



Supporting Enrollment with Student Financial Success

Fayetteville State University innovates with Ellucian technology to boost financial literacy and aid for students



Fayetteville State University (FSU) is a public four-year higher education institution with more than 7,100 students, located halfway between Charlotte and Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. FSU is also located two miles away from Fort Liberty, one of the largest military bases in the world. Until recently, the school, which is one of North Carolina’s HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), performed many of its financial aid processes manually.

FSU staff knew that streamlining these processes was vital and sought a way to do so in the spirit of innovation.

“The way that we were processing [items] in the office, we had a lot of old processes; everything was manual,” said Vincent Harris Jr., Executive Director of Scholarships and Financial Aid. “From our perspective, that’s inefficient, but from the student perspective, that’s daunting and it’s slow.”

In order to improve student experiences and financial aid processes, FSU chose a number of solutions in [Ellucian’s Student Financial Success suite](#), including [Campus Communicator](#) and [Student Forms](#). The appearance of the solutions and their seamless integration with Ellucian Banner impressed Harris immediately. He also liked their features, such as Campus Communicator’s ability to create dynamic offer letters and Student Forms’ ease of use.

Creating Cost Transparency With Campus Communicator

In Fall 2022, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) announced a task force known as the College Cost Transparency

Case Study



Stats

Fayetteville, North Carolina
4-Year Public Institution
5,000–8,000

Solutions

Ellucian Student Financial Success (Student Forms, Campus Communicator)

Results

- Ellucian Student Financial Success solutions expedite financial aid operations and eliminates process complexity for students

Initiative. It published a series of principles and standards regarding the clarity and simplicity of financial aid for higher education institutions to strive toward, as well as goals to meet.

Before utilizing Campus Communicator, FSU's financial aid offer letters did not meet NASFAA standards. The offer letters were similar to plain text-only documents with boxes to fill in, absent of any interactivity aside from one simple link to their web portal. When FSU modernized its financial aid offer letters with Campus Communicator, the results ensured the university aligned itself with College Cost Transparency Initiative goals. Harris said the offer letter modernization project is "the best thing I've ever worked on."

"We made the award letter very detailed," he said. "We used this opportunity to meet the College Cost Transparency Initiative through NASFAA, so now we're one of the institutions that fall under that category."

What's inside the new offer letter itself?

"Students get a breakdown of their direct costs, indirect costs, videos which [answer] some of the common questions we receive — it's just a really good and thorough layout," Harris said.

With Campus Communicator's multimedia-enabled financial aid offer letters, FSU students plainly see dollar amounts separated into scholarships, loans, and other categories. Harris' team also created links to external scholarships, student accounts, and other resources pertaining to their financial aid. The letters even feature a glossary that explains various financial aid terms for students and their families.

Harris and his team unveiled their new Campus Communicator-created offer letters during an enrollment management division meeting in March. In addition to links to campus visiting days, financial aid dates, housing applications, and student loan acceptance, they added the ability for students to pay for their enrollment deposit within the offer letter as well — and they can monitor the open rate of the offer letters they send out.

"It was really a one-stop shop for everything you need once you have your letter," Harris said. Emulating the implications of the improved letter, he added, "You got your award letter, you're excited for your award letter; go ahead and do your enrollment deposit."

Optimizing User Experiences With Student Forms

Harris said that Student Forms, Ellucian's AI-powered tool for automating financial aid processes through simplified workflows, excited him with regards to simplifying Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) appeals. A SAP appeal is a formal request a student submits asking for reinstatement of federal student aid after failing to meet the school's academic progress



requirements. At the time he saw it, Harris said that he remembered saying “Student Forms is going to be a great tool in regards to doing SAP appeals.”

Student Forms also assists in form creation. Staff can choose from pre-built web templates that integrate with any SIS or use [Student Forms’ AI functionality](#) to create new forms in minutes.

FSU chose Student Forms to replace their prior financial aid software. Compared to their previous software, Harris said Student Forms was a big step up. Its integration with Banner helped the school decide, but other capabilities also factored in.

“It’s checking all the boxes,” he said. “It’s aesthetically pleasing, it’s very easy to use for the students and it just made the [financial aid] process really work smoothly.”

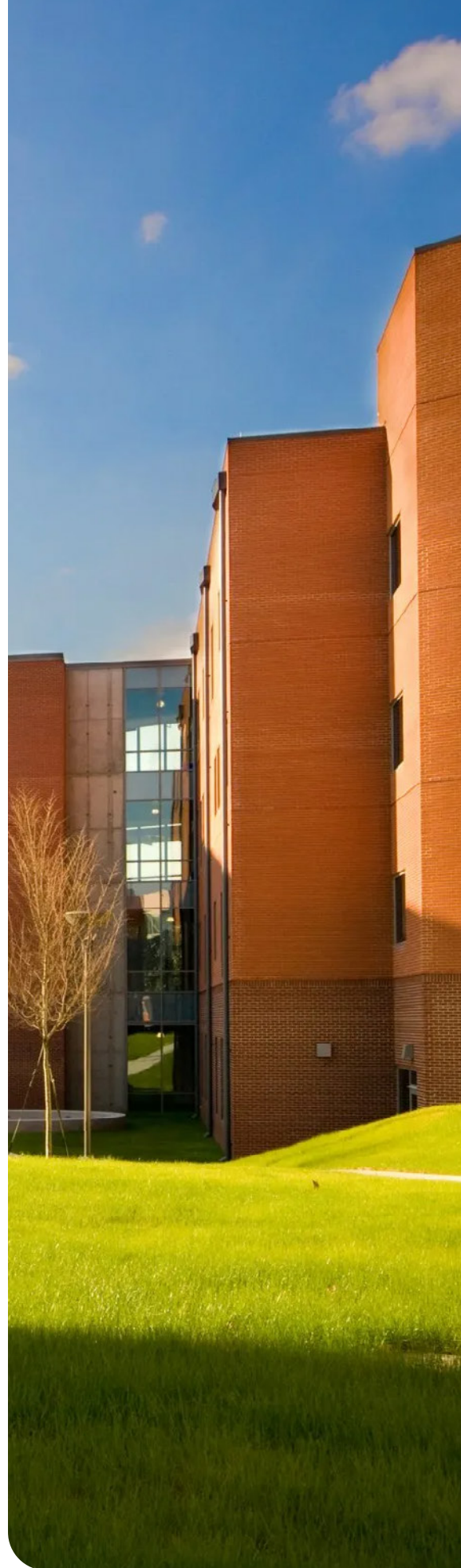
With Student Forms, whenever Harris’s office assigns an appeal to a student, the solution instantly notifies the student by e-mail and text message. The notification prompts them to go use a secure web login to resolve their appeal. Additionally, FSU can now track how many SAP appeals they’ve received from students, which stands at 499 for the Fall 2024 semester.

Error rates in student loan verification have also declined since FSU deployed Student Forms, further expediting the verification process. Harris mentioned that financial aid processes at the university will be fully moved to Student Forms for the 2025-26 academic year. He also has high hopes for its continued effects on FSU’s retention, which have already begun.

“Student Forms has helped with retention because one of the biggest barriers for retention is financial aid,” Harris said. “It’s eased up that process; it makes it more simplified for our students to navigate. When it comes to the SAP appeal component, it makes the process a lot more streamlined as well. We also have clearer communications that go out to students.”

Building a Better Financial Future for Students

FSU continues to innovate with its Student Financial Success platform. Harris and his colleagues are currently developing what they call an “academic success plan” for their students by using Student Forms. He said the academic success plan is a form that supplements a student’s SAP appeal by reiterating and reminding them of what they need to do in order to maintain financial aid eligibility in the future. The form is automatically assigned to students upon their successful SAP appeal. He used Student

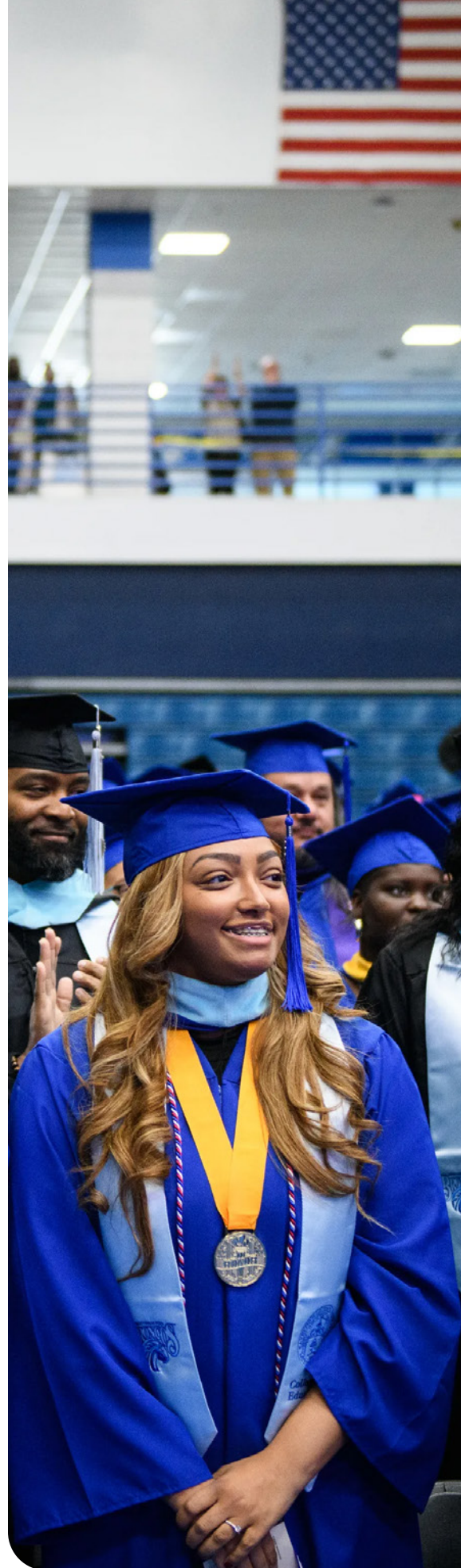


Forms's AI form builder to build its framework and made minor adjustments afterward — a process that he said was simple but beneficial.

“Just being able to craft the documents we need on-the-fly in a seamless process is very helpful,” Harris said.

Speaking more on the academic success plan, he said, “It gives students a plan on how to get back on track. It also helps them think through the challenges they may have had in prior semesters and how to correct themselves moving forward.”

Harris' academic success plan means greater financial literacy for students. Ellucian's recent [Student Voice Report](#) showed that financial uncertainty is the biggest barrier for students to attend and persist in college. Outcome-based innovations like the academic success plan show ambitious ways in which higher education institutions strive to overcome obstacles and boost enrollment and retention. With practices like these, Harris and FSU set themselves — and, most importantly, their students — up for success.



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