

TAMIU and CampusLogic Cut Through Complexity

Juan Gilberto Garcia Jr. loves working with Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) students. That's partly because he used to be one himself. When he began working for the university as a student advisor, eventually becoming the university's Associate Vice President of Student Success, his goal never wavered: Support every student who passes through his office and help them earn degrees.



Since his days as a student advisor, Garcia has recognized the importance of Student Financial Success in assisting first-generation students. TAMIU's student population sits at 90% Hispanic, with a broad international student body.

"Many people don't understand that understanding financial aid and getting through the financial aid process is the most important thing advisors can help first-generation students with. My job was not in the financial aid office – it was enrollment. But I knew that if I gave incoming students help with financial aid documents, they would be more likely to enroll and graduate."

As he rose through the ranks at TAMIU, he kept his focus on financially preparing students. Garcia said the financial aid office needed support; and manual processes were slowing down a hard-working—and overworked—team.

"Before StudentForms and CampusCommunicator, many of our procedures included a vast amount of manual work which could, in turn, make room for errors," Garcia said.

One of the first hurdles he and his team wanted to tackle was a low verification completion rate, which averaged around 45%. Garcia knew too many students who began the verification process were deterred from completing it due to complexity, and he was looking to change that.

Garcia's team wanted to do more than increase the completion rate. They wanted to decrease processing times. Before TAMIU had StudentForms, students could expect a four-to-six-week turnaround time. After StudentForms, students waited around five days—seven, during the busiest season of the year.

When you put students first, everyone wins

This saying is a TAMIU standby, and luckily, it's a value shared by CampusLogic, too. TAMIU needed a resource that would streamline the verification process and create a student-centric financial aid process.

When the team implemented StudentForms, the result was immediate. The first partial aid year (2018-2019) saw an increase of 15% in completion rates, and the first full year with StudentForms resulted in a skyrocketed completion rate—sitting comfortably at 92%; a 106% overall increase in completion. Being able to more than double their verification completion rate without a change in the number of students being selected for verification was a game-changer for Garcia's team.

"CampusLogic has definitely helped TAMIU hit strategic goals by automating our verification and award letter procedures," Garcia said. "In doing so, in-person visits in our office have decreased

by more than 80% which now gives our advisors more time to focus on essential duties to meet deadlines.”

Instant notifications have also bolstered positive student and staff sentiment, says Garcia. “The most exciting feature about StudentForms is that the student receives instant notifications to their phone and/or email when a change has been made to their account,” he continued.

Another highlight? Verification speeds are up, too. Most TAMIU students have completed verification by the first day of class.

Better communications mean better-informed students.

Garcia’s team also wanted to tackle the struggles they were having with award letter communications. An industry-wide issue, the average open rate for email communications is just under 20%. For Garcia and his team, that industry-standard didn’t align with the institution’s goal to build understanding and awareness among students.

With TAMIU’s investment in StudentForms, they also chose CampusCommunicator, an intuitive, automated system that supports streamlined communications. With its built-in personalization and brand-building, TAMIU saw its open rates soar past the industry average and currently sit at more than 40%.

A commitment to the future

Garcia’s team has an eye on moving further in the direction of becoming a model for Student Financial Success with their latest technology investment – VirtualAdvisor. With such a large Spanish-speaking population, the multi-lingual capabilities of the virtual assistant were a big

selling point, as was the ability to get answers at any hour. TAMIU knows that students don’t only have questions at school between 9 and 5 on weekdays. They needed a conversation engine that was available anytime and anywhere students need it and has the capabilities to deliver personalized answers.

Garcia says his team (and his students) felt an immediate impact. “We added VirtualAdvisor to assist our office and our university as a whole in answering general questions about financial aid, verification and about our campus and its perspective offices,” he said. “Because we can upload personalized messages, we know students will like the 24/7 conversation engine. We look forward to seeing how happy our students will be when they see this service available to them.”

And VirtualAdvisor is doing just that: Students are accessing emails and searching for information on financial aid and enrollment processes at all hours of the day and with a 24/7 chat functionality. With CampusLogic’s support, the TAMIU staff doesn’t have to worry about missed requests.

With StudentForms, CampusCommunicator and VirtualAdvisor, TAMIU supports students throughout the financial aid journey and equips them with the resources, information and tools they need to breeze through the process. Staff feel immediate support and can provide students with more 1:1 advising to high-risk students, without overwhelming staff. With more time available for personalized advising, the TAMIU standby continues to ring true: When you put students first, everyone wins. “We have made that transformation,” she says, adding that they’ve been able to do that via a virtual office in the midst of the pandemic crisis.

“We would not be where we are in COVID-19 if we didn’t have CampusLogic.”



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