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Engage2Serve Insight

Building Adoption of Student Mobile Apps on Campus

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With most students spending hours a day on their smartphones and email response rates dropping dramatically, colleges and universities are concluding that a strong campus mobile strategy is essential. Colleges are introducing campus engagement apps that students can download to get access to a wealth of information and resources related to the college. Fortunately, they are seeing that the level of student engagement that can be generated through a mobile app can make a strong contribution to student engagement and success.

But once a college creates a mobile app for students, it will have no value if students do not download it and refer to it frequently. Building adoption thus becomes a primary challenge for colleges attempting to implement a successful mobile strategy on campus.

Engage2Serve provides mobile technologies for Higher Education through our *e2s Mobile+* campus engagement app. Based on our experience partnering with colleges who have adopted the app, we can offer some recommendations for maximising the utilisation of a student app at your college:

1. Start Early:

Encourage students to download and use your app even before they enrol at the college. Apps can be a great tool to give prospective students detailed information about the college's academics, student life, and community. *Applied students* can use the app to submit documents and check the status of their

application. *Accepted students* can use the app to schedule campus visits or submit enrolment documents. The more you can get students using your app before they come to campus, the more likely they will be to use the app frequently as enroled students.

2. Leverage your Orientation:

The time when students are most in need of a wealth of information about your college is usually their first few days on campus. Most colleges schedule some sort of Orientation when new students can register for classes, meet other students, and start getting their bearings on campus. You may want to require new students to download the app as one of their first activities. You might even integrate the app into some of the Orientation activities, such as using the Campus Map as a tool for a scavenger hunt or challenging new students to identify faculty members based on photos in the Campus Directory.

3. Offer a comprehensive set of student tools:

The greater the number of useful tools available on the app, the more your students will view it as a "go-to" resource for anything related to the college. If the app offers a comprehensive set of resources, students will refer to it frequently, and may even create viral adoption as other students see how helpful the app can be. Campus events, news, social media links, directories, and maps can all be useful links on your college's mobile app. Links to specific pages on your college's web site or outside tools like an LMS will add even more richness to the mobile experience.

4. Ensure that Faculty and Staff are utilising the app:

One of the strongest benefits of a student mobile app is that it can enable faculty and staff to communicate with students in ways that will "break through the clutter" of traditional email messaging. Mobile notifications can be used to send messages directly to student smartphones, either individually, to select groups of students, or to all of your students. Chat and text features can also be used to connect directly with students. The *e2s Mobile+* app even offers a way for students to schedule appointments with teachers, advisors or other staff members with a few clicks on the app. The more that faculty and staff embrace these new communications options, they more effectively they will be able to engage and support students.

5. Include ways that students can engage with each other:

An app can not only be a great way for students to engage and communicate with staff and faculty, but also a vehicle for them to connect more closely with other students at the college. A "Groups and Communities" function can provide a means for students to stay in contact among themselves regarding clubs, activities, or common interests that they share. Students may even request groups related to major areas of study or particular classes, effectively providing them with an online study group or peer support vehicle.

6. Ask students what they want:

Student focus groups, surveys, or informal discussions with students can help you uncover the mobile app resources that will be most popular, often with surprising results. You will also want to keep in mind that student information needs will change over time, perhaps even within a single semester. You may, for instance, want to emphasise finals schedules at the end of the semester or Financial Aid resources as FAFSA's become due.

7. Don't let it get stale:

You will want to keep continuous focus on providing students with information that is useful and appealing. Reporting available from the app that identifies the level of usage of each of the functions can help. If you see that certain functions are infrequently accessed by students, you can use that as an opportunity to rearrange the app icons or try out something new.

8. Get creative:

Students will respond if you make using the app fun. Games and contests tied to app usage can be a great way to build adoption. One college even raffles off a new car every year, with an entry generated each time a student accesses their college mobile app.

By listening to students, paying close attention to their information needs, and making it fun, you can ensure that your college is getting the greatest benefit from your college's mobile app.

About Us

Engage2Serve (e2s) is a global provider of student lifecycle solutions for higher and further education. Our product suite optimises how institutions engage and serve diverse student populations using the powerful portals and mobile apps for students and staff members.

Together we help you build meaningful, personalised relationships with students, guiding them through the entire student lifecycle journey via digital empowerment and best practices that enhances recruitment, student success, and advancement.

Learn more at www.engage2serve.com

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