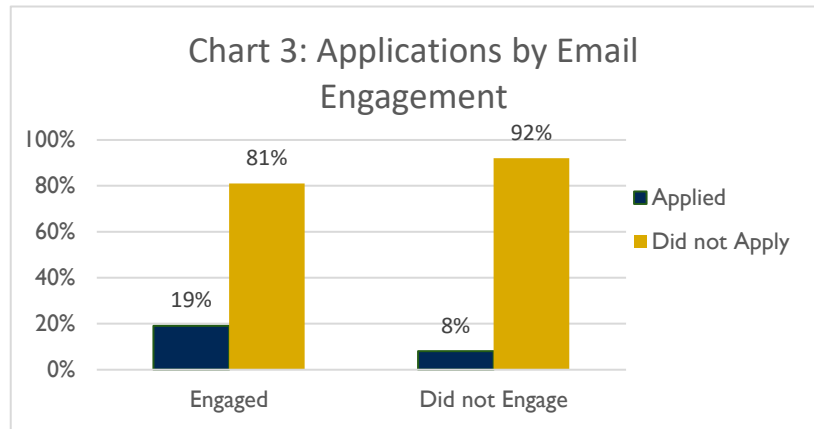
Email Engagement and Admissions Yields

We also found that most students (81%) who engaged with emails only opened them (76,140 students), while 19% clicked one or more emails (17,671 students). The students who clicked emails had higher application rates than students who only opened emails, though this was not statistically significant. Additionally, more email clicks were not significantly² related to higher application rates compared to fewer clicks; see Chart 2, to the right:

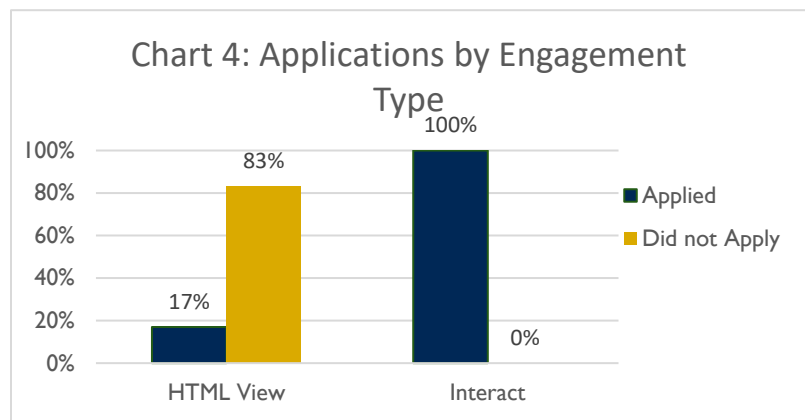


Email Broadcast Members data: Additional pre-application email data was located within Email Broadcast Members, which had 46 pre-application email campaigns which were sent to between 1 and 1,983 contacts each, for a grand total of 37,227 individual emails sent to 9,806 distinct contacts. Of these contacts, the majority (9,636, or 98%) engaged with at least one pre-application email, with only 170 (2%) not engaging with any of these pre-application emails.

Overall, we found data consistent with the Marketing Cloud email data; 19% of the 9,806 contacts who received pre-application emails applied. Also consistent was the finding that **engaging with at least one email was associated with a significantly¹ higher rate of application (19%) compared to contacts who did not engage with any of these emails (8%),** see Chart 3, to the right.



Most engagements were HTML Views (9,439, or 98% of contacts), while 2% had one or more Interaction (197 contacts). **Students who Interacted with one or more emails had a higher application rate¹ (100%) compared to students who only had HTML View activity (17%),** see Chart 4, to the right:



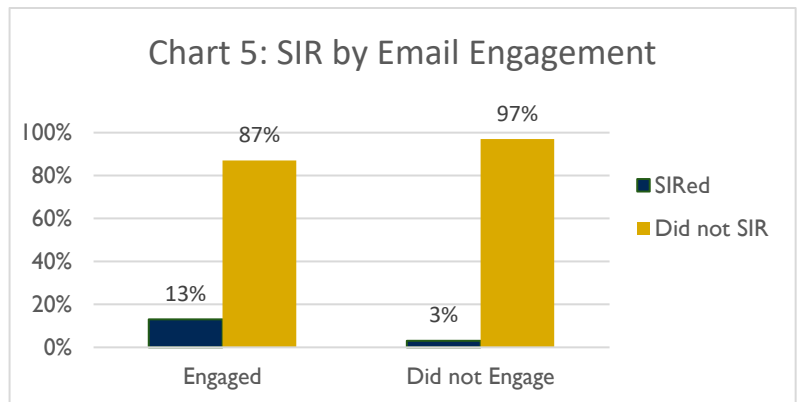
SIR yields

To investigate SIR yield, we used the same approach, with emails for the 2021 Admissions cycle, created prior to the SIR deadline (between January 9, 2021, and May 17, 2021), and looked at admitted applicants with a start term of Fall 2021. Students who were denied, cancelled, or rescinded admission were not included in the analysis. As with the prior analysis, we removed a ‘test’ student from the data, and only looked at emails from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

Marketing cloud data again had most of the email data, with 62 email campaigns sent within the pre-SIR window, which were sent to between 27 and 22,080 admitted Frosh students each, for a grand total of 1,161,529 individual emails sent to 24,024 distinct contacts.

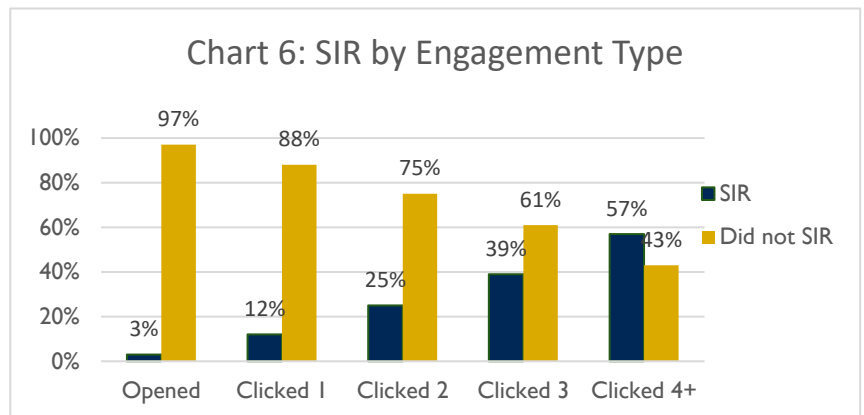
Of these contacts, the majority (23,758, or 99%) engaged with at least one pre-SIR email. Only 266 (1%) of admits did not engage with any pre-SIR emails.

Overall, 13% of these contacts submitted their SIR, and we found **that students that engaged with at least one pre-SIR email were significantly¹ more likely to submit their SIR (13%) compared to the students that did not engage with any pre-SIR emails (3%),** see Chart 5, to the right.



More than half (56%) of engaged contacts had only email opens (13,304), while 10,454 (44%) clicked one or more email.

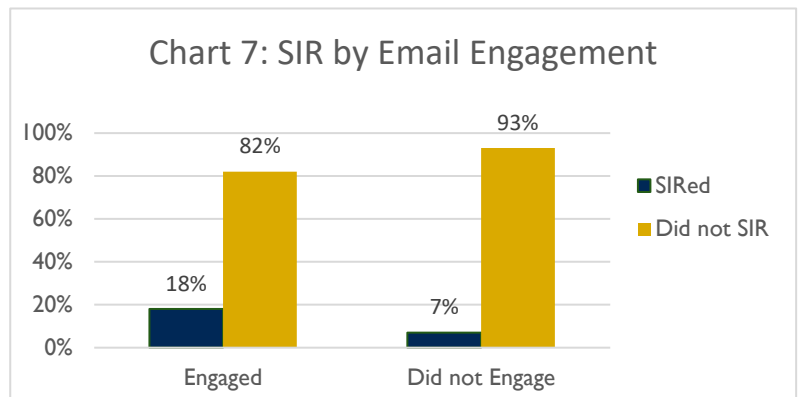
We found that type of engagement was important, as **students with email clicks had significantly² higher SIR rates (25%) compared to those with only email opens (3%).** We also found that **more emails clicked were associated with significantly² higher SIR rates,** see Chart 6, to the right:



Within **Email Broadcast Members**, an additional 8 pre-SIR email campaigns were sent to between 4 and 8,476 admitted Frosh students each, for a total of 54,994 emails sent to 10,000 distinct contacts.

Of these contacts, the majority (9,805, or 98%) engaged with at least one pre-SIR email. Only 195 (2%) did not engage with any of these pre-SIR emails.

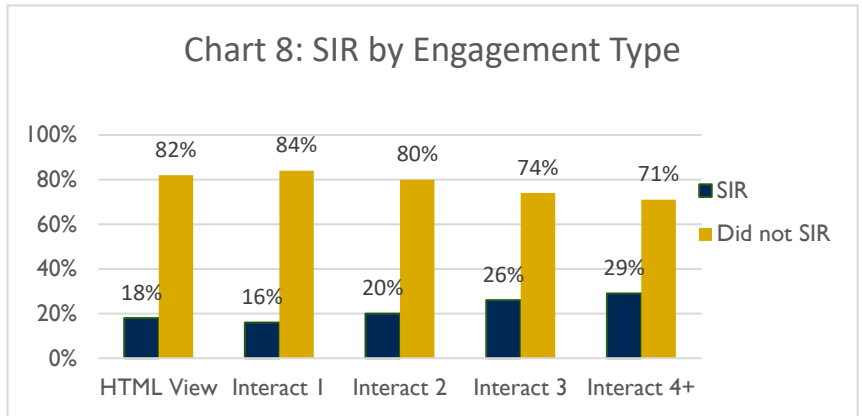
Overall, 17% of these contacts submitted their SIR, and those that engaged with at least one email had a significantly¹ higher rate of SIR (18%) than students who did not engage with any (7%), see Chart 7, to the right:



If we compare those with Interact activity (5482 students) compared to those with just HTML View activity (4323 students), both groups have similar SIR rates (17.5 vs 17.8%), but students with Interact activity on more than one email had somewhat, but not significantly² higher SIR rates; see Chart 8, to the right:

Next Steps

Email engagement rates should be considered as early indicators for predicting application rates. Additionally, marketing strategies to increase engagement with emails (for example, improving the rate of email opens and clicks) may be a way to increase application yields from prospective applicants. Each percentage point of increased email engagement (that is, an additional 1,698 contacts engaging with one or more emails) in the pre-application phase could yield an additional 340 applications and net an additional 27 enrolled students.



Conclusion

Overall, we found that students who engaged with emails, either by opening/html viewing or clicking/interacting had higher application and SIR yields compared to students that did not engage with emails prior to admissions deadlines. We also found that click and interact activity was associated with higher yields than contacts who only opened or viewed emails, and larger numbers of emails clicked or interacted with were related to SIR yield rates, but not with application yield rates. While engagement is associated with higher yields and may be useful as an additional tool in projecting yields, these findings should be interpreted with caution, as causality cannot be determined. For example, students who are more interested or committed to attending UC Merced may be more likely to open and click links inside of admissions emails, and campaigns that increase email engagement, while worthwhile to explore, may lead to smaller than projected increases in yields.

ENDNOTES

1. Based on Chi-Square analysis, $p < .05$.
2. Based Pairwise Comparisons of Column Proportions with Bonferroni Correction, $p < .05$.

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