



## CASE STUDY

# A better, more efficient way to recruit the right students

## Seeking a modern solution

Southeast Arkansas College (SEARK) is a community college located in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. It offers two-year associate degrees, with an enrollment of nearly 3,000 students and 132 faculty and staff. The institution's programs and services include technical career education, workforce development, university transfer education, general education, adult education, continuing education, and community services

After experiencing a consistent decrease in enrollment, SEARK examined its recruitment and enrollment practices to identify areas for improvement. Additionally, the institution had noticed a change in the average age of its applicants, with a drop from age 29 to age 25. SEARK was interested in more effectively targeting this younger demographic.

In order to meet changing market demands and streamline internal operations, SEARK began searching for a more efficient way to manage its recruiting processes. "The recruiters were basically trying to manage all of their contacts just through an Excel spreadsheet," says Deborah Pyland, director of recruitment at Southeast Arkansas College. "And you can imagine how cumbersome that can be, with human error, mistakes, and potential prospects falling through the cracks. They were spending a lot of their time just trying to figure out who they needed to be contacting."

The institution already used Ellucian Colleague® as its primary ERP, and preferred a recruiting system that would seamlessly integrate prospect data.

In the fall of 2018, SEARK implemented Ellucian CRM Recruit.



**Southeast  
Arkansas College**

**Enrollment:**  
2,955

**Challenge**  
Increase recruiting and enrollment efficiency, eliminate manual processes, and gain insights through improved metrics

**Solution**  
Ellucian CRM Recruit

**Results**  
More efficient recruiting process  
Seamless integration with ERP  
Improved insights through data

## Efficiency is the name of the game

SEARK was eager to get the new system up and running as quickly as possible, and started the process by instituting a training program for the admissions and recruiting staff. “We had a pretty aggressive implementation schedule,” says Pyland. “We set aside a room that had all of our computers and a main computer projector so we could simulate all training together.”

Pyland notes that the training program was intensive, but has proven to be an invaluable experience. “It actually really worked out well because Ellucian really kept us focused,” she says. “We were meeting twice a week and really had to stay on top of things.”

The institution was also keen to implement the system because it would significantly transform the application process and pave the way for greater efficiencies. With a new recruiting system, SEARK would not only more effectively target prospective students, but also save time through modernization of the application process, allowing the student’s application to move directly from Ellucian CRM Recruit to Ellucian Colleague.

“We knew this was going to change our whole application on the front end,” says Pyland. “It afforded us a lot of great opportunities to streamline our online application. Before the new system, we had just a static online application. A prospect would fill that out, it would go to admissions, and there was a lot of manual labor involved in pushing that into our Colleague system.”

Because of CRM Recruit’s tight integration with Colleague, the recruiting and admissions processes would become automated, saving countless hours that had been previously spent on labor-intensive tasks. “We knew we’d be able to just push the applications directly into Colleague, which is a wonderful thing,” says Pyland. These efficiencies allowed SEARK to utilize staff more effectively.

Although the new system has only recently been implemented, SEARK is eager to explore what it can do for the institution during the next recruiting and admissions cycle. “What we’re really excited about is being able to create recruiting events within the system so when we have specific targeted events we’re doing, six months later we can go back and see those prospects who were involved in that particular event and where they are in the process,” says Pyland. “That allows us to gauge whether that was an event that we need to continue to do.”

Pyland is also intrigued by the opportunities that the new system can open up for a community college. “Obviously the dynamics in our student population are very different from a four-year college or university,” she says. “We’re excited to look at our various recruitment initiatives and see where we’re getting the biggest bang for our efforts.”

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### **DEBORAH PYLAND,**

Director of Recruitment, Southeast Arkansas College

## Collaboration is key

For SEARK, the linchpin of a successful software implementation is the tightknit relationship between vendor and institution. Pyland believes the working partnership between Ellucian and SEARK was instrumental in the success of the project, particularly through My Projects (formerly known as the Customer Collaboration Environment), an Ellucian site designed for dynamic customer collaboration and communication. My Projects provides real-time implementation health and reporting for Ellucian customers and project members, and is used to track many key elements including project schedules, milestones, deliverables, team members, and sign-offs.

“My Projects helped improve collaboration and communication throughout the project,” says Pyland. “It was always very clear where we were in the project. It is a great project management tool. It was always very clear where we were, where we were getting behind, and it kept us on track.”

Pyland is also grateful for the wealth of information and support available to her team through documentation and training. “When you’re implementing something and you’re just getting all of this information thrown at you, it’s nice to be able to step back and have that support so that we can go back and review things,” she says. “And our trainers have been really great about walking us through exactly where to click and what to do—they were very knowledgeable.”

Going forward, SEARK will be looking to leverage the new system to not only drive efficiencies, but also to create more effective, targeted recruitment programs. “Everyone’s looking for enrollment increases,” says Pyland. “We’re excited about the data that we’re going to be able to pull from the system that just shows what we’ve been doing, and whether we’re doing the right recruitment efforts.”



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