Wiregrass Georgia Technical College Removes Financial Aid Barriers with Student-Forms from CampusLogic

"We were seven weeks away from school starting and we hadn't done the first verification file yet," recalls Andrea Bassett, Assistant Director of Financial Aid at Wiregrass Georgia Technical College for more than a decade. "I was about to break out in hives." Paper-heavy, manual processes and staffing shortages had created a perfect storm for one of South Georgia's leading technical colleges. Staff were stretched thin across the school's four campuses, spending precious time loading data, prepping, and mailing thousands of forms. Budget dollars—and staff morale—were eroding.

Wiregrass is one of 22 institutions that make up the Technical College System of Georgia. Covering an 11-county service area, Wiregrass serves 3,828 students. Seventy-eight percent of students at the two-year public community college receive financial aid. Identifying and removing barriers for students is central to Striving for Excellence, Wiregrass's strategic plan. "Providing avenues for student success is critical," says Bassett. "I knew things had to change. What we were doing wasn't student-focused, or sustainable." That's when the college turned to StudentForms by CampusLogic—technology Bassett had her eye on for a while.

StudentForms Automates Processes, Freeing Up Advising Hours

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 its convenience and time savings.

Wiregrass Students: Tech-Savvy, Self-Service

"I had been worried that CampusLogic would be too techy for our rural students, but I'm happy to say I was very wrong about that," she laughs. "Even with all the time, effort, and money we previously spent sending out paper forms and chasing students to send us the information back, 90% of them still walked through the door without what they needed to complete verification in-hand. Or they called us to ask questions that were answered in the information we had sent." An Ellucian Banner® school, Wiregrass was live with StudentForms in July, and everything changed.

From Stress to Smooth Sailing in Short Order

As soon as portal instructions were sent to the students, files started flowing in, students took action submitting their documents—and walk-in traffic and emails dropped in number. "Even with the short time frame, we got everything processed smoother and easier than ever before," Bassett reports. "We previously had lost two verifiers and we brought in a whole new system, and it still went smoothly."

Automated, Personalized Reminders Drive Change

Bassett loves the automated text and email reminders. "Students get reminders every three days for 15 days—it definitely cut down on our outreach efforts." StudentForms is now a digital bridge between the campuses, making it easy for staff at any campus to jump online to help out with file review in busy times. "Previously if someone was out sick at one of our offices, I'd have to make a 90-minute drive just to help out," says Bassett. "Now, anyone at any campus can answer the main phone line and help that student real-time."

All-In on Automation: Streamlined SAP Appeals & Professional Judgments

Wiregrass chose to automate their professional judgment and satisfactory academic progress (SAP) appeals processes with StudentForms from day one. "If we're going to have to get used to something, let's get used to everything all at once," Bassett told her team. Their previous home-grown SharePoint system had become weighty and unmanageable. "It wasn't user-friendly across committees." Today, staff members no longer need to sort through everything to find pending cases, and students are automatically notified when further documentation is needed. StudentForms also gets rave reviews from SAP appeal committee members who note that everything is easier to manage over distance now.

Cost Savings & Less Stress for Staff: Win-Win

"We were doing everything with paper and snail mail before," Bassett explains. "It's been a big plus, not having to send out all the letters; it's lessened our printing budget, our office supply order is down. The office even looks better; we've opened up floor space and gotten rid of extra filing cabinets." The financial aid office at Wiregrass Georgia Technical College is now enjoying the benefits of a happier, less-stressed staff, reduced call volume, and reduced foot traffic. In addition, information is now centralized and easily accessible, allowing the staff to successfully advise and help more students in an efficient and effective way.

Student Financial Success: Critical to Student Success

"What we do is critically important to overall student success," says Bassett. "A lot of students can't attend without financial aid—it seems like such an obvious statement. But there's huge emotional stress that comes from not understanding how you'll ever pay for something. That stress can affect their academic progress." Bassett and her team are thrilled with how StudentForms helps them give students "peace of mind, so they can concentrate on their schoolwork, jobs, and their families." Her only regret: "I wish we'd made the change earlier."