UWF Teams Up with CampusLogic to Slash Verification Times & Deliver Better Student Experience

There were never enough minutes in the day for the five financial aid counselors at the University of West Florida (UWF). On top of their verification workloads, each counselor is responsible for managing a program portfolio, which includes scholarships and work-study opportunities. But it was nearly impossible to give these important programs the attention they deserved, explains Shana Gore, Executive Director of Enrollment Management. "By the time we got through verification, there was never time." She knew a better process would free up staff to dedicate time to what was really important—setting up UWF's 13,000 students for overall success.

The Solution: StudentForms by CampusLogic

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.

A Breeze for Students and Staff

Onboarding for UWF, based in Pensacola and part of the State University System of Florida, was a breeze. "StudentForms is really user-friendly. It's very simple for the students to walk through, but it's also been easy for staff to pick up on," Gore says. "There wasn't a huge amount of training time that had to go into it. It just makes sense." She adds that, unlike with many third-party vendors, UWF can always count on CampusLogic for support—even now that they're up and running.

UWF uses single sign-on so students still go to their portal, the same way they always did. Now it's easier for them to submit only what's necessary—rather than the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink list their old, generic process demanded. Plus, parents can fill in their own information, creating more time savings and less confusion and back-and-forth. Students now complete forms more quickly, Gore says. "My guess is that this improvement in efficiency is a combination of the form being easier to complete, having it available in a mobile-friendly version, and also the built-in reminders CampusLogic provides."

Verification, Simplified

The staff loves StudentForms because verification can be completed in five to ten minutes, whereas their previous manual corrections took up to 30 minutes or longer. Before, each verifier worked on two screens, one displaying Banner by Ellucian® and the other the imaged form. "Neither fit properly on the screen, and the placement on the form didn't always match up with the Banner screen, creating a lot of back-and-forth," Gore explains. "Now everything's lined up right next to each other. It's very easy to see the discrepancies because they jump out when they're side by side."

With StudentForms onboard, Gore explains that the financial aid staff at UWF can now make it through their must-do list and get a head start on their nice-to-do list, which includes more one-on-one advising with students who have outstanding requirements, as well as an increased focus on their work study program. With more time on their hands, they are less stressed and more able to stay on top of daily issues that affect the students at UWF.

Next, they'll be revamping their basic award letter with CampusCommunicator by CampusLogic, which delivers digital, mobile communications throughout the financial aid cycle. Not only was their old Banner-based letter a pain to prepare, it simply wasn't effective. "We were looking for something that would be more engaging for students—something that would be mobile-friendly because our award letters were not mobile-friendly at all," Gore says. "We felt like students were really not looking at the letters, not using them. We were really just sending them because we had to send them." Gore feels that the new simple-to-understand and interactive version, which will go out for 2020-21, will further time savings. Currently, they field a lot of questions from students who are confused about the old award letter.

Saving Time for More Important Things

Newfound efficiencies have already freed up staff time, especially for the counselors. "More efficient verification has given them more time to work on their assigned programs. They're finding time in their day to work on those things and be more involved," Gore reports.

The goal of the financial aid office is to ensure students truly understand what their options are, she adds. "They need to understand the benefits and impacts of all the options to be able to make the decision that best suits their needs. I think that with CampusLogic tools being very clear, along with our ability to be more proactive, we're doing a better job of reaching that goal."

Because whether in a time of crisis, or just during a regular school year, the focus is always on what matters most: student success. "Being able to help students achieve what they set out to do for their future, that's success for us," Caruso says. "We need to be able to help them on their financial journey to achieve their goals."