



CASE STUDY

Building a stronger workforce

Enhancing career services to give students an edge

Edinboro University of Pennsylvania is a public, four-year institution located in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, with a satellite campus located in Erie, Pennsylvania. Serving more than 4,000 students, the university aims to provide a comprehensive, quality education that will help its students find and cultivate meaningful and rewarding careers.

To help facilitate that mission, Edinboro's Office of Career Development recently analyzed its technology and services in an effort to better serve students.

Traditionally, the office of career services has been siloed on college campuses. This model of a stand-alone career office, operating in isolation and offering mostly transactional services—like resume reviews and job boards—is now outdated. These traditional career services operations remain out of step with the needs of the modern workforce, as employers demand more professional and soft skills. Edinboro also believes that college students need to learn how to adapt to a quickly evolving workforce, and career development professionals must figure out how to effectively serve all of their stakeholders.

To that end, Edinboro decided to utilize technology to revamp how its career services office operates. The university found that career services works with all academic and administrative departments in some capacity, whether it's prospective students, families, employers, internship sites, or alumni—collectively, more unique groups than any other office on campus.



Enrollment

4,000 students

Primary Challenge

Revamp the career services office to increase outreach and help students get the information they need

Solution

Ellucian Banner®

Results

A 192 percent increase in student appointments with career services

Increased student engagement across campus

Integrated data and improved efficiencies

In addition, Edinboro's career services office must collaborate with other academic and administrative departments in order to effectively approach career development. With a staff of just three people, the career services office must lean on technology and innovation to best serve 4,000 students, 65,000 alumni, 700-plus faculty and staff, and a network of more than 1,000 employers.

After several years of developing successful digital technology tools such as career assessments, centralized internship and career databases, online appointment scheduling and digital resources, libraries and links, the university's tools were scattered across multiple platforms. Each tool or resource required a different web address, login, and process. At the same time, Edinboro was seeing usage of its tools decrease, and the user experience was poor.

Tying disparate systems into one portal

To begin, Edinboro decided to integrate its technology using single sign-on functionality from its Ellucian Banner® ERP. The transformative effort also involved looping in stakeholders and experts from across campus to ensure success. "In early discussions around the need to centralize and streamline our technology stack, we involved admissions, IT, and marketing to ensure that the platform met everyone's needs," says Monica Clem, director of the Office of Career Development at Edinboro.

The university also adopted a new platform to replace its existing website and centralized access to existing digital tools. The institution added additional features, including new career communities, equity communities, staff and faculty pages, and information for prospective students and alumni. Their new website was re-branded as "TartanEdge," and is accessible through the student and staff portal via single sign-on using the same CAS authentication, and it is also available to anyone via on the Internet as well. "While each tool functionally meets a need, the biggest challenge was how to integrate them in a way that serves the stakeholder with a good user experience and functionality," says Clem.

When students sign in, the system automatically imports student information from the ERP. This integration also allows all the departments in the university, including the career office, to send students weekly updates that include the most recent and relevant information for them.

Integrating the university's ERP with TartanEdge was crucial for creating streamlined data and connecting all technology into a one-stop-shop for student success throughout their experience at Edinboro University. This integrated approach has allowed the university to provide multiple student touch points. Providing streamlined access to the university's entire technology stack is a game changer not only for the career services department, but for the institution as well. "Our site is not just a static website with information, but a portal to all of the tools and services we provide," says Clem. "Information is curated by hashtags, so we are able to tag content to multiple stakeholder groups. This approach, involving the entire campus community, is not common in college career services but represents a modern, innovative approach."



The new, integrated system launched in October 2018 and has been well-received by stakeholders across campus, with a marked increase in unique visitors—both internal and external—to TartanEdge. “Our launch event attracted over 50 faculty, staff, and administrators, and adoption of TartanEdge has been smooth and efficient,” says Clem. “Since the launch, we have over 2,500 unique users who collectively have viewed over 9,300 pages, vastly increasing our reach. Utilization of our digital tools, including appointment scheduling, has also increased.”

Gaining deeper insight

Clem notes that career services has seen a dramatic uptick in student engagement, with an impressive 192 percent increase in student appointments. In the three months since implementing the new system, Edinboro exceeded the total number of interactions that took place in academic year 2017-2018 (both in-person and digital) by 25 percent, and the institution is on pace to quadruple engagement during 2019, and usage of the career assessment tool has doubled as well.

But it's not just students who are benefitting from the new, integrated technology. Faculty usage of the career development department's tools are also increasing—and there are plans to roll out more programs to further enhance functionality for faculty. “We are currently working with our Art Department faculty to move their paper candidacy applications online using the digital functionality of TartanEdge,” says Clem. “Faculty now have access to all of our guides, documents, and resources on-demand, and requests are increasing. This is our first pilot program that will extend to many other academic departments, further integrating our resources.”

This new approach to integrating technology and career services has also helped the university to gain a deeper understanding into the particular types of services utilized by students across academic disciplines.



192%

increase in student appointments through Edinboro's calendar services



4X

increase in engagement with Edinboro's career services projected for 2019



2X

increase in usage of Edinboro's career services tool



“We also found that students in academic programs with more streamlined careers—such as nursing and teaching—tended toward transactional services like resume writing and graduate school applications,” says Clem, “while students in programs with less linear career paths—such as art or English—gravitated toward developmental services like assistance with major indecisions and career planning.”

In addition, the new system has made appointment scheduling more effective. This has helped the career services staff to better hone their communications and also led to increased participation rates among students. “We have been able to analyze our student appointment data to pinpoint the most popular days of the week and times of day for our students—something we were not able to do before the technology,” says Clem. “For example, we analyzed appointment timestamps and isolated Tuesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. as the most popular time for an appointment, so we chose to schedule our weekly alert emails to students at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesdays. By contacting students two hours before the most popular time, we are leveraging their attention.”

This kind of visibility into student preference has helped Edinboro target the right students with the right information—and to track what content is of the most interest to students. For example, the university has found that the internship page on TartanEdge has garnered the highest number of hits, and consequently, the proportion of appointments for assistance with internships has doubled, reaching 14 percent of all appointments during the fall semester. Armed with this kind of insight, the university will be able to more closely align its resources with the preferences of students.

Moreover, there has been another positive impact of the new system as well. Students have commented on the improved access to information. “Students are also reporting that they find the platform useful,” says Clem. “Students tell us that they find the information intuitive and easy to use, and that they are finding themselves using resources that they did not know existed.”

Alexis, a senior and English education major, notes, “TartanEdge has been very helpful because I have learned about opportunities that I would never have known about without it,” she says. “I always click the links in my weekly alert, which is how I learned about an internship and a part-time job in my field available this summer. I was able to get advice and examples on resumes, read articles about the value of internships, and apply for the positions all from the same page. I received two offers for this summer. Finding both an internship and a job would have been more difficult without the help I received.”

In a relatively short span of time, Edinboro has seen notable improvements for its career development office, and the institution is looking forward to finding new ways to utilize the system, all while reaping the benefits of having more insight into student preferences and effective communication. “We are finding that our resources are getting significantly more attention than in the past, and this is in the first three months of launch,” says Clem. “We are excited to see what the first year of data will look like given these early successes.”



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