

Are Higher Ed Chatbots Enough? Why Virtual Assistants Are Better for Your Office



Chatbots have been gaining popularity in the higher education community in recent years, and it's easy to see why. Schools increasingly have a presence online, students are more comfortable typing than speaking on the phone, and they save staff from answering simple questions. But are they really the best option for your financial aid office? Virtual assistants, such as [VirtualAdvisor™](#) by CampusLogic, are like a chatbot's cooler, smarter cousin; they have all the features of a chatbot, but offer better support, analytics, and personalized information to your students. Here are the main differentiators between them:

Personalized Answers and Advising

When a chatbot just answers questions that can be found in your FAQ or through a simple Google search, does it effectively serve your students? Today's students are more than capable of finding information online, but navigating the world of financial aid can still be tricky. That's part of the reason why CampusLogic created VirtualAdvisor. We believed in a tool that could provide personalized answers and direct students to next steps in their own financial aid process. By connecting through CL Connect to other CampusLogic products and your SIS, VirtualAdvisor can answer specific questions such as, "How much money should I borrow?", "Do I qualify for any scholarships?", and "Did I complete verification?" All pre-loaded answers were written by financial aid professionals with years of experience and will continually be updated to comply with new regulations. This individualized attention is what truly helps students get through the financial aid process and minimizes the questions coming into your office.

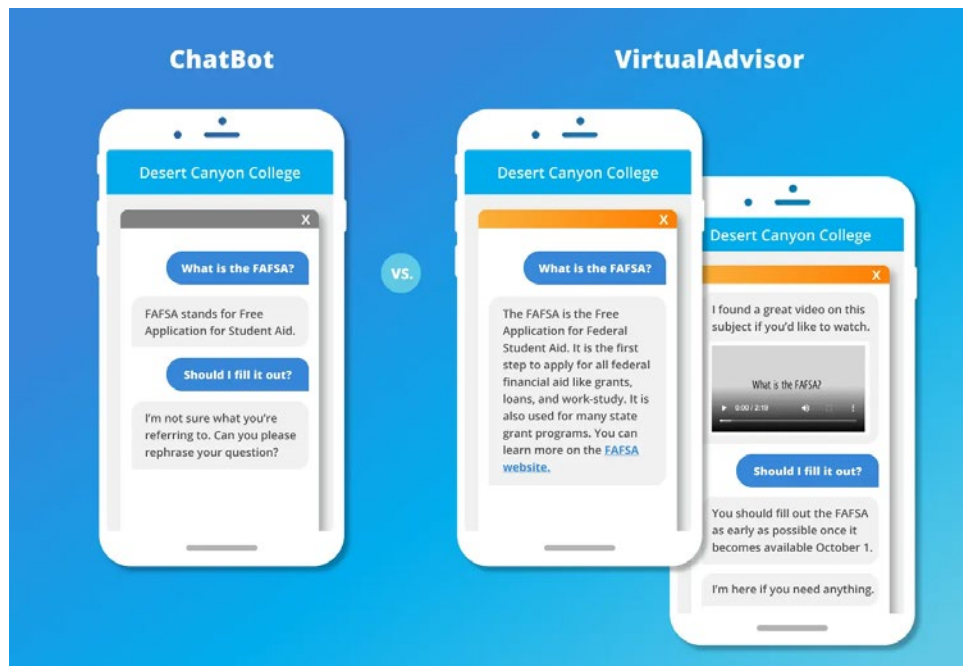
Language Capabilities

As the student population continues to become more and more diverse, we believe it's important

to provide service to people of all cultures and backgrounds. Higher ed chatbots of course offer answers in English, and some offer Spanish at an additional cost, but CampusLogic is proud to offer instant translation within VirtualAdvisor to over 60 languages. Using Microsoft's LUIS cognitive services, VirtualAdvisor will detect the language being typed by the user and instantly translate its answer into that language. When your administrators want to review the conversation afterward, they can simply translate it back into English or their language of choice. This service provides unrivaled availability to students and families of diverse backgrounds.

Conversation Flow

When a student comes into the financial aid office to ask for information, do you forget the last question they asked as you answer the next? Of course not! Unfortunately, this is what happens with most chatbots, which hinders the user experience. Virtual assistants on the other hand, are able to use context from previous parts of the conversation to continue it. For example:



Emotional Intelligence

When reviewing conversations between a bot and your students, wouldn't it be helpful to know—at a glance—if the student was satisfied, angry, or indifferent after the interaction? With most chatbots, this isn't possible, but with VirtualAdvisor's advanced sentiment analysis, you can see that exact information. The software analyzes the words used during the conversation to assign it a sentiment, thereby providing a simple way for administrators to see which students might need more attention.

Human Intervention

VirtualAdvisor is not only like a new member of your team, but also includes tools to be a bridge to your human team. By taking the majority of student and parent support, your best human

experts are given the time to provide in-depth consultations to students with the most need. Using the VirtualAdvisor AI to screen student and parent conversations enables hand-off of unique circumstances to human experts, giving human advisors superpowers to drive student comprehension, engagement, and ultimately financial success.

Virtual assistants, such as VirtualAdvisor, provide a more dynamic, personalized, and smooth experience for users and administrators than chatbots. When it comes to the complexity of financial aid information, a more advanced tool is necessary to reduce confusion instead of adding to frustration.



About the Author

CampusLogic's Chief Operating Officer - Specializing in product management, project management, and business process design throughout his 20-year career, Chris is an expert in managing change. It's a leadership characteristic that serves him well at CampusLogic where his team is transforming traditional Financial Aid processes..