Personalizing the New-Student Onboarding Experience

HighEdWeb 2015 Conference - #TIE9
Presenters

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Who is Cedarville?

- Private liberal arts college founded in 1887
- Southwest Ohio
- Primarily residential undergraduate students
- 3,711 undergraduate, graduate, and online students
Onboarding Students Without Waterboarding Them

The Title that Almost Was
Why?

Our common goal is to move admitted students to matriculated students -- to get them to board our train.
“iGens desire authentic, personalized outreach from people similar to them. Of those surveyed, 43% stated personal contact influenced their decision to attend a college or university, such as one-on-one communication with a current student or engaging content such as videos.”

SOURCE: BusinessWire.com, "Class of 2020 Wants Colleges and Universities to Ditch Email, Viewbooks and Non-Personalized Communications", November 12, 2014
New Connections Checkpoint

As you anticipate coming to Cedarville this fall, it’s time to start thinking about life on campus. Access our RoomSync app to get to know potential roommates, learn about the housing selection process that begins later this spring, and meet other future Cedarville students in our private online community on Facebook.

Watch your mail and email for your Checkpoint #1 notification in early March!

TO DO

☐ Reserve Your Spot
Confirm your plans to enroll at Cedarville this fall. Pay your reservation deposit.

☐ Join Cedarville’s private online community on Facebook
Join today, and meet your future classmates and friends in a safe, private social network. It’s the place to be for all future Cedarville students!

☐ Find Your Roommate via RoomSync
RoomSync is a roommate matching software to help you in finding your roommate. It’s your choice whether you use it, but many students find this Facebook app helpful in searching around.

☐ Register for All-Access Orientation, an exclusive event for accepted students.
Register today and plan to attend either March 14 or April 11. Exclusively for accepted students, this event will allow you to experience campus life and learn about the resources available to you. It’s a great opportunity to meet other potential roommates and learn more about the college experience. The event will include a tour of Campus with an Orientation Leader and sessions on academic life, campus resources, and financial planning.
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Frustrations

“I did this task that you told me to and it is still there when I go back!”
Key Issues

- Inconsistent reporting of task status
- Constant messaging of the same task, even though the user may have done it
- Static and impersonal
Solution Key Tenants

- Create our own private Facebook group
- Create a device-agnostic website
- Centralize communication
- Feature their personal counselor
High School Student Confusion

How do students want to be communicated to during the onboarding process?

SOURCE: RuffaloCody Student Perceptions and Behaviors 2014: How to Engage Them
Phase 1

- Create a private Facebook group
  - establish community
  - increase relational touch points
Phase 1 Hurdles

● Normal vs. App/Game facebook group
● You cannot just add users; the user has to authorize this action. But it used to be a thing:

  ● Add user to group by API removed - Apps can no longer add any user to a group via API. They can only add users that have a role on the app (admins, developers, testers, test users).

● Doh.
Welcome, Mark!

You're successfully connected to Facebook! Now, you're just one click away from becoming a member of our "Class of 2019" group. Just click the "Add Me" button below and confirm the Facebook prompts when you see them.
Phase 2

Communication and Personalization
Welcome, Mark!

Your To Do List:

- Online Resources
  - Financial Aid
    - View My Scholarships
    - Complete Form
  - Parent Resources
  - Academics
    - ACAJH
    - Be the crazy one

My Financial Aid

My Admissions Counselor

Facebook Group

Email

Date

Date

Date

Date
Phase 2 Implementation

- Incorporated most of original ideas into final product
- Support for task interdependencies
- Tasks can be delivered based on certain criteria
- Tasks that can autocomplete
Phase 2 Pilot Group

Selection of incoming students that we knew would come even if their MyCedarville experience bombed :)

Aw, Snap!

We initially forgot about commuters when we required that they do the “submit housing request” task.
Survey

43% response rate
How often did you log into the portal?

- Often (weekly): 72%
- Occasionally (monthly): 20.2%
- Seldom (a few times or less): 5%
- Never: 2.8%
Did you give your parent(s) your log-in and password to access My.Cedarville.edu?

Yes: 58.7%
No: 41.3%
Did your parent(s) help you complete tasks?

Yes, with all the tasks. 0.3%
Yes, with many of the tasks. 17.1%
Yes, with some of the tasks. 64.2%
No, not with any of the tasks. 18.4%
Did you join the Class of 2019 Facebook group?

- Yes, and I participated in discussion. 38.9%
- Yes, but I only observed. 49.2%
- No, but I do use Facebook. 6%
- No, because I don't use Facebook. 6%
What methods of communication prompted you to check the portal for new tasks?

- Postcard: 21.5%
- Email: 85.5%
- Text: 33.4%
- Other: 6%
Postcard

Not Helpful

[Bar chart with bars for ratings 1 to 5, with a red arrow pointing to the 'Not Helpful' text]
Email

Not Helpful 〇 〇 〇 〇 Very Helpful

Bar chart showing responses to 'Email' with a range of 0 to 160 for each response level.
Overall, how easy was it to use the My.Cedarville.edu portal?
Tasks Completed Over Time

Total # Tasks Completed

February

August
Rev 2 Updates

- Added significantly more google analytics tracking events
- Expanded to handle future terms more gracefully
- Expanded to handle no valid applications more gracefully
- Starting much earlier (fall instead of winter)
What’s Next?
Key Takeaways

- Integrate social media at a deeper level
- Increase relational touchpoints
- Evaluate data that can be personalized
- Improve user experience with personalization
“Coming to college is a huge transition and an overwhelming experience so it helped to keep me calm in the midst of that process.”
“It helped connect me with both people and objectives which helped me to get connected and involved.”
“I do not need all the postcards in the mail.”
Q&A for #TIE9

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