

CASE STUDY

Enterprise Texting for Community Colleges

A Case Study from Grand Rapids Community College

Overview

Eric Mullen is the Associate Dean of Enrollment Management and Financial Aid at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), and 95% of their students come from the immediate service region. While community colleges face unique challenges, we've found that engaging with students is the most important objective of ANY school.

This case study will show how GRCC reaches students across multiple departments with the help of a texting platform.

The challenge

WHO IS GRCC?

- > Located in downtown Grand Rapids, MI
- > 14,000 degree-seeking students
- > Around 16,500 applicants, 11,400 matriculants, and 6,000 new students ('17-'18)

WHAT THEY'RE UP AGAINST

- > Declining enrollments
- > Shrinking pool of applicants and matriculants
- > Declining attendance at admission and enrollment events

The story

“We are able to target students with specific interests that would fit with the new offering. It’s the deeper level of segmentation. When you can be that specific and timely with your messaging, it’s huge.”

– Eric Mullen, Associate Dean of Enrollment Management and Financial Aid at GRCC

Texting conversations allow for touchpoints that help students work through matters quickly.

Grand Rapids began texting in 2013 with Callfire due to the realization that texting was students’ preferred method of communication. Community colleges are strongly tied to local economies and, at the time, a recession actually led to a spike in enrollment with people seeking re-training and more affordable education opportunities.

The school started using Mongoose Cadence in the fall of 2016, wanting more personal and approachable methods of reaching students and prospective students, as well as a more efficient way to move students through the application process.

“Students may not engage with us right away, but six weeks later will drop us a note. They see texting as a viable way to get in touch with us.”

– Eric Mullen, Associate Dean of Enrollment Management and Financial Aid at GRCC

Texts sent prior to fall of 2016

14,000

Texts sent through summer of 2017

41,606

Increase in fall yield rate

+3%

(fall '16 57.2% to fall '17 60.2%)

Expanding the use of texting across campus

CASHIER'S OFFICE



In the past, GRCC Cashier's office felt the volume of the texts they needed to send was too great. Once group accounts (texting accounts that could be accessed and utilized by multiple people within a department) were implemented at GRCC, the office quickly realized the value of sharing the workload and saw an immediate boost.

STUDENTS WHO PAID IN FULL:

Fall 2017 → 64.5%

Fall 2018 → 71.9%

Overall Increase → +7.4%

The results sold the department, which now regularly uses texting to communicate with students.



ADMISSIONS

Although GRCC'S pool of applicants and matriculants have continued to shrink, with texting they yielded **200 additional new students, and estimated \$226,000 in tuition revenue.**



ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

The academic side of the house quickly realized results with texting as well.

BUSINESS DEPARTMENT → Invite students to career advising sessions

THEATER DEPARTMENT → Invite prospective students to open house and plays

MATH DEPARTMENT → Assist new students with math placement questions

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT → Promote new classes to current students

Always evolving

Eric and the staff at GRCC constantly look for new ways to use the platform. For example, GRCC recently moved to year-long registration, something typically only done at 4-year institutions. It's a massive undertaking and a more coordinated effort was needed. With the efficiencies gained through texting, Student Success and Retention saw an immediate lift.

More and more staff members are viewing texting as an invaluable tool, and are becoming more strategic and proactive.

“The rapid adoption of texting across campus was fueled by clear and significant data.”

– Eric Mullen, Associate Dean of Enrollment Management and Financial Aid at GRCC

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