



The University of Miami Modernizes Its Student-Facing Technology with HighPoint

Founded in 1926, the University of Miami is one of America's top research universities with more than 16,000 students from around the world. The University is comprised of 11 schools and colleges serving undergraduate and graduate students in more than 180 majors and programs. UM was ranked in the top 50 universities in the nation in 2016.

CHALLENGE:

Reduce Email Avoidance and Improve Accessibility to SIS System

Like most established higher education institutions, the University of Miami has evolved its technological capabilities. With the seismic shift towards mobile devices, however, the online user interface was no longer sufficient.

A national survey of college students by the Harris Poll revealed that smartphone use among college students was 86 percent in 2015 and 89 percent used laptop computers¹. "We knew we had limitations with how our portal was delivered to students," says Scott Ingold, executive director of Enrollment Management Systems and Analytics at the University of Miami. "It wasn't mobile friendly and didn't size correctly on mobile devices. In a student focus group we conducted, the number one write-in comment was for mobile access to UM systems."

Mobile functionality wasn't the only challenge the University faced. It had no way of knowing whether or not its students were reading their email messages from department staff and faculty. One recent study² found email avoidance is rampant among college students. As many as 39 percent of students avoid their academic advisor's emails and 54 percent avoid emails from university departments.

These missed messages often contain important and valuable information college students need in order to do well in college, take advantage of opportunities, and engage with their school. While texting might be students' communication channel of choice, it is not FERPA compliant. Ingold made it a priority to provide students with a secure, user-friendly interface to do all of the things they need to do to be successful.

Shelley Hoffman, manager of Enrollment Systems at UM was on board, saying, "When it comes to customer service, we have to remove as many barriers as possible so students can reach their goals. Capabilities such as online applications, mobile access and effective communication keep them engaged and help with recruiting and retention."



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¹ Harris Poll. "Pearson Student Mobile Device Survey," 2015.

² Louisa Ha, Claire Joa, Itay Gabay and Kisun Kim. "Does College Students' Social Media Use Affect School Email Avoidance and Campus Involvement?" Internet Research 28(1).

SOLUTION:

Reach Students Where They Are: Using HighPoint Mobile and Message Center

The University leadership chose HighPoint Mobile and HighPoint Message Center because the products were user and faculty-friendly, the solution covered all of their requirements and more, and HighPoint offered a team of experts to support the product.

Message Center was first to be rolled out to all active students and applicants. Instead of emails that are unsecured and unmeasured, messages are placed in a secured portal. Recipients receive a push notification on their mobile device alerting them to check their portal to receive the message. The best part is that the school can track open and read rates in order to follow up with students who have not opened their message.

The next feature deployed was HighPoint Mobile. University leadership decided to do a soft rollout with no marketing to give their help desk time to prepare. "The day Mobile launched, our help desk was ready to answer a million questions," she says. "We were shocked that our help desk received less than five calls that day with 10,000 hits on our mobile version. Mobile was that intuitive."

Part of the success of the Mobile solution is that it is fully configurable. In UM's case, the Mobile site was labeled the same as the full site so students were familiar with the tabs. "Students love having everything at their fingertips," explains Hoffman. "For instance, they pay most of their bills online from their phones, view class schedules, search for classes, and request transcripts. Basically, everything they can do from our full site, they can now do on their mobile devices in minutes."

RESULTS

Greater Accessibility, Functionality and Engagement

For UM, the biggest benefit of the HighPoint solution has been its simplicity. The clean, organized, and user-friendly Mobile app and Message Center allows students to focus more on being a student rather than dealing with administrative tasks. Being a student includes keeping them connected.

"We had no way to track students' read rates prior to Message Center, which is one of the main reasons we purchased the HighPoint solution," says Hoffman. "In only our first year of using Message Center, over 150,000 messages have been sent, on average over 70 percent are read by students and applicants, and in some cases as many as 89 percent. This is a stunning success rate that proves our students are informed and engaged."

The fact that UM listens so well to its students and their needs is likely the reason why HighPoint has received such praise from Hoffman and Ingold: they share similar core values. "We can't even describe how amazing it has been to work with HighPoint," says Hoffman. "They are so flexible and willing to develop what we need. They establish deep relationships with their customers and we feel like they are listening."



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