

Seminole State College: Achieving Greater Success with Fewer Resources

With nearly 30,000 students enrolled, Seminole State College of Florida is a full-service education provider with campus and online courses. The school offers a variety of bachelor's and two-year college-credit degrees; specialized career certificates; continuing professional and adult education; and an array of cultural events.

Seminole's strategic goals and priorities are centered around the development of innovative programs that cultivate student engagement and success and promote opportunities for employees as well. As with many public institutions, striking a balance between offering these types of programs and finding the resources to enable them isn't always easy.

CHALLENGE:

Do More with Less

In an effort to become more efficient, Seminole State College wanted to streamline processes in order to continue to deliver quality programs and services without adding headcount. The initiative began when Dr. Dick Hamann took on an interesting role usually held by three separate people. As vice president of Student Services, vice president of Technology and Institutional Resources, and CIO, Dr. Hamann was afforded a unique perspective when it came to student engagement and success.

"Student services is geared around engagement and human touch as a primary focus, with processes and structure as a secondary objective," Hamann says. "IT, on the other hand, is organized, logical and process driven. Both are necessary yet neither had much interaction with each other. Finding a balance between the two was critical to reach our goals."

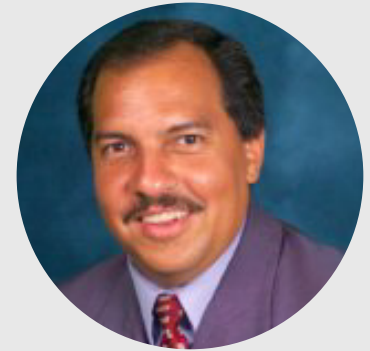
His logic stems from the fact that the college journey is a series of sequential steps that follow a specific process that touches multiple departments who traditionally have never communicated. When Hamann was asked to look at processes and technology, he first identified current processes that move a student along from admission to graduation. He found they were manual, labor intensive, and often repetitive.

He also discovered each department had their tasks with little sharing of ideas or information. In the post-secondary environment, student retention and ultimately student success requires cross-departmental collaboration. Hamann made it his mission to bring departments together for the benefit of the students and to automate as many processes as possible in order for the institution to be able to do more with their limited resources.

SOLUTION:

Bring People and Technology Together

With an eye on technology, Hamann and his team set out to connect people and workloads. Everything from financial aid to advising was addressed. "Our enrollment is growing, which isn't typical across the country and not something we anticipated," he says. "Our retention efforts are concentrated on bringing student services and academic functions together to optimize each student's success."



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- Dr. Dick Hamann
Vice President of Student Services;
Vice President of Technology and
Institutional Resources; CIO
Seminole State College

"It could take us 2-3 months to review every application and track down students, often too late for the student to make the corrections before school began. Today, the student is alerted within 24-hours and we have reduced calls to our call center by at least 50 percent, totalling a savings of up to \$300K per year."



If a student is struggling, a professor will refer them to an advisor. If the underlying issue is due to finances, for instance, the advisor will send them to the financial aid offices. It's all connected, tracked, and managed through software.

HighPoint automates the process from the time a student completes a financial aid application, through the verification process without staff members ever touching it. HighPoint Financial Aid Automation automatically informs staff and the student when the process is complete or if there is any missing information. It even provides a link where students can fix the issue themselves. Empowering students to complete more of their own tasks is helping Seminole offset the cost of hiring personnel that would be required to track the student down and walk them through the process.

Before HighPoint, students didn't always know what was missing or understand why their application was declined. It had an effect on enrollment.

Seminole State College is able to take those resources and dollars and reinvest them into other tools and solutions that benefit the students. These investments have proven to be significant. In less than two years, Seminole's graduation rates have skyrocketed from 38 percent to 52 percent.

"Automating as much as possible and making it easy for the different departments to share student information was key," says Hamann. "Bringing technology together with academics not only ensures a more streamlined experience for both student and staff, but it minimizes human errors while increasing human interaction."

To date, Seminole is utilizing several HighPoint products, including Mobile, Financial Aid Course Audit, Financial Aid Automation, and Message Center. The automation all of these solutions bring has enabled the school to operate with a limited staff while achieving greater efficiencies than ever before.

RESULTS

Greater Staff and Student Success

With HighPoint, Seminole State has eliminated much of the manual work previously required, particularly with financial aid verifications. Technology enables the school to empower students, maximize funding and gain back office efficiencies.

"Students are no longer taking courses that don't qualify towards their degree, saving us both significant dollars and hours of lost sleep," says Hamann. "Students are informed faster for ineligible courses and financial aid application issues, and they can easily track their status in real time throughout the process."

Students have provided feedback on HighPoint Mobile, the mobile app they use multiple times a day to perform tasks, find information, communicate, and track their progress. Hamann says having access to the schedule of classes, campus maps and the status of their financial aid has significantly improved their ability to navigate the onboarding and continuing processes associated with attending college.

"Seminole State College has been able to achieve greater efficiencies, better student engagement, and get more accomplished without increasing headcount. HighPoint is a technology investment into the health and success of our students and our school."