



# SUNY Stony Brook Reimagines the Scholarship Experience

ScholarshipUniverse

Financial barriers are the #1 obstacle keeping millions of students from pursuing and completing their degrees. Administrative professionals in financial aid, enrollment, and student affairs are tasked with finding solutions that help students overcome these hurdles—in effect aiding in the recruitment and retention of these students. One critical way of doing this is creating a streamlined scholarship application and management process that helps students unlock the funding they need.

Stony Brook University's Director of Financial Aid Nick Prewett realized that his team would need help reimagining their scholarship management structure to prioritize ease of use for students, and time efficiency for staff. "We saw a need to update the way we were processing scholarships." He and his team began the search for a tool that would move them away from a manual process to a digital-forward one they could centralize from multiple sources across campus.

## Leaving Outdated Scholarship Management Behind

There was a time at Stony Brook when staff spent valuable time managing paper-based requisitions and working in a system that was not centralized for the needs of students or the efficiency of staff. This process resulted in challenges identifying funding for scholarships and exactly which students were receiving the awards. The conversation about adopting a scholarship management solution gained traction after Prewett and his team began to look more



Stony Brook  
University

## CASE STUDY

### Main Challenge

Replacing an outdated system

### Solutions

ScholarshipUniverse

### Results

- Accelerated fund utilization
- Increased efficiency through automation
- Seamless student experience
- Time savings for staff

closely at the amount of scholarship funds going undistributed at the end of each year. **They identified nearly one million dollars in aid that was being underutilized due to several factors and realized the opportunities they had to maximize aid distribution.**

40% of Stony Brook's 27,000 student population are Pell grant eligible, and those same students are graduating from the university at a higher rate than their ineligible counterparts. As a flagship of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, this graduation trend makes the school a bit of an outlier amongst other public universities. Moreover, it underscores the importance of ensuring that students have their financial needs met so they can focus their time and energy on excelling in their path to the graduation stage.

## Creating Efficiency Through a Fluid PeopleSoft Integration

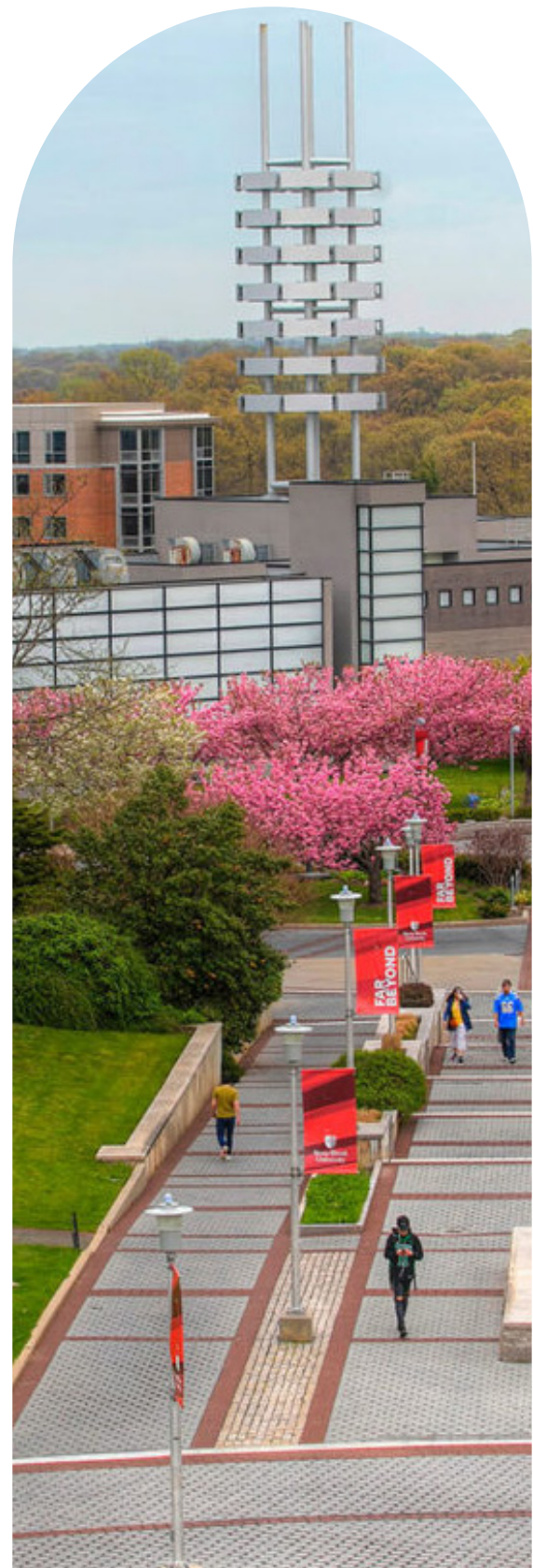
The solution for Stony Brook was streamlining the student and staff experience with ScholarshipUniverse, an SIS-agnostic student and scholarship matchmaker that streamlines scholarship management from application through awarding. Automation and simplicity combine with a vetted external scholarship database of thousands of awards to create a modern solution. With an adaptive matching engine, automated alerts and SIS integration, ScholarshipUniverse accelerates fund utilization and keeps more students on course.

Prewett explained that his team's decision to implement ScholarshipUniverse over other tools boiled down to a guiding question, "Here's what our student information system is, what can this scholarship management system do with that to make things easier for us as administrators and easier for the students?"

For Stony Brook students, the integration between ScholarshipUniverse and PeopleSoft created a seamless experience. Students—who are becoming increasingly digitally tapped in—expect personalization when and wherever possible. The ScholarshipUniverse and PeopleSoft integration allowed students to continue using their existing login information, even within a platform that was new to them. Applying for scholarships became even easier for students with pre-populated biographical information speeding up the application process.

## The ScholarshipUniverse Impact for Staff

Students aren't the only population on campus who benefit from a digital forward scholarship management process. According to



Prewett, there were immediate time savings for staff, “Moving away from an Excel-based awarding process into a dynamic online platform saved a significant amount of time.”

After implementing ScholarshipUniverse, the financial aid and advancement offices were empowered to make better use of more than just time. Implementing ScholarshipUniverse created an opportunity for Stony Brook to thoroughly audit each endowed scholarship and its requirements while inputting awards into the platform. This process, which Prewett called “self-discovery,” allowed his team to confirm that funds were truly being awarded to students in a manner that met the intended criteria set forth in the original endowment.

“One of the biggest outcomes we’ve had with ScholarshipUniverse is making sure that our scholarships are really targeted towards the recruitment and the retention of students as opposed to just rewarding.”

**Nick Prewett**

Director of Financial Aid  
Stony Brook University

Beyond that, the team began having some critical discussions about why certain scholarship funds had not been awarded and how those funds could be utilized creatively and strategically.

## Supercharge Your Scholarship Management

Bringing any new technology onto your campus requires a commitment across teams to solve multiple problems. With the right solution, that investment can be extremely worthwhile for both students and staff, but it’s important to get it right the first time. That means finding a solution that solves your core problems and integrates well with the other solutions your team is currently using.



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