



CASE STUDY

Increasing enrolment— and staying ahead of the competition

Pacific University is a private institution located in Forest Grove, Oregon, USA, with additional campuses in Eugene, Hillsboro, Woodburn and Portland. The university serves about 3,500 students, offering both graduate and undergraduate degrees and is consistently named among the top regional institutions in the West.

After experiencing an influx of students upon reinstating its football program, Pacific University saw a significant financial bump from the increased enrolment. Since the institution relies heavily on tuition, the administration then concluded that it would be financially prudent to redouble its efforts in recruiting and retention, to carry that success forward into the next decade.

To achieve that goal, Pacific University began the process of implementing Ellucian CRM Recruit. The team at Pacific University learned about Ellucian CRM Recruit at Ellucian Live. The team reported that after trying to use Ellucian Colleague for recruitment, this was an opportunity to get a recruitment-centric system of their own while still having that integration with Colleague for the rest of campus.



Enrolment

3,500 students

Challenge

Increase enrolment by targeting best-fit students, while also improving the student experience

Solution

Ellucian CRM Recruit

Results

Improved results from recruiting efforts

More accurate data about prospective students

Increased efficiency through improved processes

Targeting best-fit students

Initially, Pacific University was intrigued by the potential to more accurately market itself to prospective students through defined segments. “Whenever someone expresses an interest in basketball with their application and they’re in the ‘admit’ status, we can inform the coach that there’s someone new for them to talk to,” says now retired, Steve Mason, former Enterprise Systems Manager. “So we have this weekly email that goes out to the coach that says, ‘Hey, there is new interest in your program,’ and we do that for music, math, computer science, all the athletic teams, and other groups to keep them informed.”

The communications and marketing functions of the solution grants Pacific University a competitive advantage when it comes to not only recruiting students, but also recruiting best-fit students who have a higher likelihood of succeeding at the institution. “With the legacy of our university, we have professors and faculty who want a higher caliber of students,” says Ryan Garcia, Director of Marketing and Admissions for Pacific University’s College of Business. “In turn, we target students based on specific demographics—such as if we want more students from a certain state, or whatever other criteria it might be. That ability to segment after they request information is pretty big for us too.”

Because of the competitive environment among institutions in the region, Pacific University must distinguish itself from the pack—and one key area in which it does that is through personalised communications with potential students, facilitated through Ellucian CRM Recruit. “We really focus on the connection with the students,” says Garcia. “Being able to pull that small population of students that we met at a certain visit, or who are interested in a certain academic interest, allows us to talk to them in small group settings and get that personal message across to them.” Pacific’s admissions team believes CRM Recruit enables them to communicate easier, faster and more accurately with prospective students.

Once prospective students arrive on campus for a visit, the solution can also make things more streamlined for them as well, with the help of automated text messages. “We run automated ‘visit’ texts right now and have digital forms for them to complete,” says Garcia. “They click the link right from the text, fill out the form online, and then it goes in the system more quickly for us to review, compared with the old paper version.”

Empowering the admissions staff

Ellucian CRM Recruit has had positive impacts for staff as well. “We feel we’re providing better information to the admissions counselors and the operations people,” says Mason.



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Garcia notes that the new system has been relatively simple for end-users and staff members to learn and they're able to get up to speed relatively quickly. "They're able to navigate it fairly easily, and they're able to start using it pretty much within the first six months," he says. "They're able to really be self-reliant with pulling their lists of prospective students."

The admissions staff can now automate tasks and focus their energies on what really matters. "We've been able to automate a lot of things that have, in the past, been fairly mundane tasks for somebody," says Garcia. "We'll send emails for students who are on our wait list. We're able to automate that system now, whereas in the past, somebody had to be doing it. Those changes allowed counselors and general admissions staff to focus their efforts elsewhere."

That kind of efficiency translates into time and cost savings for the university. "From an operational standpoint, the real advantage with Ellucian CRM Recruit is we don't have to write the import for Ellucian Colleague for SAT and ACT scores and applications," says Mason. "It's all part of the Recruit import. Previously, when the new formats came out, we had to dedicate programmer time to redo all the imports. We don't have to do that anymore. That saves us about 100 to 120 hours a year."

Ryan Garcia says that the solution's dashboards and other functionality have also led to improved efficiencies, and impacted how the institution conducts

business as well. "Just the reporting abilities that we have now is far ahead of what other institutions are able to do," says Garcia. "We build reports that automatically generate out of Recruit into an Excel dashboard. We use them for all of our recruiting events, so we can track exactly how many people have attended, how many people have RSVP'd, and it's all in real time. We also have a larger report that is more detailed that gives individual breakdowns of just about every territory, person, high school—whatever else we need—and all of it has been done with either dynamic lists or pivot tables. It is helpful that all that data is stored in Recruit, whether we know we need it or not, as soon as somebody asks for it, we are able to pull it easily."

Having that kind of information on hand has allowed Pacific University to more accurately target and develop marketing plans that have real impact. "We just sent out a mail piece and we'll be tracking to see what effect it has," says Garcia.

"It was sent to students who hadn't applied yet and we'll be watching to see how many of the students apply—and where they're coming from, so that way we can segment it better in the future. If it works for one region, one interest, whatever it might be, we'll continue to do that. But if it didn't work for another group, we'll come up with a new strategy."



Integration matters

For Pacific University, integration with Ellucian Colleague was an important part of the decision to implement Recruit. “A large portion of admissions staff have never logged into Colleague before,” says Garcia, “nearly all the same information is visible through Recruit.”

That means all of the pertinent admissions data is right at the staff’s fingertips—which amounts to greater efficiencies as well. Pacific University implemented their exchange program application online. With the international constituents, it’s now helpful to have the ability for them to upload their documentation directly into the system. This saves a lot of time and manual processes, rather than trying to get things through the mail or email. It makes processing those types of applications much faster and more efficient.

Because of Recruit’s seamless integration with Colleague, the university can also simplify processes in other critical areas. “We would have four or five different vendors to do each piece of the marketing,” says a former team lead. “Before we had the email capability in Recruit, we were doing emails through a different vendor, so it would just be a little bit more cumbersome because we’d have to do it through two or three more systems.”

Adapting and growing

Ellucian CRM Recruit has opened new doors for Pacific University’s recruiting efforts. A few years ago, a pair of private institutions in the Pacific Northwest became insolvent and were forced to close their doors. Pacific University saw an opportunity—and they were able to capitalise. “We had two local universities close for various reasons and because we had Recruit, we were able to quickly put up a specific application for those two groups of students.”

That application—up and running within a day—allowed Pacific University to target the students of the shuttered institutions and helped them apply to Pacific. “We were able to process a lot of applications for these people a lot smoother and quicker I think than anyone else in our area,” says Skjeie.

Pacific University has been able to set itself apart from its competitors—and its enrolment numbers are looking good when compared with other nearby institutions. Garcia notes that Pacific University is in a good place, with greater potential to grow in the coming years. “We have seen a lot of competitors in this region who have not been able to get applicants in,” he says. “Especially since we’re a smaller liberal arts university, we really focus on the connection with the students and getting that personal message across to them—which has been a huge advantage.”



“We’ve been able to automate a lot of things that have, in the past, been fairly mundane tasks for somebody. Those changes allowed counselors and general admissions staff to focus on recruiting higher caliber students.”

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