

Recognizing and Supporting the Unique Needs of Online Graduate Students





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Agenda

- OHIO Online's student-centric approach
- Delivering on Experience
 - Transitioning a program to internal OHIO Online support
 - Advocating for Online Students
 - Delivering Meaningful Career Services
 - Providing Access to Mental Health Services
- Are the needs of online students unique?

How are the
needs of online
students unique?



OHIO Online's Student-centric approach

OHIO UNIVERSITY



#1

Best Value Public University in Ohio 4 years in a row (*U.S. News & World Report*)

R1

Prestigious classification for research institutions

1st

Athens ranked Best College Town in Ohio

28k+

students enrolled in all campuses and online



OHIO
UNIVERSITY

ONLINE



#1

College in Ohio for
online education

60+

Online degree
programs

#53

Ranked America's
Top Online Colleges

55%

OHIO's graduate
students enrolled in
online programs



OHIO Online Students

- 55% of OHIO's graduate and 20% of undergraduate population
- They are working professionals.
 - Top driver is career progression
 - Juggling career, family, finances in addition to school
 - Pay for programs with student loans, personal savings, and some employer benefits
 - Scholarship opportunities are limited
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrBA4wvG0Fw&t=1s>



OHIO Online Organization

Cohesive Strategy

Market, operations, portfolio

Student Experience

Consistent high quality student experience
from inquiry to commencement

Infrastructure

Built to support the strategy and experience

Enhancing the student experience

- Raise the visibility and understanding of our online student population within Ohio University
- Create a consistent, high-quality experience for students across the institution
- Make it easier to become and to be an online student at OHIO
- Create a welcoming and engaging experience for online students
- Provide meaningful and appropriate support to online students



Online ≠ Invisible



- Communications
- Website
- Campus offices
- Support services
- Community engagement
- Belonging
- Navigation

Transitioning to OHIO Online Support: MSW

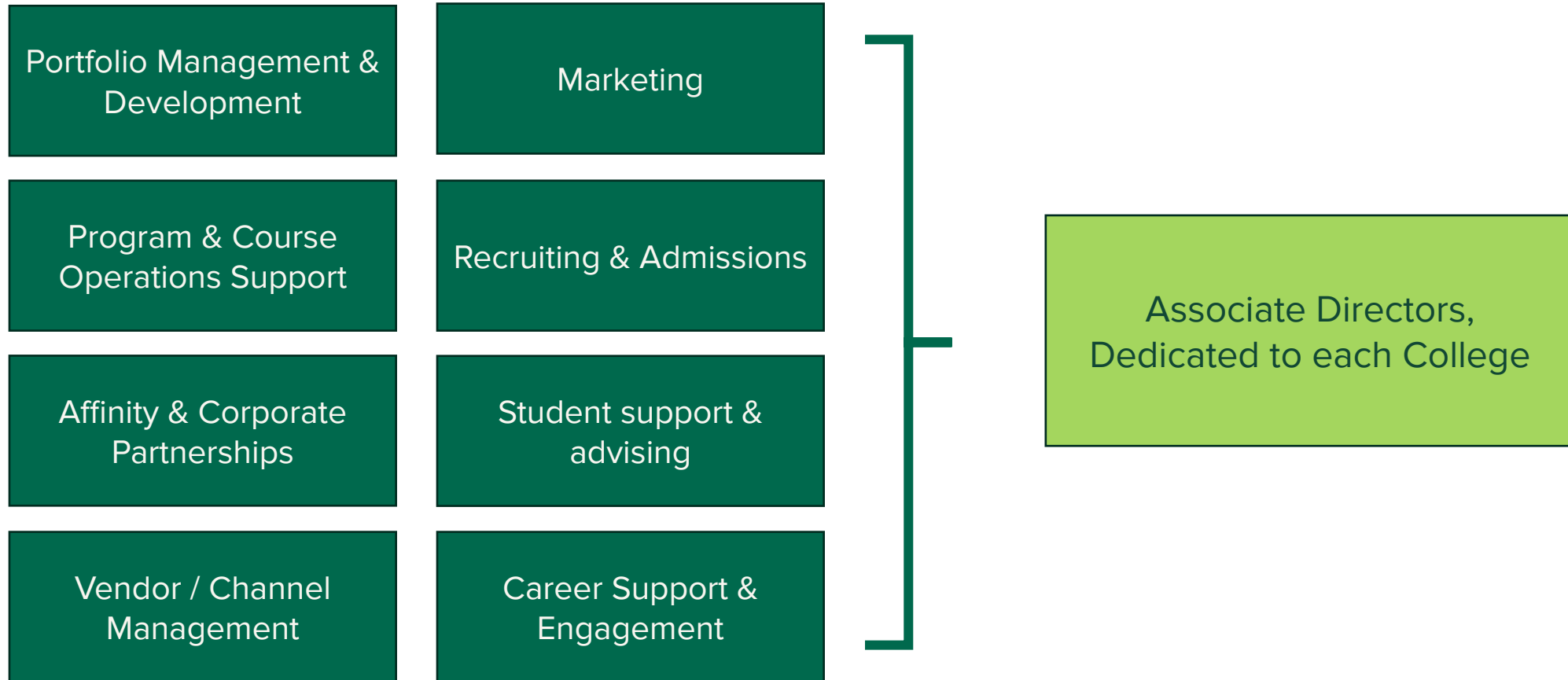
MSW Program Transition

- Transitioned from Vendor to Internal
- Issues
 - High volume of student experience concerns
 - Clunky admissions process
 - Overwhelmed program leadership
 - Too many points of contact required to solve problems
 - Misinformation at every part of the student lifecycle



Enhancing Faculty, Program, and College Experience

Services originate from multiple campus units; we're organized to help navigate.



Relationship First Program Management

- Dedicated Weekly Meetings with Program Leadership
 - Review enrollment funnels, establish swim lanes
 - OHIO Online owns the process
 - Program Leadership owns the knowledge
 - Teams of Two for Enrollment and Retention Support
 - Builds redundancy and consistency in the student experience
- How did this clear up misinformation?

Relationship First Program Management

- Student Retention Strategy
 - Student Success Team has access to technology solutions to review student performance in real time
 - Weekly program meetings escalate student concerns from the success team and the faculty simultaneously
 - Working meetings create timely retention action plans for each student
 - Establish Trust in the Faculty/Staff Relationship
- Early Alert Metrics
 - LMS Log In Data
 - Grade Less than a B
 - Missing Assignments
- Reengagement Strategy
 - Accessible degree plans based on student planned return date
 - Planned check in communication regardless of enrollment status
 - Discuss process barriers for future enrollment that can be removed
 - Motivational support

Outcomes: Pain Point Reduction

- Students
 - Clear understanding of program expectations
 - App decisions are timely
 - Student report high level of responsiveness to needs
 - Stop Outs have an easy plan of action for programmatic return
- Program Director
 - Improved quality of leads, recruiting students who are better aligned with program goals
 - High level of student performance awareness has reduced time spent on reactive student issues
 - Increased organizational support has reduced cognitive workload, email volume, and ad hoc meeting frequency

Quote from the program director

“Spring 24 was 500% better than our experience with the vendor by any measure. I never knew it could be so easy to work with a partner like this.

Between the strong quality of the leads and knowing our students were getting the correct information during the enrollment process, we feel like the program is targeting the right students. As a result, our student experience issues are much lower and the time we spend on retention efforts has been reduced.”

Advocating for Online Population: GoOHIO App



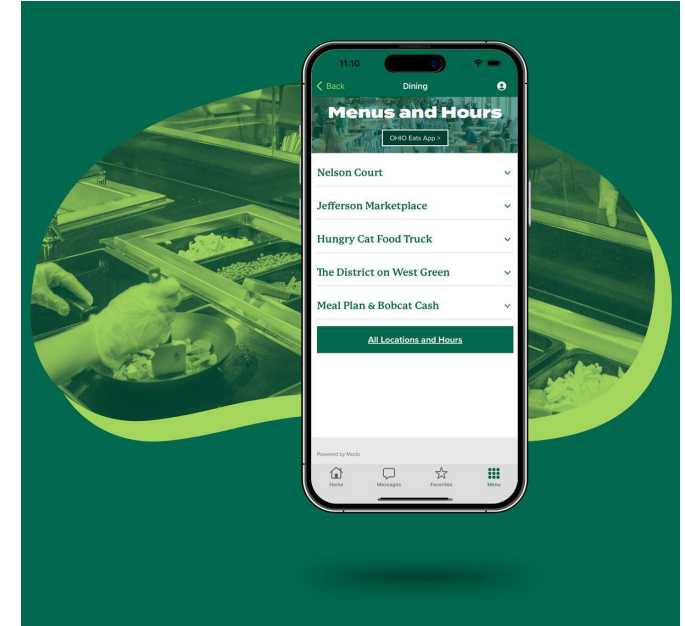
Campus Population Bias

- Go Ohio App
 - Roll out a phone app to support OHIO student experience
 - Project run by a Main Campus technology group
 - Minimal input from OHIO Online Team
- Student Population Personas
 - Main Campus
 - Regional Campus
 - Online
 - Graduate



Online Persona Assumptions

- Students modality is fluid
- Resources are equally available to all
- Student navigation and needs are independent of modality
- Online students have the same needs regardless of program
- University staff interact with all students the same way



- What other assumptions have been made?
- How was this problematic?

OHIO Online Response

- Advocate
 - Step in and pause the process.
 - How do we minimally disrupt and confuse students?
- Educate
 - Clarify online learner populations (Program vs Course Learner).
 - Provide data about the online user experiences to inform app development.
 - Discuss use cases specific to the online population.



- Own the Process
 - How do we step in to help finish the project and reflect the online populations?
 - What are the communication needs?
 - How do we stay involved for future projects?

Outcomes

- Creation of Two New Personas
 - Online Undergrad
 - Online Graduate
- New information that strengthened the overall product
- Tailored communication for online students
- Inclusion of OHIO Online in the Technology Stakeholder Group
- Increased engagement of online student feedback in feedback sessions
- Increased collaboration across campus based and remote teams

Initiative: Career Support

The “why” for students is career progression



- Online programs create pathways for new and returning learners
- Students enroll in online programs to advance careers
- Learners may also be considering industry certifications or degree alternatives to qualify them for desired jobs
- 92% online degree completers attribute positive career outcomes to their online program within a year of graduation, including salary increase, job change, career confidence, etc.

(Source: Wiley, Voice of the Online Learner 2023)

The challenge...scope, scale, expectations, resources

- Provide meaningful career support to graduate students who are diverse in their:
 - Geography – 50 states & beyond
 - Experience level – 0-25+ years
 - Job function & Industry – engineers, nurses, teachers, public officials, business leaders
 - Job level – individual contributor to VP F500
 - Career goals: move up, change employers, functions, careers, entrepreneurial



Introducing GradCAT

OHIO's Graduate Career Acceleration Team

- Comprehensive approach designed to support working professionals, whatever their career goals
- Targeted programming, delivered at thoughtful times
- Expert virtual 1-1 career coaching with industry professionals, inside and outside normal business hours
- Personal branding services, including resume, profile, and materials development support
- On-demand resources including career exploration, job database, webinars, branding support, etc.
- Innovative partnership with an industry leader in talent development & mobility services to augment our talent and scale, Randstad RiseSmart



Career concierge: OHIO empowers online graduate students to help them achieve their career goals

In a strategic move designed to further empower online graduate students and help them achieve their personal career goals, Ohio University is increasing the reach of its Graduate Career Acceleration Team (GradCAT) program – an expansion that will make the program accessible to online graduate students across over 40 diverse graduate degree programs. GradCAT, a first-of-its-kind partnership with career mobility solutions provider Randstad RiseSmart, provides OHIO Online graduate students with unique access to three dedicated experts, including a personal career coach, an expert resume writer and a career concierge.

[→ Learn more](#)

Sample programming topics

- Job Search Essentials
- Salary Negotiation Mastery
- Executive Presence
- Imposter Syndrome
- Maximizing Your Professional Brand
- Using AI in your job search

OHIO
UNIVERSITY

ONLINE

Sign up today for Job Search Essentials

Job Search Essentials: Practical Real-World Guidance for Making it (Actually) Happen

Warning: this is not your usual job search tips like you've heard since high school or read on LinkedIn. This webinar series tackles the realities of job search preparation and success in a challenging market.

Delivered from the perspective of an experienced talent acquisition professional who has done hiring for multiple industries across the planet, join us for a lively examination of what really works. Be prepared for high candor. And be ready to dig in like you may never have dug before.

Part 1 – Job Search Tools – Resumes, Cover Letters, LinkedIn Profiles

Tuesday, March 19, 2024 - 12:00 p.m. OR 6:00 p.m. EST

- [Registration Link – 12:00 pm](#)
- [Registration Link – 6:00 pm](#)

Part 2 – Job Search Strategies – Networking, Job Postings, Interviews

Tuesday, March 26, 2024 - 12:00 p.m. OR 6:00 p.m. EST

- [Registration Link – 12:00 pm](#)
- [Registration Link – 6:00 pm](#)



GradCAT feedback

I wanted to reach out and let you know that I will actually be **starting a new role**. I was even able to apply some of the **negotiation practice to secure full relocation coverage and increased compensation!** Thanks again for all the help along the way!"

"The online platform was **easily navigable**. There were a lot of resources I utilized including **templates and job search tools.**"

Working with my career coach was without a doubt the most valuable part. She was so **helpful and encouraging** throughout my job search. She went **above and beyond** her duties to help me feel confident and **prepared for interviews**. She brought me back to my foundation of what I really want to do in life and helped me search for jobs **with intention**. From resumes to value propositions, she was so **knowledgeable and professional** in helping me **tailor my skills and application** materials. She was an absolute **pleasure to work with.**"

"The webinars and all content on the site is **amazing**, but my **career coach was absolutely incredible!** She **completely changed my mindset and gave me the tools and confidence needed** to pursue a new career."

I've really **enjoyed my experience** so far and my coach is awesome. She's provided me with some **great advice** and has been able to help me talk through some of the things I've been stuck on up until now. I'm **grateful for this opportunity** and look forward to seeing how much I grow through this experience and through what I learn from the coaches."

I like how detailed my resume is now, it provided information I wouldn't have considered

"It was organized to perfection and had invaluable content."

Resume review was really helpful as well as the meetings to review LinkedIn profile."

Initiative: Mental Health Support

Challenges faced by online learners



- Learners from all 50 states
- Limited time, and services not available at the “right” time
- Limited access to campus-based support
- Adjusting to online coursework
- For adult learners, adjusting to “back in school”
- Time management
- Imposter syndrome
- Productive workspaces
- Balancing full-time jobs, families, finances
- Social/community support

Campus services

- OHIO's Counseling and Psychological Services provides exceptional support to campus-based students and a curated set of resources for online students

...how can we serve students not located on the Athens campus?

Online and Self-Help Resources



Online Self-Paced Workshops

Counseling and Psychological Services offers two, three-session workshops designed to support students struggling with anxiety and depression.



Togetherall

A free, online and anonymous community providing students a safe space to talk to their peers.



WellTrack

A self-guided, interactive online therapy program. Students can monitor their moods, learn how to manage anxious and depressive thoughts and behaviors, or hang out in the zen room.



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a useful practice for developing relaxation skills and a sense of inner harmony and well-being.



Resources Directory

Support can be accessed through resources compiled by mental health professionals, which includes a collection of community, national, and self-guided tools.

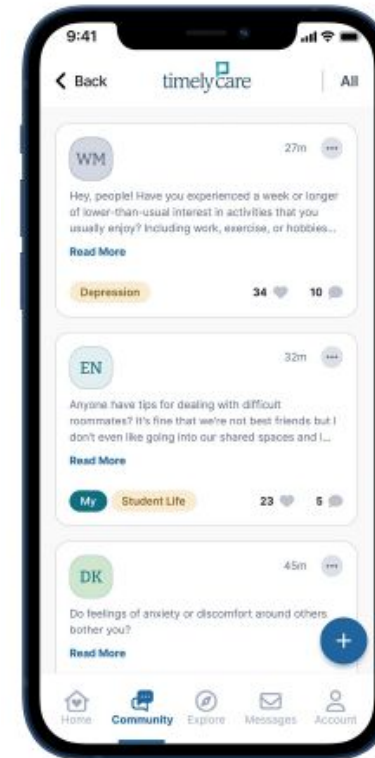


Provider Search

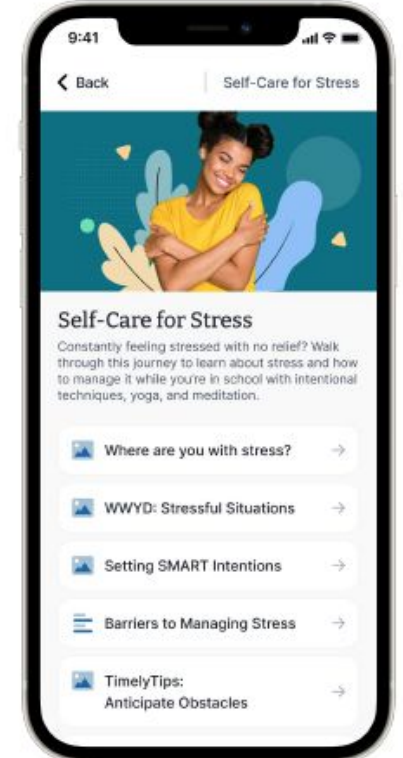
Counseling resources vary by campus, but you can find a provider in your area through Psychology Today's database of mental health professionals.

Our approach: 24/7 Telehealth Support

- On-demand 24/7 support, health literacy, and crisis management by master's-level behavioral health professionals
- Scheduled counseling sessions with counselors licensed in the state where the student is located
- Scheduled visits with a health coach, empowering students to make healthy lifestyle behaviors
- Digital self-care organized provides students access to evidence-based tools, techniques, and journeys
- Available via SSO, access from an app
- Partnership with Timelycare



Peer Community



Self-Care Journeys



Online Students—are the needs unique?



Questions to ask of your institution

- How do we advocate for the online population? Who is their voice?
- If you remove the idea of a campus, does what you're doing still make sense?
- How can we reduce the “friction” and the cognitive for online students?
- Is this communication relevant to an online population? What reaction and questions will your online students have?
- Are we training our students to navigate our systems efficiently? How much “training” do we need to do? How can we streamline the process?

thank you