

# Purdue Fort Wayne Powers Through COVID-19, Continues Scholarship Matching with ScholarshipUniverse



Purdue Fort Wayne's (PFW) financial aid office ended the year, like others across the country, with its doors shut. Its team kept operations running via virtual meetings, answering student emails and phone calls, and doing verification from living rooms, kitchen tables, and home offices. The financial aid office is now ramping up its plan to tackle the 2020-2021 school year back on campus. "We're hoping that when students arrive in the office, there will be little contact because most of the work has been done up front," says Doug Hess, Director of Financial Aid. "We're trying to be as proactive as we can."

Collecting a stockpile of personal protective equipment, creating social distancing measures, and installing plexi-glass shields were priorities at PFW. Equally vital, though, was ensuring that streamlined, simple, digital solutions were in place to help the financial aid office provide the highest quality service, safely. Luckily, PFW had already optimized their scholarship program.

## The solution: ScholarshipUniverse by CampusLogic

[ScholarshipUniverse](#) is a student and scholarship matchmaker that streamlines scholarship management from application through awarding. Automation and simplicity combine with a vetted external scholarship database of thousands of awards to create a modern solution that improves the staff and student experience. With an adaptive matching engine, automated alerts, and SIS integration, ScholarshipUniverse brings more funds into institutions and keeps more students in seats. A scholarship one-stop-shop, ScholarshipUniverse streamlines searches, and students can work on applications, any place, anytime

## Lightening the Load of Scholarship Staff

PFW began using ScholarshipUniverse before the pandemic hit, but during the COVID-19 crisis,

it has proven to be especially invaluable. For the assistant director of scholarships, it has provided much-needed assistance. "She was up to her eyeballs in work," Hess explains. PFW hands out internal merit-based scholarships worth between \$1,000 and \$4,000, and it also tries to match its 10,000 students with other internal scholarships to bridge financial gaps—a heavy lift for teams using manual search processes.

"We needed help," Hess says. "It was really a pain, to be honest, for someone to have to go and manually look for matches. ScholarshipUniverse really helps us narrow it down. Instead of having to search for the scholarships we could award, ScholarshipUniverse does the work for us." It has streamlined the process immensely, he reports.

## Vetted, Legitimate External Awards for Students

The financial aid office also tries to help students find external award dollars. "In the past, we would tell students and parents to go to our

website for information on external scholarship opportunities,” Hess explains. “We vetted them as much as we could, but we didn’t have the time to fully vet them, so we were never confident that all were 100 percent legitimate.”

ScholarshipUniverse ensures external scholarships are legitimate and fully vetted, Hess explains. “We can now, without any hesitation, direct students with 100 percent confidence to this list. They may qualify and they may not, but we know it will be good information they are viewing.”

## Over-the-Top Service in an Uncertain Time

It’s never been as vital as it is now to provide comprehensive, responsible financial aid service for students and families. It’s an uncertain time, and there is no shortage of questions. “We are finding that families are more anxious than usual, and that is understandable,” Hess explains. “Their lives have been interrupted, and they are frustrated with the length of time it is taking for institutions to make decisions about things that affect them. Sometimes the financial aid office doesn’t have all the answers yet. We have to tell students and families ‘I don’t know’ more often than we previously did; that is uncomfortable and hard.”

But the confusion and frustration caused by the unknown are being offset by the proactive solutions implemented at PFW. By prioritizing proactivity, streamlining processes, and providing great customer service, they are reminding students and families they are still a priority—no matter what COVID-19 throws their way. Above all, PFW isn’t losing sight of what matters: breaking down barriers that exist in financial aid and supporting every student on a path to student financial success. “There are a lot of uncertainties

right now, and we’re making sure we’re providing good financial literacy tools for our students,” Hess explains. “We’re making sure that our students are walking out with the least amount of debt possible, especially in this environment.”

*This success story describes the particular experience of Purdue’s Office of Financial Aid with ScholarshipUniverse. It is not intended as a marketing endorsement or a guarantee that other institutions will have the same experience.*



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