ellucian

How Bellarmine University Innovates with Experience

Bellarmine University is a successful private four-year institution based in Louisville. Unfortunately, their previous web dashboard was labor-intensive, time-consuming, and largely dependent on frequent maintenance by staff like Freddie Claypool, Bellarmine's Director of Enterprise Applications. Plus, since it was based on tech that was more than a decade old, it looked outdated. All that changed when Bellarmine decided to switch to Ellucian Experience.

"[Our old dashboard] had security concerns, and just like anything that had been in place for a long time, that portal had gotten—what's the Midwest phrase?—'long in the tooth'," Claypool said. "So we knew we had to find something else.

"Ellucian Experience came along at obviously the perfect time."

Experience's SaaS-based delivery means less time and money spent by the university keeping its system up and running, allowing staff to focus on better things than upkeep and tasks hindered by the limitations of on-premises technology.

Bellarmine spent three months preparing for their Fall 2023 deployment of Experience, during which time they made use of Ellucian-made cards and configured their own custom cards to individualize their instance of the platform. According to Bellarmine staff, the migration process was easy, modernized the school's dashboard, and is supporting student success with its countless helpful features.

BELLARMINE
UNIVERSITY

Case Study

Main Challenge
Bellarmine's web dashboard was unwieldy and antiquated.

Solutions
Ellucian Colleague
Ellucian Experience

Results
- SaaS delivery eliminates need for maintenance
- Customizable cards simplify content creation
- Experience model modernizes look and feel of hub

Democratizing Content Creation

Experience enables higher education institutions to create their own custom content in the form of cards that populate the web dashboard. While Experience comes with several pre-made cards, Ellucian customers can build their own to fit their institutions' needs. Bellarmine has taken advantage of this to make their instance of Experience truly their own.

"We've made great use of images and established icons on our cards," Claypool said. "For example, we have a system for our student athletes called 'Arms' and we made use of its icon to make it very easy for people who use that system to find that card."

Claypool also showed cards for those at Bellarmine to access the campus's radio station, a campus events calendar, their campus ministry, and more.

Recently, Bellarmine's registrar asked for an Experience card with access to several key resources. Their old hub had the links, but she couldn't find them in Experience. At the time, it didn't exist yet.

Staff built five custom cards in less than a half-hour and color-coordinated the cards to match Bellarmine's three instances of Colleague and Self-Service. They then linked them to the resources the registrar had asked.

Due to the ease-of-use Experience offers, Bellarmine has been able to deliver a plethora of content that streamlines daily tasks for students and staff, from a detailed weather card to a cleaner and more intuitive campus directory. Bellarmine's old directory linked to an external resource from its dashboard, whereas with Experience, everything takes place within the card.

Other cards that are already in use address parking permits, offer students a detailed view of courses, and provide other day-to-day solutions for students and staff alike—and since Experience looks the same on web as it does on mobile devices, none of Bellarmine's custom cards get lost in translation or need to be relearned.

Migrating Made Easy

Changing from one platform or system to another can be a real headache. There are so many new things to learn—and old things to unlearn—that users frequently get frustrated. One trick Bellarmine has used in its migration to Experience has been to keep as much visual consistency from their old hub to Experience as possible, in terms of things like color schemes.

"We have three Colleague environments," Claypool said. "We have production, but we also have a conversion environment and a development environment. We were very intentional with our color theming, so those

three colors that you see there are three of the primary colors identified by our marketing department. Let's say if I want to go to the conversion UI, once I click into that [from Experience], the color scheme of that UI is that same color from the card."

Seeing both solutions side-by-side tells a clear story: Bellarmine's previous hub was useful but nonetheless overladen with links, while Experience is a much more manageable dashboard. It's far less tightly packed with links, and several cards show individualized content to help their respective user find academic success. Experience keeps the heart and soul of the university's old web solution while bringing it into the future with customization and personalization.

As the new "front page" for Bellarmine, Experience is in use by the entire campus. Between students, staff, and faculty, that's 5,000 people going straight to Experience when they get onto Bellarmine's Internet services.

> "Everybody on our campus, whether they're a student, faculty, staff, whomever, they know the URL of Experience," Claypool said. "We expect people to go and use Experience as their single point of entry to all Bellarmine systems. We know that Ellucian has packaged Experience as being that single pane of glass that all future Ellucian applications will be delivered through and we've adopted that as our own."

"We want all of our community members to view Experience as being that single pane of glass."

Due to the school still being in its early days of deployment, their key metric so far has been word-of-mouth. The feedback staff have received from students and faculty has been overwhelmingly positive. Users call Experience a sleeker service with a more modern look than its predecessor. Claypool also pointed out that users have praised "the fact that they can make the dashboard their own."

Looking to the Future

Bellarmine's instance of Experience is up and running, but that doesn't mean the university is done innovating with its new hub. One idea Bellarmine staff are deploying Spring 2024 involves their card that shows a student's courses. This card will be expanded to the point that the student can check on individual assignments in each course through tight integration with their LMS, all in Experience.

A future update to Bellarmine's Experience dashboard will have a card for students and staff to check on their meal plans and number of remaining meals or money, using real-time data from Colleague, and add more to their account as needed. Those balances are also security trimmed, meaning they won't show up on the screen automatically. This measure is in place in case users are looking at their accounts in a public place and want to protect their privacy. Users can click to reveal the balances when they're comfortable doing so.

How will they manage their future with Experience? Claypool co-leads the Bellarmine Enterprise Systems Team (BEST) and he hopes to utilize them to guide the university's instance of Experience.

"I'm hoping that I can commission a subcommittee of our BEST team to take a greater emphasis in leading the future development of how Experience looks for us," he said. "It would be the charge of that group to help sort through the requests that we get from our community about what Experience can do—authorize new cards to be developed, figure out how to better train in those areas where training would be beneficial, that kind of stuff."

While Bellarmine's instance of Experience is new to them, Bellarmine staff also anticipate learning a lot from the data metrics available to them that will accrue in the near future. That knowledge will help Bellarmine— and BEST—plan for more innovations in Experience and optimize it for everyone on campus.