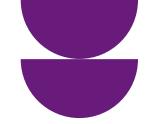# ellucian

Bucks County Ditches Three- to Four-Week Wait Time for Verifications; Down to Mere Days with CampusLogic Platform

Drawers and drawers of files. Piles and piles of papers. That was life in Bucks County Community College's financial aid office. Donna Wilkoski, Executive Director of Enrollment Services, and Jack Labarko, Assistant Director of Financial Aid, knew there had to be a better way. Labarko came to Bucks, a three-campus school in Pennsylvania, from a paperless office, so he'd witnessed the world of difference modern solutions make.

With nearly 9,000 full-time and part-time students to serve, the Bucks County financial aid office was struggling with tedious, drawn-out processes, and the school took notice of their pain, Wilkoski explains. "We finally had management above us who listened and saw all the work we did manually. Management was willing to provide us with the tools we needed to make things easier—for us and the students."

The Solutions: StudentForms, CampusCommunicator, ClearCost, and CampusMetrics

With a variety of CampusLogic products onboard that integrated with their student information system, Colleague® by Ellucian, Bucks County was ready to get rid of cumbersome manual processes once and for all.

StudentForms simplifies financial aid processes—like verification, professional judgments, and SAP appeals. A key component of the cloud-based CampusLogic student financial success platform, StudentForms provides a digital portal for financial aid professionals to manage tasks, review files, and automate student communications via text and email. Plus, students can upload documents from any mobile device—a feature staff and students love for the time savings.

Bucks County reinforced the power of StudentForms with CampusCommunicator,

which delivers digital, mobile communications throughout the financial aid cycle; ClearCost, a net price calculator; and CampusMetrics, which provides instant analytics and insights to help financial aid offices make better-informed decisions. "What the CampusLogic platform does for us is just amazing," Labarko reports.

Quick, Easy, and In Control

The change in efficiency and student satisfaction was apparent right away. Bucks County went live with StudentForms mid-year and by the time 2019-2020 loaded, Wilkoski and Labarko were blown away with how quickly staff were able to complete verifications. Before CampusLogic, they couldn't even calculate how long it took to complete the average verification, but Wilkoski says that with all the paper forms and back-and-forth, it was as long as four weeks, depending upon student response time. Now, with StudentForms, verifications are completed within one to four days, resulting in happy students and a more relaxed financial aid staff.

SAP appeals used to revolve around paperwork and wait times, but now Wilkoski and Labarko report the process can be completed in just minutes. Bucks County continued their forward momentum by kicking their old paper award letter to the curb, replacing it, as well as their shopping sheet and debt letter, with mobile and engaging communications via CampusCommunicator.

Overall, they now have more control and insight into what's going on, and they agree that it's much simpler to find out where every student is in their financial aid process. "With the old way, we had files in cabinets. I used to have to go and count them to see how many people we had in our verification queue," Wilkoski says. "Now I just pull up the screen and I can see it all." CampusMetrics also provides valuable insights to the financial aid office so they can monitor how things are going and make adjustments as necessary.

Happy Students, Happy Financial Aid Office

How do you make students happy? Offer fast, easy service right where they want it—on their phones. Labarko and Wilkoski say it was a scary change for the office when they went from completely manual processes to digital processes, but their students embraced the change with open arms. "The day we sent out emails for no academic progress, within about 15 minutes, students were already submitting their appeals," Wilkoski says.

"Students coming in today are used to doing everything on their phones," Labarko adds. Flexibility is also important to them. Simplicity and fewer steps mean that financial aid staff have more time to concentrate on one-to-one advising and helping more students on an individual basis.

Those in the Bucks County financial aid office know that students need to understand the cost of college, as well as how to borrow responsibly. ClearCost helps with that. "We don't pre-package loans for students," Wilkoski explains. "They tell us how much they wish to borrow, and that helps with our default rate. We haven't changed the way of doing loans, and for me, that was a big factor when we chose a solution."

Getting rid of those stacks of files and paper—along with the sluggish pace of manual processes—was a gamechanger for the Bucks County Community College financial aid office. But the real win is knowing students are more confident about their options and borrowing in a more informed way. "Happy students, happy life!" Wilkoski laughs.