How Ellucian Ethos Boosts Efficiency at Hawkeye

Like many higher education institutions, Hawkeye Community College—located in Waterloo, Iowa—is modernizing its operations. Hawkeye is updating its tech solutions systematically while being careful to avoid costly mistakes. Before integrating their systems and automating tasks with Ellucian Ethos, some processes at the school were still done with pen and paper.

Among them, staff said, was their student course evaluations. Processing these surveys manually was time-consuming and labor-intensive. However, according to Mrs. Jamie Dewitz, Associate Director of Communication and Information Systems at Hawkeye, it wasn't the only operation at the school that needed updating. In fact, their inaugural task for Ethos was something else entirely—and based on how it went, it certainly won't be their last.

Streamlining Textbook Processes

Hawkeye first used Ethos to solve an unusual pain point. A new partnership with an online bookstore also introduced a new textbook rental program. At the time that Hawkeye partnered with them, the bookstore had no online solution for opting students out of the program. Instead, all students defaulted to being opted into it, which would charge students a fixed rate per enrolled credit hour—regardless of whether the student needed books or not.

"We didn't see how that was fair to students who didn't need to use that program, so we created an opt-out system," Dewitz said.

"It looked like a very simple webpage on the surface. It showed the user's Ellucian Colleague ID and radio buttons to allow a student to 'opt-in' or

Case Study

Main Challenge

Student evaluations and other processes were still done on pen and paper at Hawkeye.

Solutions

Ellucian Colleague
Ellucian Ethos

Results

- Ethos saves time and effort over manual processing of evaluations
- Staff are notified when students drop courses
- Ethos integrates systems like Hawkeye's evaluation system and SIS

'opt-out' of the rental program. In the background, Ethos was sending the student's name and ID, the term date, and the date that student submitted their rental status, all in real-time, to Colleague. The seamless integration helped the Business Services office know whether or not to charge students for their textbook rentals. That's what made us want to utilize Ethos: We wanted that textbook opt-out information from students to come straight into Colleague as quickly and accurately as possible."

By integrating the opt-out system between Ethos and Colleague, Hawkeye didn't have to build behind-the-scenes database connections. It may seem simple compared to some of the major operations in higher ed tech, like migrating from on-premise software to SaaS, but it's a microcosm for Hawkeye's future. Dewitz credited the school's forward-thinking attitude regarding its opt-out system to Hawkeye's ambitions to become a SaaS school, and this was just one way to dip their toe in the water.

"We want to eventually move to the SaaS platform and we know that building integrations behind-the-scenes through the database level isn't something we're going to be using in the future," she said. "We want to really make sure that for our integrations from here on out, we don't need to 'double work' everything."

Working with Multiple Solutions

Since deploying Ethos in 2021, Dewitz and Hawkeye have started using it for more system integrations with Ellucian partner solutions that have proven beneficial to the school during its modernization process. For example, Hawkeye has worked with SmartEvals and are currently in the process of becoming DualEnroll's first Ethos customer. They also utilize the Ellucian Intelligent Learning Platform (ILP).

> "When we have third-party vendors that have worked with Ethos, they can say 'Oh yeah, we're confident that it works; it's just plug-and-play from here on out,' that's been nice," Dewitz said.

Hawkeye's partnership with Ellucian has earned praise from Dewitz as well as some of her colleagues. Jodi Dinsdale, Assistant to Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, also spoke about Ethos's integrations with SmartEvals and other processes.

"Using Ethos has eliminated the need for using the antiquated 'paper-and-pen' approach when it comes to student evaluations and choosing to opt out of the textbook rental program, as that's how it had been done prior to adopting Ethos," Dinsdale said. "[The opt-out form] was created to make the student experience easier and I think it accomplished that."

Surveying Students to Plan for Tomorrow

Ethos's work with SmartEvals and ILP have also gained popularity with Kari Kaufman, Director of Institutional Research at Hawkeye.

"Administrative staff appreciates that the Ethos connection allows our student course evaluation software, SmartEvals, to be virtually hands-off," Kaufman said. "The Ethos upload automatically keeps the rosters, sections, and faculty information up-to-date. All that's left is for the system to send out the evaluations to the correct students on the preset days."

Kaufman also mentioned that since SmartEvals talks to their student information system through Ethos, Hawkeye staff can upload a plethora of data elements in addition to its traditional data. They can also import the class modality to send out custom evaluation forms to students who may have taken the course online or in-person, asking questions specific to those modalities.

"Because Ethos can relay who has dropped courses, we can survey students who withdrew from the course with a specific 'dropped course' survey," she said. "We couldn't do that with the paper-and-pen surveys because those students were no longer in the classrooms to complete the survey."

Future-Proofing Today

Dewitz said that the biggest benefit Ethos offers Hawkeye is future-proofing. When any higher education institution migrates to SaaS, there are plenty of things to concern itself with in order to ensure a smooth change. Now that Hawkeye is integrating all its systems, they'll have far fewer things to worry about when they migrate, such as having to recreate cloud-based counterparts for existing software. In fact, Ethos and its integrations are already saving the staff time while they're still on the on-premise version of Ellucian Colleague—something they sorely needed.

> "What we appreciate most is that we don't have to continually monitor Ethos," Dewitz said.

"Right now, with Colleague being maintained in-house, we need to make sure each individual connection is back up and running after we're done with scheduled maintenance. We don't need to do that with our Ethos applications. We have the opportunity to function with a 'set it and forget it' mindset, which is a great feeling.

"It's a breath of fresh air."

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