

Doane University Found a Partner in Nelnet Campus Commerce



DOANE
UNIVERSITY

A Quest for Partnership

Doane University is committed to providing its students with the best campus experience possible. For them, implementing this vision of excellence extends to every interaction a student has with the university—both in-person and online. In 2020, Doane identified room for improvement within their campus's billing and payment process. To create a seamless, holistic campus commerce experience, they knew they needed support from a partner who offered effective solutions and shared in their student-first vision.

My goal was to take a look at all the technologies that we had in place and look for a campus commerce solution that could be holistic, and in that, I was looking for a partnership. I can be a customer. I can be anybody's customer anywhere. But what I was looking for was a partnership. So that's why we reached out to Nelnet.

– Derek Bierman, Chief Information Officer for Doane

Doane first started using Nelnet Campus Commerce payment solutions in 2001. Because of this long-standing history, they were confident that Nelnet would be a reliable partner in implementing the changes they needed to make. Doane University President Dr. Roger Hughes said, "The thing I like about our relationship with Nelnet is we're both fearless. We're both not afraid to try new things."

Facing Doane's Challenges, Fearlessly

As a result of this partnership, Doane is experiencing many positive outcomes, including increased revenue and peace of mind.

But before diving into these results, let's explore the process that got them there. To start, Doane and Nelnet came together to form a plan for transforming the university's campus commerce processes and ultimately improving the student experience. They identified existing challenges and set forth with a focus on three goals.

1. Increase Enrollment: From the beginning, a top concern that Doane wanted to address was their enrollment rate. Based on observation, they hypothesized that many students were dropping off during the registration process, never fully completing an application nor enrolling in the university.

They were concerned that the process was too cumbersome, tedious, and confusing. They wanted to find a solution that would simplify things, getting students through faster and with fewer steps while ensuring they collected all necessary information

2. Improve Record Keeping: Students and departments across Doane's campus often need to accept payments for a variety of reasons, including fundraisers or events. With no defined process for these types of transactions, students and departments would accept payments via cash or peer-to-peer apps like Venmo or PayPal. When these payments were submitted to the university's business office, this created significant challenges and made effective record-keeping almost impossible. Bierman said, "We can't really tell, you know, what money was for. There was just no great record keeping."

3. Stay at the Forefront of Innovation: Baked into Doane's philosophy is a strongly-held belief that staying at the forefront of technological innovation is essential in creating a competitive student experience. Because of this, they wanted a partner who not only delivered innovative solutions but invited them to be a part of the development process.

The relationship with Nelnet helps our technology roadmap in the fact that we're able to bounce ideas off of them. That's what I love most about the relationship. We can call Nelnet up and say, okay, we're thinking about this. We're hearing this in the industry. What are you hearing about it? Is this an avenue we should be investing in?

– Dr. Roger Hughes, President of Doane University

Collaborating for Positive Change

Shared values and close collaboration between Doane and Nelnet were essential to achieving each of these goals.

"Nelnet was looking to improve student experience with their own products. We were looking at improving the student experience for our products," said Bierman. "And so we got together and we started walking through what those experiences should be like. And we found a lot of synergies."

The process began with weekly exploratory meetings. Developers from Doane and Nelnet worked together to assess the university's current registration process. They examined code within Nelnet's products and on Doane's side to get a clear picture of how things were functioning and determine opportunities for improvement.

As a result of this collaboration, Nelnet customized the technology to best meet the needs of Doane and their students by eliminating several steps from the registration and enrollment process. For example, they identified instances where students had to confirm the same information twice or click through unnecessary repetitive steps. Removing these simplified the process and improved the overall experience for students.

Partnering for Today and Tomorrow

Today, Doane University uses Nelnet Billing & Payments, Refunds, and Payment Plans to create the campus commerce experience they want for their students.



Increased Enrollment

Doane experienced a 20-30% revenue increase as a result of their partnership with Nelnet.

Through collaboration, they simplified the registration experience and made it easier for students to communicate directly with Doane's staff through Nelnet's solutions. This meant that students didn't have to exit the process to get answers to their questions, leading to more completed applications and increased enrollment for the university.

Improving Record Keeping

Solving Doane's integrated commerce and record-keeping challenge is a goal that is still in progress today as the university continues its decades-long partnership with Nelnet.

Thanks to Nelnet's commitment to providing unparalleled customer support, Doane's staff and students have peace of mind that their challenges will always be addressed and their questions will never go unanswered.

With Nelnet, I always know I can reach out to someone and get product ideas or solutions to what we're needing for payments.

– Kelli Sweitzer, Doane University Bursar

Committed to Innovation Through Partnership

With an open door for conversation and a commitment to innovation, Doane is set up for long-term success. They feel confident that, not only will they have technology that functions well, but that through partnership with Nelnet, their solutions can continue to evolve as their campus and students' expectations change.

Want to learn more about Nelnet Campus Commerce solutions and our commitment to partnership? Contact our team today.