

Community college strategically plans a long-term solution



About Hawkeye Community College

Since Hawkeye Community College opened its doors in 1966, it has focused on meeting the needs of the community, providing quality, affordable training for learners at all stages of life. The two-year, public college in Waterloo, Iowa, serves more than 25,000 individuals and awards almost 1,500 diplomas and degrees annually with a focus on community impact and lifelong learning.

Solution used

RNL Strategic Enrollment Planning

About RNL Complete Enrollment

RNL Complete Enrollment gives you the most advanced platform for meeting these big enrollment management challenges. It delivers the research, data, expertise, analytics, and technology to sustain success across all areas of enrollment.

A challenging environment

After facing several semesters of decline in headcount and credit hour enrollment, the college began searching for a way to stop the downward trend, which was sparked by a low regional unemployment rate, new state funding guidelines that shifted competition to in-state schools, and declining population in the predominantly rural area served in northeastern Iowa.

“There are so many factors, but the heart of it is changing demographics,” said Kathy Flynn, vice president of enrollment services. “Iowa is an aging state. Over 60 percent of our K-12 school districts have a declining enrollment. In a state where you’re seeing that pattern, you’re going to have issues.”

Hawkeye needed to develop new strategies to boost recruitment and retention immediately, as well as in the future.

Establishing a plan

The college’s partnership with Ruffalo Noel Levitz began in 2014 with RNL Strategic Enrollment Planning. Throughout multiple campus visits, RNL helped Hawkeye uncover many roadblocks and identify pivotal front-end recruitment and retention projects that had major impact in the short-term. RNL consultants strategized with Hawkeye for the future with long-range projects designed to help the college reap the benefits over time.

- They launched an intercollegiate athletics program, starting with competitive sports shooting and slowly expanding to include additional sports. The campus has seen great success from adding athletics in a sustainable way.

“It was a very conservative approach that took into consideration what facilities we had, so we didn’t have to build new, what community partnerships could exist, and student interest,” Flynn said. “We insist that it’s about student success first in the classroom. It’s not about a top athlete. What they’ve brought to campus is remarkable in terms of diversity.”

- The college invested in a CRM that would keep information in one place and assist them in communicating more effectively with interested students. Hawkeye is better able to track prospects and harness the power of analytics to find gaps.
- The academic advising system was revamped, providing enhanced student support and placing success coaches in key buildings to be accessible to students.
- They also developed career academy centers, linking Hawkeye with local high schools to create opportunities for high school students who are interested in specific career and technical programs.

A successful initiative

By implementing these initiatives, the college was able to achieve the following:

- Slowing and reversing a multi-year enrollment decline, growing FTE enrollment by 53 students in 2016 (from 4,354 in 2015 to 4,407 in 2016).
- A nearly 5 percent increase in headcount, from 5,219 students in 2014 to 5,532 students in 2016.
- A 1.2 percent increase in credit hours from fall 2015 to fall 2016.

The college continues to see increased campus morale as a result of the positive changes. Faculty and staff have embraced the new initiatives and work together to reach their goals.

“It’s made a real difference to many people, and the results just reinforce those positive feelings,” said Dr. Jane Bradley, provost and vice president of academic affairs.

The Hawkeye team is continuing to refine their strategic enrollment plan, and exploring strategic, active outreach to continue growing enrollment at a steady and realistic rate.

“The planning process is so well-defined that it gives us the confidence to do things that involve a little risk,” Flynn said. “When the plan comes together, it’s very rewarding. But it doesn’t mean our work is over—far from it. It should never end.”

KEY RESULTS

53 MORE
STUDENTS ENROLLED
IN 2016 VS. 2015

5% INCREASE
IN STUDENT HEADCOUNT

1.2% INCREASE
IN CREDIT HOURS FROM
2015 TO 2016

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Kathy Flynn
Vice President of Enrollment
Services at Hawkeye
Community College