

College of the Mainland: When Disaster Strikes



A conversation with College of the Mainland's Andrea Fillip



Andrea Fillip

Bursar, College of the Mainland

College of the Mainland in Texas City, TX

Institution Type: Community

Enrollment: 4,000

Solution: Actively Managed Payment Plans

Challenge: After over a decade of partnership with Nelnet Campus Commerce, College of the Mainland began the process of switching from Nelnet's legacy payment plan to a newer Enterprise Payments Platform. When Hurricane Harvey delayed the implementation process for the Texas school, Nelnet Campus Commerce responded immediately.

Result: Nelnet Campus Commerce worked with College of the Mainland to delay monthly payments so that students could put their finances toward recovering from the disaster rather than paying for school. By working with their account manager, College of the Mainland was able to resolve issues quickly and successfully complement the implementation of the new product after recovering from Hurricane Harvey.

College of the Mainland, Meet Nelnet Campus Commerce

College of the Mainland is a community college located in Texas City, Texas, named for its location on the "mainland" portion of Galveston County. Prior to 2006, the college relied on students to make in-person payments at the cashier's window. This cumbersome process often resulted in delayed payments — and it required the understaffed bursar's office to call and collect payments.

"We really needed to contract out with someone to have an online payment plan option," says Andrea Fillip, bursar at College of the Mainland. This would allow students to set up automatic monthly deductions rather than calling or coming in each month, with the added benefit of reducing workload for the bursar's office.

After examining a variety of payment providers and platforms, the college decided to partner with Nelnet Campus Commerce in 2006. When the two teams met, neither could have predicted how much they would later experience together — and that an 11-year relationship built on genuine trust, reliability, and caring would be tested.

A Team Shifts from Implementation to Help Mode

In early 2017, College of the Mainland began the process of transitioning from Nelnet's legacy platform to its newer Enterprise Payments Platform. With this system upgrade, the college would gain a number of convenient features, including real-time payments, faster automatic processing, and greater, more-detailed account reporting — all at no additional cost to College of the Mainland.

"Our students are tech savvy. They don't want to come into the business office. Students prefer to get online or call us with questions." - Andrea Fillip, Bursar, College of the Mainland



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Though the process of implementing a new campus system can seem daunting, the team at College of the Mainland was impressed, but not surprised, by the high level of customer support provided by Nelnet Campus Commerce. No matter what the next steps were, the college's leaders were always informed of what was coming and were reassured that help would always be there.

"I love the fact that when I talk to them on the phone, they don't just say, 'This is Matt from Nelnet, what can I do for you?'" says Andrea. "They never make us feel like we are bothering them — ever."

The initial plan was for College of the Mainland to go live with the new Enterprise platform for the fall 2017 semester, but when tragedy struck in the form of Hurricane Harvey, plans changed. The Nelnet Campus Commerce team quickly transitioned from implementation mode into response mode. The team saw that, not only would the implementation plan need to be postponed, the college's students were suffering and needed time to focus on recovery.

When Andrea reached out to Nelnet Campus Commerce account manager, Andy Nealon, to determine whether payments could be delayed, she was amazed at how quickly the issue was resolved.

Nelnet Campus Commerce Partnership Benefits Staff and Students

When College of the Mainland initially partnered with Nelnet Campus Commerce, it was noticeably easier for students to make payments by scheduling automatic payments. Andrea says, "When we were having in-house payments, it was a very low percentage of students that were paying their full monthly amount." The college has seen a noticeable increase in the portion of students making their monthly payments in full.

While Andrea's staff was used to saving time with Nelnet Campus Commerce, they were pleased with the switch to Nelnet's new Enterprise platform. With real-time payments, faster payment processing, and more detailed reporting, both students and staff have benefitted from the new platform. Andrea's staff has been able to spend less time managing payments and more time dedicated to projects that will make a difference for their students and their campus.

Adversity can test the best relationships — and business partnerships. The positive customer experience College of the Mainland had with the Nelnet Campus Commerce team during and after Hurricane Harvey was what the team had come to expect in 11 years of partnership. "Nelnet Campus Commerce's response time is great; if there's an issue, it's resolved in such a timely manner," says Andrea. "That's important for me, my staff, and our students."

"When we were doing in-house payments, there was a very low percentage of students that were actually paying their full monthly amount."

- Andrea Phillip, Bursar, College of the Mainland

