HIGHPOINT

Houston Community College Invests in Its Students' Success with Frictionless Technology

Houston Community College has the largest international student population of any community college in the nation and the second largest of any higher learning institution. With seven colleges, 20 campuses and nearly 115,000 students, 40 percent of whom are on financial aid, HCC leverages technology to enable its diverse student population to navigate their educational journey in the easiest way possible.

Whether it's providing modern systems and equipment for its health sciences students, enabling manufacturing students to work on the same 3D printers they would see in the workforce, or offering a streamlined mobile student portal, HCC invests heavily in cutting- edge technology to attract, retain and engage students from wherever they may come.

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**- Dr. Bill Carter
CIO, Houston Community College**

CHALLENGE:

Connect Students to Their Information for Easier Journey

As an open enrollment institution, HCC requires a wealth of information from its applicants. Applications, transcripts, financial aid information and health records are just a few of the many forms that must be uploaded into HCC's PeopleSoft SIS. For HCC, making the enrollment process as simple as possible and connecting current students with their own information not only improves their experience but produces better student outcomes.

"Our goal is to make it easy for students and parents to navigate the educational journey from inquiries through completion," says Dr. Bill Carter, CIO at Houston Community College. "If it is difficult, we will lose students. We must speak their language in terms of providing them with the same user experience they have in other areas of their life. They are used to Amazon-like, responsive mobile experiences where relevant information is presented to them on their devices without multiple steps or friction."

Dr. Carter made it his mission to align students, staff and faculty onto a single system where everyone had easy access to the same information within PeopleSoft. "In the past, we developed systems that made it easy for our staff to use," he explains. "Now, we are focused on the student experience and delivering a customized, personalized experience based on their needs. We want them to have self-service capabilities where they can complete their verification and enrollment tasks from a mobile device in just a few clicks."

HCC had a mobile system, but it was limited in its student services capabilities. Students could view their schedules and basic information about HCC but not much else. Their information was still locked inside of PeopleSoft SIS and required them to continually input personal information the school already knew. HCC relied on email, robocalls and texting to send reminders and information to students, something Carter says was hard to monitor and not effective. "Students told us they received too many emails, phone calls, voicemails, and text messages," he says. "As a result, staff members were frustrated as students were missing critical deadlines and jeopardizing their success. We knew we had to do a better job."

Since deploying HighPoint Mobile and HighPoint Message Center, HCC has seen:

- A **50%** reduction in the number of page view clicks
- A **225%** increase in the number of portal users
- **200,000** unique users in one month
- **1 million** page views in one month

⩕ SOLUTION:

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

After looking at a number of mobile platforms, Dr. Carter immediately identified a central problem: all but one offered a real-time interface with PeopleSoft. Delays caused by nightly or hourly uploads of student information would cause problems during peak times and further irritation. He discovered HighPoint was the only solution embedded directly within PeopleSoft, giving it the unique ability to provide students with a seamless experience with real-time information at their fingertips.

"HighPoint's bolt-on capability to the PeopleSoft environment meant we didn't have to reinvent in a second system and create redundant rulesets," says Dr. Carter. "The solution provides a student-centered design with a real-time interface so all of their information is updated in one place and students and staff see the same information. This capability enables a more efficient student journey that aligns with their expectations for immediate service and provides a better student experience."

The HighPoint functionality is revealed through HCC's student portal, MyEagle. From a single lift-off page, students are provided a dashboard of clickable tiles that take them directly to specific tasks and information. From financial aid, schedules and grades, to their Message Center, course catalog and calendar, they are always one click away from what they need. In fact, when students register for classes, they simply click on the class they need, drop it into a shopping cart and pay. They can accept their financial aid reward and it is automatically verified and applied to tuition and fees.

HCC anticipates that the HighPoint Message Center app will replace many forms of communication. Students will have a single place to receive and reply to important messages from advisors and counselors concerning documents needed to enroll, college and club events, registration deadlines, upcoming appointments and graduation information, to name a few. This simplified communication platform centralizes and stores messages. It also provides staff with a historical record of communications to see if students have opened their messages, thus improving HCC's ability to understand and serve students' needs.

"Our main goal was to give users what they need quickly so they can get back to being a student or staff member faster," says Carter. "In 2019, we are adding two more HighPoint modules on the portal, Schedule Builder and Degree Planner, to our suite of products. This will give students instant ability to map out their educational journeys in a sequential, visual way to reach their goals faster."

⩕ RESULTS

A Mobile Experience that Drives Student Success

The initial MyEagle portal was rolled out in less than 90 days and the first prototype was running within the first week. Because data flows back and forth between HighPoint and HCC's PeopleSoft SIS, the HighPoint products can be installed and deployed quickly for near-immediate ROI. "I don't know of any other vendor who could provide such rapid value," says Dr. Carter. "Our goal is to have Schedule Builder up and running in less than a week. I can't even roll out new features in PeopleSoft that fast."

The investment in HighPoint is an investment in HCC students. Even though HCC is still deploying new capabilities, the number of users that are using the portal to access their information speaks for itself. In April alone, MyEagle had more than 200,000 unique users with more than one million page views. The number of average pages viewed was 2.6, down from six.

Students can now go log into a single app from their mobile phones, laptops, tablets or desktops to see their required next steps, whether it be to register for a specific class, turn in a form or pay for a class. According to Carter, a veteran in the community college environment, the easier you make your processes to keep students working in the system, the better off the student will be.

"The reduction of page views tells us people are getting the information they need quickly and we are meeting their needs," says Dr. Carter. "HighPoint gives us more flexibility and our students the confidence they can do more, complete their journeys, and reach their education and career goals faster."