



St. Petersburg College Improves Student Service Using Ocelot's AI Chatbot



Photo courtesy of: WJArchitects (WJA)

“ Our call volume is pretty exceptional; it’s a couple hundred thousand phone calls and emails a year from students.”

Wayne Kruger

Executive Director of Operations



- > Offers Associate’s & Bachelor’s Programs
- > ~46,000 Students
- > Average Age: 28

St. Petersburg College (SPC) was struggling with unsustainable email and call volumes. Michael Bennett, Associate Vice President, Financial Assistance Services and Wayne Kruger, Executive Director of Operations, knew a technology solution was the only way to meet the demand. SPC became one of the first partners to use Ocelot’s AI Chatbot, and one of the first to see immediate results.

EXCEPTIONAL CALL & EMAIL VOLUME

SPC’s team of financial aid advisors was overwhelmed. Their staff takes on a couple hundred thousand phone calls and emails from students each year. Despite making every effort, the high volume made it impossible to provide the personalized counseling they were accustomed to.

The team would leave on Friday only to return on Monday to a backlog of hundreds of service requests which would take them up to two days to dig out of, only to have another backlog of questions piling up behind it. They were stuck in a perpetual reactive cycle, preventing them from having meaningful conversations with their students.



MEET PETE

SPC launched Ocelot’s AI Chatbot (appropriately named Pete) in July 2018 right in the middle of a rush period for the Financial Aid office. The results were immediate. Right from launch, Pete carried an impressive workload to answer tier-one and tier-two level questions 24/7/365.

SPC Financial Aid counselors finally had the pressure relief they were seeking.

THE IMPACT

18%

Decrease in
phone, email,
walk-in traffic

20%

Of interactions
serviced by
Ocelot chatbot

40%

Of interactions
occurring after-
hours

OCELOT'S AI CHATBOT PROVIDES A PATH FOR SPC TO:

- 1 **Unburden its staff from tier-one and tier-two level, or otherwise repetitive questions that are better suited for student self-service so SPC can get back to substantive student advising**
- 2 **Provide a platform for students and parents to navigate the complexities of student service-related offices to support engagement, enrollment, and retention goals 24/7/365**
- 3 **Quantify the issues, questions, and topics that are on students' minds so SPC can improve how it communicates to students**

A NOTE ON STUDENT EQUITY & ACCESS

The chatbot is also deeply connected to SPC's student equity and access initiatives that address the challenges that a staggering number of university students dealing with food insecurity, homelessness, inadequate income or childcare challenges, and other obstacles experience. The chatbot supports this initiative by ensuring all students regardless of background have equal access to the resources they need to successfully maneuver through university life.

EXPANDING ROLLOUT

With the success in the initial rollout to the Financial Aid office, SPC is expanding the chatbot college-wide to admissions, advising, IT helpdesk, and registrar offices. Further, SPC and Ocelot are integrating the chatbot with its PeopleSoft Student Information System, giving an added layer of personalization to students questions.



And what it did immediately was help us reduce the number of phone calls, number of emails, and right now about 20 percent of our answers going to students is through the chatbot...it's freeing up our staff for more in-depth advising or counseling."

Michael Bennet

Associate Vice President,
Financial Assistance Services

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