CASE STUDY

Expanding market reach and improving the experience for students and staff

Modernizing the management of non-credit offerings

Roger Williams University (RWU) is a private four-year institution in Rhode Island serving 5,400 students from around the country. In addition to undergraduate programs, graduate programs, and the state's only law school, RWU provides students of all ages with a wide array of workforce and professional development programs—most of which are housed in University College, one of its eight schools.

In the past, RWU has used the Ellucian Colleague® Instant Enrollment module to manage non-credit offerings. However, spotting significant potential to grow enrollment from this key sector—as well as to better serve the region's workforce and professional development needs—the university decided to seek a more tailored, modern technology solution.

"Instant Enrollment just wasn't in line with what our staff or students expected," says Carolyn Dias, assistant dean, Operations and Special Projects, University College. "We needed something more modern, nimble, and reliable."

Roger Williams University

Enrollment
5,400 students

Primary Challenge
Grow market share with non-credit offerings, improve student and staff experience

Solution
Ellucian Elevate

Results
Greater efficiency
Improved user experience
Increased revenue

Choosing a new, more effective system

RWU wanted a solution that would offer everything needed to better serve constituents, as well as expand further into the non-credit market. Another key deciding factor would be how well the software integrated with other systems used on campus.

The university explored a number of alternatives. This included a couple of options built on the Salesforce platform. "Salesforce wasn't as affordable as it first appeared once you started looking more closely," says Brian Kacmarsky, director of administrative systems, IT. "Plus we didn't have a developer on staff with knowledge of the system, which would have made integration more difficult."

RWU has been an Ellucian customer for more than 20 years, using various solutions. So when looking for a new non-traditional program management solution, RWU decided to also consider Ellucian Elevate®.

In contrast to Instant Enrollment, Elevate is a comprehensive solution designed to manage every aspect of an institution's continuing education and workforce development program. A SaaS offering that seamlessly integrates with Ellucian Colleague and Ellucian Banner®, it offers increased efficiency for staff, an improved, mobile-friendly experience for students and partners, and easier access to data that enables faster decision making.

"Ultimately, we chose Elevate because it's purpose-built for these types of programs, it would greatly enhance our user experience, and the integration is built right in it," says Kacmarsky. "We also saw over our deliberation time period how Ellucian was really investing in and standing behind the product."

Becoming a nimble, twenty-first century operation

Since implementing the new system, RWU reports that it has already made management of its non-credit programs far more efficient and effective. The software automates time-consuming processes—including registration, collection of documents, credit card refunds, and creation of completion certificates. Staff can also build classes easily and quickly on demand, without needing IT support.

"Elevate is not only opening us up to a new market, but also the incredible efficiencies we've gained have made this such a good move," says Dias. "As we move forward using this type of open-market approach to enrollment, we can serve a lot more students and really grow our programs."

Dias notes that the first non-credit program to adopt the new software is going to be one of the College of Workforce and Professional Development's most successful programs this year. **And the college as a whole is on track to double its revenue.**

In addition, the modern solution offers real-time information on enrollment and key financials like profitability, allowing RWU to make more informed decisions about program management and prevent course-related losses before they occur. "We're also able to work better with our finance office for reconciliation purposes, because the reporting in the system is great and the data is very good, so that's been a dramatic improvement," says Dias.

Meeting the expectations of today's students

RWU's student- and partner-facing experience has also changed significantly. Having a cloud-based solution enables anytime, anywhere enrollment and immediate,
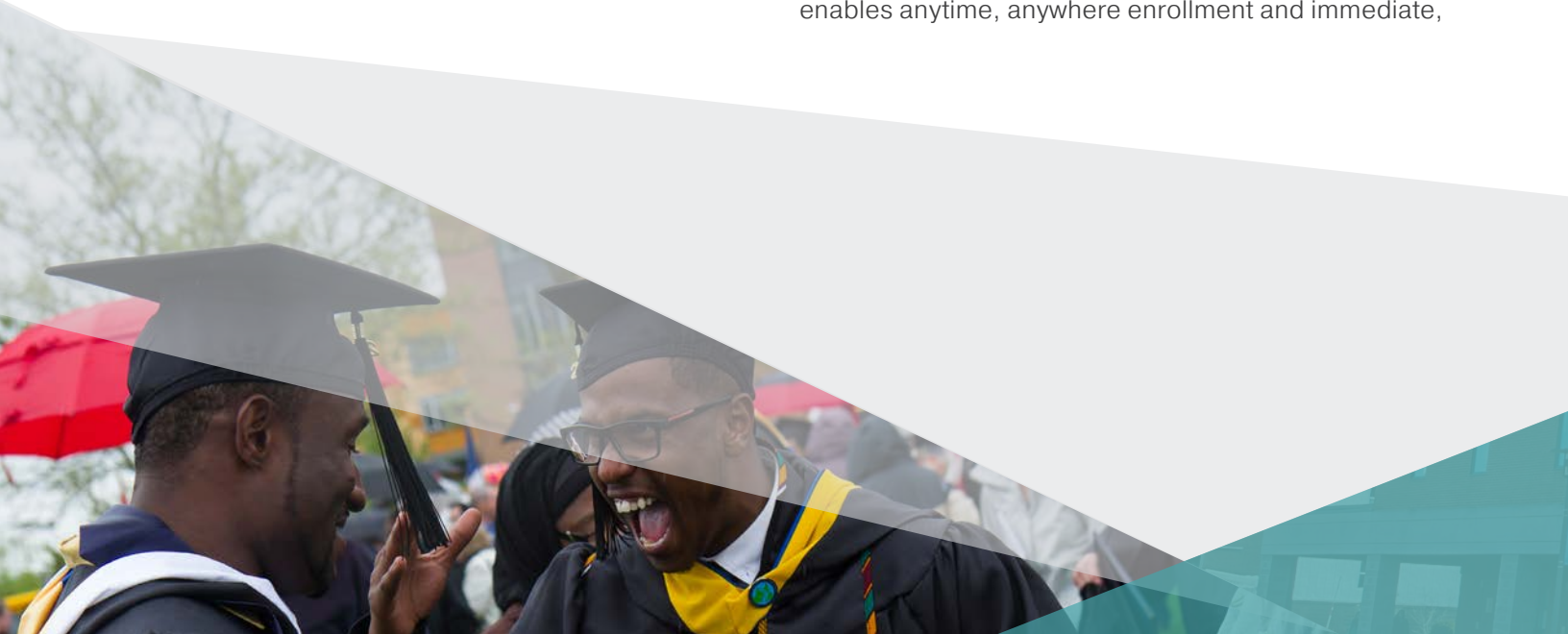
personalized communications, which today's constituents expect. And as these expectations continue to evolve, so does the software through continuous product improvements that customers receive from regular SaaS releases.

"Students, as well as our community and corporate partners, are used to a consumer-friendly online shopping experience in all areas of their lives," says Kacmarsky. "In order to remain competitive, we have to make registering and paying for classes easy and secure. And we need to communicate in a relevant, timely manner. Elevate makes all this possible."

Ensuring a seamless launch

Kacmarsky described the launch as "the smoothest implementation I've ever experienced." RWU had an aggressive timeline, and Ellucian's rapid, outcomes-based implementation methodology, combined with great collaboration with the RWU team, resulted in a fluid process and quick time-to-value.

The process began with a comprehensive project scoping exercise that included multiple stakeholders from both organizations. Together, they developed a highly detailed plan for implementation, which outlined what to expect at each stage along with the timelines, cost, training required, and list of stakeholders associated with every task. The plan was tailored specifically to the university's needs and objectives.

"From the very beginning, everything was so clearly presented, and we were prepared for everything," says Kacmarsky.

Once the project plan was complete, RWU followed an agile deployment process, which involved a series of sprints—each focused on specific features and functions. Throughout the process, the university was able to track everything through a My Projects

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Assistant Dean, Operations and Special Projects, University College

site, which supports dynamic collaboration and communication. The My Projects site provided RWU with real-time information on everything from project schedules and deliverables to milestones and sign-offs. All of the training materials and meeting recordings were also made available on the project site if questions arose during testing or for future use, such as when new staff need to be brought up to speed.

"We appreciated how flexible the process was," says Dias. "If something came up and the university had to reschedule training, it was immediately rescheduled and the project was always kept on track. Communication was really transparent. And, even now during post-implementation, Ellucian understands the urgency of getting any issue resolved and responds to us quickly with assistance."

"The most impressive thing for me from a technical standpoint was that Ellucian had an individual expert to cover every piece of the pie," says Kevin LeClair, RWU's Colleague and system administrator. "We've gone through a number of different implementations with Ellucian, and with third-party vendors, and this was by far the smoothest. Everything about the process was fantastic."

RWU was able to meet their aggressive implementation timeline, launching Elevate in under four months. "We came in on time, under budget, and at the end of the process, we were able to take off and run with the system, own it, and operate it without constantly having to go back," says Dias.

Looking ahead

Next, RWU plans to roll Elevate out to non-credit programs outside of University College. "Now that we have a twenty-first century system here, our institution can achieve the revenue goals and the potential that is out there for us on the non-credit side. The sky is the limit for this," says Dias.

Dias' advice to others considering the solution: "Definitely move forward and implement the system. As soon as you start really understanding what the solution offers, you'll know the potential out there, not just for the efficiencies to be gained, but for the revenue to be earned."

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KEVIN LeCLAIR
Colleague and System Administrator, Roger Williams University

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