



Boosting Enrollment While Saving Big

How Impact Award winner Olivet Nazarene University recouped a million dollars while ramping up enrollment

The annual Ellucian Impact Award recognizes higher education institutions that use technology to solve challenges, operate more efficiently, and create better student experiences. Staff at Illinois's Olivet Nazarene University switched to Ellucian's CRM Recruit SaaS system to boost enrollment and save big, enriching the university's experience for both students and staff.

The Challenge: Quickly Migrating Enrollment Systems

In east-central Illinois, roughly an hour south of Chicago, stands Olivet Nazarene University (ONU). A private four-year university, ONU recently encountered a considerable predicament: The school had to perform a very time-sensitive migration of their enrollment department's Graduate and Continuing Studies Team's operations.

One part of the challenge included migrating from their old database to a new one. Their previous database held 8,000 student records, an intricate system of processes, and thousands of notes and document attachments. Additionally, much of the university's enrollment data was compartmentalized into two distinct CRM systems and needed to move to a single, unified CRM database.

As it stood, the school used multiple websites and links for its application process, which — coupled with the rest of the disparate and myriad intricacies to their system — made a cumbersome part of the school experience for students, faculty, and staff. This contributed to ONU suffering a six-year negative trend in enrollment. Furthermore, recruiters



Case Study

Solutions

CRM Recruit

Results

- \$1 million savings accrued by switching to one recruitment CRM system
- 25% boost in new student enrollment with new CRM system
- Simplified online student application process

at the school needed to be empowered to recruit, enroll, and host online students at ONU's remote partner locations, and they needed to do so effectively and seamlessly.

Finally, ONU had been in the position of relying on external consultants for some of their processes, which complicated matters for the institution beyond its control. To solve all of their problems in a way that realized the school's solutions' full potential, they would have to transition away from these third-party companies and utilize ONU's autonomy.

The university needed simplification and it needed it fast.

The Solution: Unifying Enrollment Processes and Meeting Students at Home

In order to solve its problems, Olivet Nazarene University transitioned its old database to the Ellucian CRM Recruit SaaS system, which was already being utilized by its undergraduate enrollment team.

“Through CRM Recruit, we were able to unify [the two student applications] into a single page,” said Kevin Hatcher, Executive Director of Revenue Technology and Operations for Development at ONU.

Support from Ellucian Professional Services gave ONU expertise and support in navigating the dynamic project. The university said this support was crucial in addressing the challenges they faced that were associated with data migration, system integration, and overall project management.

Integrating their old system's data with the CRM Recruit SaaS database and the operational processes of ONU's undergraduate enrollment team within a year was vital, so staff were trained on new operational procedures in order to realize a singular user interface application that all students could access while applying to ONU. This UI app enhanced the student experience by triggering efficient follow-up processes and communications from corresponding offices and teams.

Meanwhile, staff prioritized the implementation and deployment of ONU Plus, which is one of the school's new enrollment initiative. The introduction of ONU Plus allowed its recruiters to recruit, enroll, and host its online students at partner locations.

“We were able to do that within a year's time, which was a pretty rapid pace,” Hatcher said.



Site directors underwent CRM Recruit SaaS training to boost enrollment at each location. The university bet that this would generate an additional revenue stream for the university while affording students the opportunity to pursue a degree through the school near their own homes.

By developing and utilizing ONU Plus, the institution hopes this innovative strategy will align with the popular trend of online education while infusing a distinctive community-based dimension through partnerships with local organizations. These partnerships, campus leaders believe, will enhance the university's online education initiatives while helping ONU's unique and holistic educational experience shine through.

Since transitioning to one CRM recruitment database, the school established a seamlessly integrated, consolidated database system, which fostered improved communication and collaboration across its key academic divisions such as enrollment, advising, financial aid, and student development. Now, whether an applicant seeks on-campus, online, or ONU Plus site classes; or whether they're a high school student seeking post-graduation enrollment or a current or graduated student seeking credit transfers to pursue a degree; they'll find accessibility and ease of navigation at ONU.

The Results: Process Optimization and Heightened Operational Efficiency

With the support of Ellucian Professional Services, ONU soon experienced a successful transition from its former CRM system to its current CRM Recruit SaaS database, which exemplifies a proactive strategy aimed at continuous process optimization and heightened operational efficiency within its enrollment division. Its results show quantifiable measurements in the fields of cost savings, rising enrollment, and more.

“It is something through which we've seen significant benefit and growth,” Hatcher said. “It also allows further opportunities that wouldn't have been able to happen before.”

Transitioning to a single recruitment CRM system across the school's enrollment department and key university offices saved the school nearly one million dollars, emphasizing ONU's newfound efficiency, gained through its systems consolidation.

By streamlining its applications process and making improvements in other processes and communications, plus introducing its forward-thinking ONU Plus program, the university has produced a record



enrollment figure. In August 2023, ONU welcomed an impressive 801 incoming new undergraduate freshmen and transfer students to its storied halls. They believe this increase shows the efficacy of the initiatives they've undertaken in attracting and securing a larger student cohort, which will boost revenue growth throughout the institution.

The Graduate and Continuing Studies team enjoyed a 25% in new student enrollment compared to its previous year, showcasing the heightened impact and effectiveness in its recruitment efforts.

ONU's various initiatives have yielded cost savings, record-breaking undergraduate enrollment, and significant growth in new student enrollment for its Graduate and Continuing Studies teams. Their story once again shows that optimizing efficiency and streamlining operations works wonders for an institution's financial health, recruitment efforts, and operational effectiveness.



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