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Hillsborough Community College Online Orientation
Putting Educational Theory First – From Orientation to Graduation

Case Study

HILLSBOROUGH
Community College

At Hillsborough Community College (HCC), it's about what's best for students. And to keep it that way the college keeps on top of their research game, continually looking for ways to improve.

Recent research conducted by Clarus Research Group uncovered that where the new student enrollment steps were concerned, there was room for improvement at HCC.

The Problem:

There was much information about the school that students were receiving too late in the enrollment process. Information such as program and degree information, student activities, support services, academic policies, student safety and welfare, and paying for college . . . all important to the full college experience at HCC.

Hillsborough Community College's current online orientation was functional but not appealing to students. So they would typically hurry through it just to get to the class registration portion. As a result, many students would often meet with an advisor knowing little about what the school really has to offer.

Further, updating the content in the current orientation was cumbersome and time-consuming. This helped to justify another reason to improve their online orientation.

The Solution:

Hillsborough Community College set out to make the orientation more appealing and more effective by developing a two-step process: First, welcome students to the college and provide the base knowledge they need to succeed. And second, upon completion of the online orientation, an advisor determines which students continue with the registration process by taking a registration workshop online, and which students will be required to attend the registration workshop in-person.

The online or in-person decision is individualized based on first time in college or previous college experience. But either way, all students are now better prepared to have a productive meeting with their advisor where they will review their educational path and degree intent – determining course selection and sequence – *before* attending or completing the Registration Workshop enrollment step. Now, everyone is set up for success.

A well thought out program. But how would they design, develop and implement this?

To accomplish their new online orientation goals, HCC knew they needed a partner with several attributes:

▶ A partner with experience working with not only 4 year universities, but with 2 year community colleges as well.
▶ A partner with the technical savvy to successfully program a two-step online orientation process that would report on results.
▶ Someone who could capture the HCC brand to create more than just a functional product, but one that portrays HCC in its best and most meaningful light.
▶ Someone who could offer an easy to manage system for updates once the project was completed.

They turned to Advantage Design Group Online Student Orientations because it met all of these requirements. Further, through a peer recommendation, Hillsborough Community College felt comfortable approaching Advantage Design Group to get the job done.

After initial meetings where both Advantage Design Group and HCC took the time to fully understand the needs and the processes, work began. Consultation and a timeline were provided which helped tremendously for keeping the project on track. It made it clear the obligations and deadlines for both parties.

"The process was great. Our whole group says Advantage Design Group was very organized for us, and the timeline sheet is very helpful.

For a project of this magnitude it kept us on track," said Cris Legner, Dean of Student Services. *"We would not have been able to do this in-house on our own."*

Advantage Design Group first went to work on the custom HCC design. Following branding guidelines, and taking inspiration from HCC imagery and culture, they worked closely with HCC to make the right first impression on their students with an engaging, interactive program.

"This is not an out-of-the-box product. It's polished, professional and it helps us to implement our new enrollment steps more efficiently," said Legner.
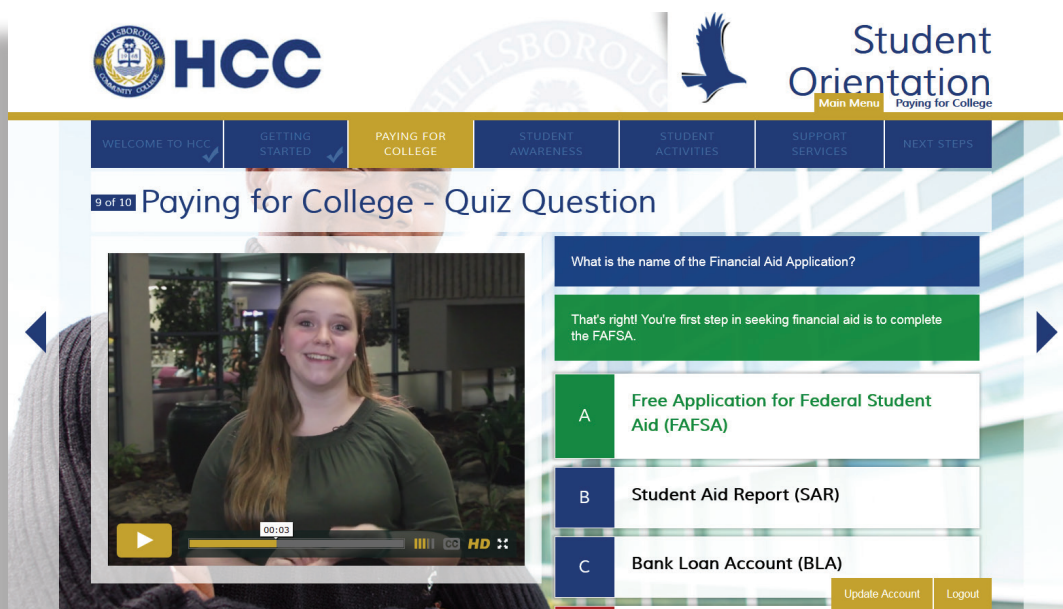
Programming was also underway at this time to ensure the system would flow in the two-step process as needed. The well-thought-out strategy of students participating in basic college knowledge, then meeting with an advisor before being given access to the second part of the orientation, had to work flawlessly for HCC to accomplish its goal.

Further, building the back end program – content management system – was just as important to ensure that HCC can easily update images, text and videos whenever they need to.

"The content management system we acquired through this project truly puts us in control. There is no need to contact an outside company or internal IT services for us to make a change. And this means so much to us because it lets us easily and continually supply the most up to date and relevant information for our students," said Legner. *"It's always about what's best for our students here."*

While Advantage Design Group designed and programmed, HCC was able to focus on their content. HCC formed an online orientation team, did the overall planning for necessary college knowledge vs. the registration workshop process, and gathered the content that they really wanted and needed students to know. It all came together and the final product has been described as . . .

"Such a great representation for Hillsborough Community College. It really puts us out there. It's how we want our students and community to see us. It works well and it looks good."

Looking Forward

As HCC continues to put their students and educational theory first, they are looking ahead to further support their orientation project. They will soon be implementing a version in Spanish – and are considering adding a student survey feature in support of their ongoing research. They also know that down the road they can update videos as they need to in order to keep the orientation fresh.

Hillsborough Community College will continue researching, re-organizing, and reinventing all of their programs including orientations. It's where the student education and experience begins – and for them it's nothing but the best right from the start.

Advantage Design Group is an award-winning multimedia design and development firm based in Jacksonville, Florida. For nearly 20 years we've helped organizations show their story with a unique balance of creativity and technology. Today, our Advantage Orientation Platform is helping colleges and universities across America reach measurable goals for student orientation, transition, retention and success.

We can do the same for you. Contact us for a demonstration.

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