

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND STREAMLINING ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES

The five Catholic Benedictine values of hospitality, stewardship, community, love of learning, and respect are the hallmarks of The College of St. Scholastica, and they are also its distinctive difference. However, as the college expanded its reach into online learning, it faced a challenge of extending those values into the virtual world.

For the last three years, enrollment within the college's online learning programs has grown about 15 percent annually. The majority of the programs are completely online and include bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level degree programs.

"Our community is why we are distinctive. It is tangible and important to the people who live and work here, and come to our campus," emphasized Lynne Hamre, CIO. "As we began growing our online learning programs, we were challenged with extending that feeling of community to people who never come to our campus. We want to make sure that they feel like a member of The College of St. Scholastica community."

The college is hoping that Ellucian Luminis® Platform, Ellucian's next-generation portal and web services delivery platform, will be a key component of reaching



The College of
St. Scholastica

PROFILE:

- The College of St. Scholastica
- Duluth, Minnesota
- www.css.edu
- Enrollment: 4,014

CHALLENGES:

- Making online and extended learners feel a part of the distinctive St. Scholastica community
- Reflecting the St. Scholastica experience in the virtual world for all users
- Navigating among different systems was difficult

SOLUTION

- Ellucian Luminis® Platform

RESULTS:

- Single sign-on capability and targeted content streamline administrative and academic processes
- Portal reflects the values of the college and strengthens sense of community
- Personalized content makes user experience more satisfying and engaging

this goal. The college implemented the platform to help support four institutional objectives:

- Create a virtual environment that reflects the distinctive St. Scholastica experience
- Expand and carry out the one-college philosophy
- Integrate Catholic Benedictine values into the life of the college: Focus campus attention on the Benedictine value of community
- Enrich campus life and student support: Fully implement the Student Services Virtual OneStop and complete plans for a physical OneStop

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING

The College of St. Scholastica named its new portal “Cor” which is Latin for heart and represents the portal serving as the heart of the college’s digital community.

“Hospitality, stewardship, community, love of learning, and respect. When we talk about these Benedictine values, we have to have all of them in play because you can’t have one without the other,” said Sister Mary Rochefort, associate vice president, Mission Integration. “Our values drive our mission and our mission drives everything we do here at the college.”

The college is leveraging Cor to strengthen the focus on those values.

“When we talk about being a values-based institution, it is very concrete,” said Chris Bacigalupo, corporate portal administrator at the college. “Those values are very specific. Not only are they great things to live your life by, they are broad buckets that can permeate our actions. They also gave us a framework for creating our portal. We believe an institution’s portal should reflect its personality. So we ask ourselves, ‘is our portal hospitable, is it respectful in tone?’”

To strengthen users’ sense of community, the college plans to leverage the community-building tools within Ellucian Luminis Platform. “We are encouraging people to submit examples of people living our values to our Living Our Mission page,” said Hamre. “We continually have discussions about how to communicate our values through the portal.”

To strengthen users’ sense of community, the college plans to leverage the community-building tools within Ellucian Luminis Platform. The college has been live only three months so it is just beginning to explore all the functionality within the platform.

“The first community we are working on is a general online community,” said Bacigalupo. “It’s a vehicle for the director of the virtual campus to create a sense of togetherness for our online students and faculty. We want to have places for them to dialog and where they can find resources targeted for their needs.”

The college views the community tools as important vehicles to bring the online students into the larger St. Scholastica community. “I will feel like our job was well done when our online students are creating clubs, and even more so when they are part of our on-campus clubs,” said Bacigalupo.

Cor also is an extension of the physical campus, and residential students also will benefit from and participate in the community-building opportunities available online. “Our traditional students are highly engaged with social networking. They live in the digital space and we need to provide a St. Scholastica space for them,” said Hamre.

CUSTOMIZABLE SPACE WILL ENHANCE COLLABORATION

Another function that the college will turn on in the future is enabling users to create a customizable space that will deepen collaboration and communication among students, faculty, and staff.

“We’ve moved incrementally with unlocking different functionality because it is such a vast product and has vast capacity. We were concerned that if we uncorked it all at once, we would create confusion,” said Bacigalupo “First, we are letting people get comfortable with the portal, and we are presenting them with a ‘dashboard’ based on their roles. But in the future, we will enable the customization that will let users create their own dashboards. Within their dashboard, they will be able to include the communities they want to be in and choose different portlets that will give them access to different services. The ability to customize will enhance collaboration and communication even more.”

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Lynne Hamre, CIO

“I go to cor.css.edu, log in once, and I have access to everything. It helps me as a student, as a person, as an athlete to know that I have support with my friends, my peers, my teachers, faculty, and staff.”

David Walsh, Student

To keep users apprised of new functionality, the college posts a notice on what's new about every 10 days. “We get positive feedback. They tell us they would like to have targeted messaging and community tools, so it affirms that we are on the right track,” said Hamre.

PERSONALIZING CONTENT AND STREAMLINING ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES

Ellucian Luminis Platform is also helping the college streamline administrative processes and reduce user frustration. With the college's previous homegrown website, a user had to understand when they needed to access Ellucian Banner Self-Service and when they needed to access Blackboard, which was not always intuitive. Also, users had to sign in and out of various systems.

Cor enables single sign-on (SSO) access to Banner® Self Service, Google, and Blackboard. Users do not have to re-authenticate as they move among the different systems. Ellucian Luminis Platform is the application that powers Cor and serves as the interface between Cor and Banner.

Within Cor, roles are derived and driven from logic within Banner. Some of the roles currently defined by the college are students, faculty, staff, and student employees, which are then overlaid with the campus they attend, physical or virtual. The college also recently created an affiliate role for board members and long term contractors.

For students, all the information and resources they need are presented within OneStop, a concentration of student-focused services such as financial aid, registration, student accounts, and more in one page delivery. The portal recognizes that the user is a student based on the role presented by Banner, and those resources are automatically centralized for them.

“All the services we are presenting to them were out there before, but they are more intuitive now,” explained Hamre. “It is no longer about knowing whether you need to go into Banner, to the registrar's web page, or financial aid's web page. Now it's framed around tasks that students need to accomplish, like registering, or receiving financial aid. On OneStop, they are presented

with checklists associated with the tasks they need to accomplish.”

“I go to cor.css.edu, log in once, and I have access to everything,” said David Walsh, student. “It helps me as a student, as a person, as an athlete to know that I have support with my friends, my peers, my teachers, faculty and staff.”

Luminis Platform has a modular, open design that also lets the college seamlessly integrate web services.

“We really want to bring life to all web services and use the portal as a way to unify web experiences,” said Bacigalupo.

For example, the college is embedding the YouTube channel into the portal. The IT team also is re-evaluating its CMS with the hope of re-architecting it and modularizing the content to deliver it in the portal via web service. Its goal is to create content once and use it in many places.

“Now, we can really take advantage of web services across delivery modes. In the past, transitions between systems and web services was not an easy flow for the end user,” said Bacigalupo.

Employees and faculty also are benefitting from much more targeted content and streamlined processes, due to the role-based capability as well as the portlet structure.

“We are using Banner to define logic to create roles to intelligently deliver content that is germane for each user,” said Bacigalupo. “For example, we have an employee page where the content is stewarded by human resources and that page is delivered to everyone with an employee role. For students, the OneStop page has all the content that is germane to their experience. And we can meet the needs of our online learners who have different needs than our traditional brick-and-mortar students. We are really excited to develop even more granular content delivery. For example, someone can be a traditional student and an extended student and possibly have some unique needs.”

“The platform provides for effective and efficient service to students so they can accomplish their administrative

processes,” added Hamre. “And we are creating efficient work processes for staff and administration.”

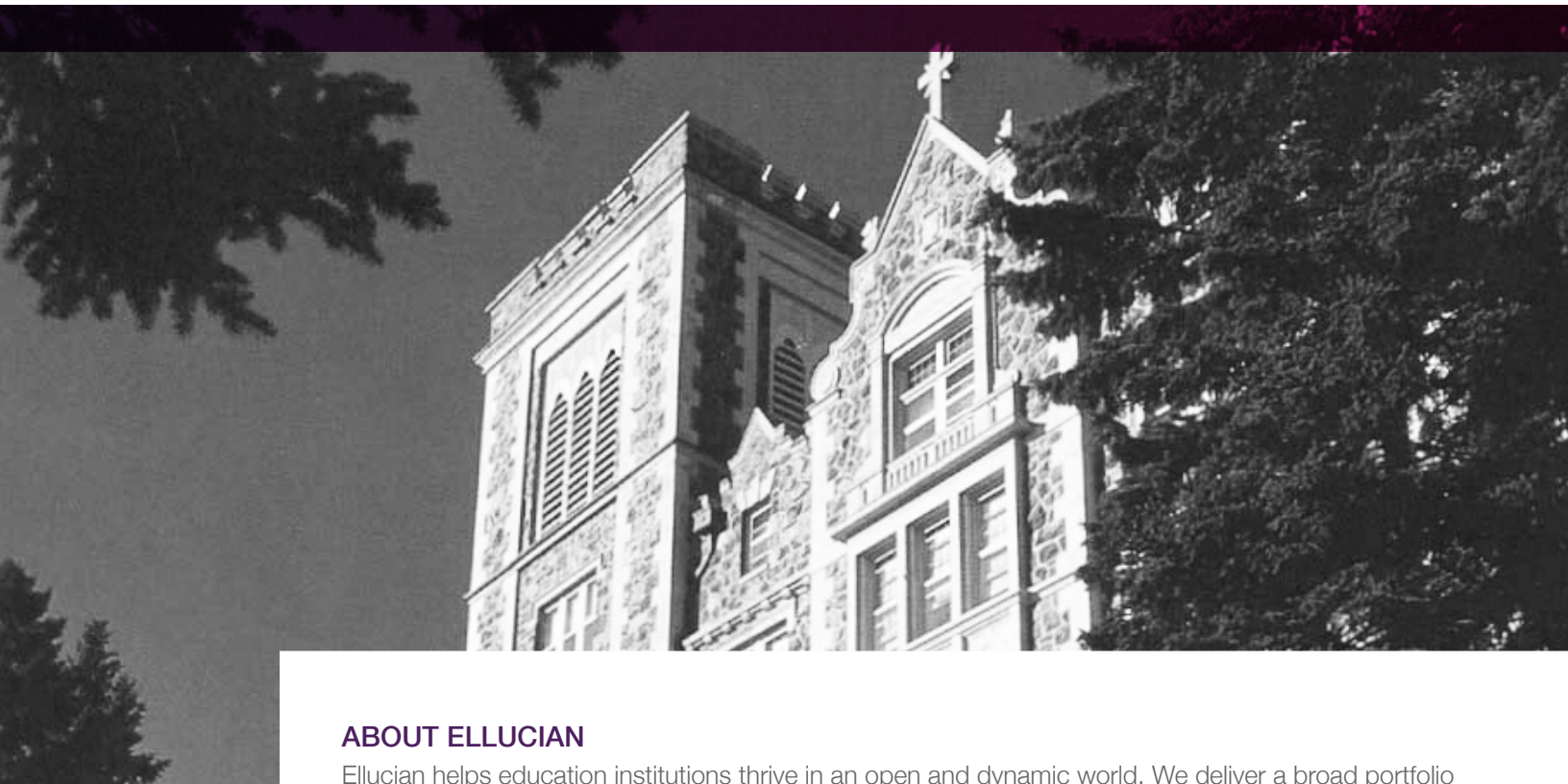
In the future, the college plans to create a prospect role that will help with recruiting and bring prospective students into the community earlier. The college also hopes to leverage the portal for its alums as well as to increase fundraising and other stewardship.

From prospect to staff to online learners, Cor will continue to be the heart of the college’s digital community.

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