Pfeiffer University:
Partnering with Dynamic Campus to Accelerate its Digital Transformation

Dynamic Campus

Colleen Perry Keith, Ph.D.

When Dr. Colleen Perry Keith began working as president of Pfeiffer University in July of 2015, her WiFi was spotty, the university's cable television system was unreliable and the school had to borrow iPads from the high school next door to have working technology for a seminar for incoming freshmen. "IT was not seen as helpful to the institution at that time; our technical capabilities were fodder for jokes on campus," she says.

Two years later, no one is laughing — Pfeiffer has made revolutionary changes to IT while saving money, sometimes in unexpected ways. The transformation began with the hiring of Pfeiffer alumnus Dr. Ken Russell to serve as the new chief information officer and vice president of digital transformation.

"When I arrived, the IT team was really careening from day to day, they had no time left to get ahead of the issues."

Knowing the existing IT team was under-resourced to address both the acute maintenance needs of the university and its more strategic initiatives, Pfeiffer signed a seven-year managed IT services agreement with Dynamic Campus to provide an on-site team of higher ed IT experts. Tapping into Dynamic Campus'

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fighting fires and focusing on whatever the most pressing issue was at hand," Russell says. "But when you're careening, it's difficult to be strategic. It's difficult to transform. Our IT support was so busy reacting

reservoir of deep talent for day-to-day maintenance and operations not only frees Russell to focus on moving the institution forward using new digital assets, but also gives Pfeiffer the scale, scope and agility to meet

the changing needs and growing expectations of students and faculty.

For a university based in rural Misenheimer, N.C., recruiting, retaining and training top IT talent can be more of a challenge than it might be on a larger, more urban campus. But because Dynamic Campus specializes in higher education and offers a nationwide roster of top IT talent, its expertise proved invaluable. "Dynamic Campus enables small but nimble organizations like Pfeiffer to leverage the best technologies and technologists out there without having to recreate or reinvent the wheel. They've been in our shoes before and knew exactly what we needed," says Russell. "We were able to tap into that expertise instead of shouldering the cost of creating the infrastructure ourselves. As a result, Dynamic Campus made a positive difference very quickly."

Noticing immediate differences

With a remote main campus, along with two satellite campuses, Pfeiffer required a customized approach — and that's exactly what Dynamic Campus delivered. "The ability to come in and really diagnose was very important to us," says Keith. "Dynamic Campus spent time with us, collaborating with us to devise a model that worked for everyone."

That model's value quickly became apparent to everyone on campus. "Within three weeks, Dr. Russell and Dynamic Campus had fixed ongoing issues with our WiFi and computer labs. Faculty and staff felt an immediate difference in their daily work," Keith says. "Dynamic Campus also saved us thousands of dollars by identifying software we didn't need, weren't fully using or was outdated."

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Unifying classrooms and campuses

In an increasingly digital and connected learning environment, the fundamental concepts of the modern classroom are changing quickly. Institutions large and small are challenged to identify and deliver the innovations that truly facilitate learning, rather than simply distract. As Pfeiffer looked to migrate its Charlotte campus to a new, state-of-the-art location nearby in June 2017, Russell and the team were able to tap into Dynamic Campus's expertise to ensure the classroom environments were configured to maximize the effectiveness of instructor and student alike.

"Dynamic Campus brought in people with expertise in collaborative learning and networks to determine the best technology for the classroom as well as the best delivery 'behind the wall,'" says Sharon Bard, Pfeiffer's director of facilities and campus operations. "In our past dealings with vendors, we hoped we were getting the right advice. But with Dynamic Campus' vendor-agnostic approach, we know we are getting exactly what we need."

Such an approach is particularly helpful considering students' changing needs and growing expectations of students. "Dynamic Campus understands classroom technology and is able to show our instructors solutions to suit their teaching styles while helping them teach a little better," Bard says.

Likewise, Dynamic Campus has made a difference with university-wide training for faculty and staff. "Our goal is to have one united campus; even though we have three locations, we want to be one Pfeiffer," says Keith. "During a recent training on customer service, some weren't able to travel from our Charlotte campus to Misenheimer and instead participated via Blackboard Collaborate. Ordinarily I'd be very concerned about pulling that off and holding my breath, but I no longer have those

worries. Dynamic Campus makes sure it works and if it doesn't, someone is here who can quickly get it fixed."

That's true when a problem occurs on any Pfeiffer campus. "Dynamic Campus has helped us unify everything, including our vendors and networks," says Bard. "Because everything has essentially become one, we no longer encounter different problems on our campuses."

Taping into expertise as needed

Dynamic Campus' unified approach has simplified things for Pfeiffer in other ways. "Our challenges required vast knowledge that was impossible for us to find in three, four or even five people, and even if we had, we wouldn't have needed them full-time," Bard says. "Dynamic Campus provides us with expertise we can tap into as we need it."

Furthermore, that availability runs around the clock. "The nice thing about Dynamic Campus is I can reach them 24/7. We had a situation where one of our systems was failing because of a vendor partner. I called Dynamic Campus and they were right there," Russell says. "There's no 9 to 5 with Dynamic Campus; we have a constant connection. We are partners in every sense of the word, and that's why it works so well."

Administrators aren't the only ones who can easily reach Dynamic Campus; everyone on campus benefits from a new help desk in the student center. "Our help desk used to be in the basement of the administration building. There were no signs and it was very hard to find. So we moved it front and center on the main floor of our Student Union to make it easier to interact with students, faculty and staff," Keith says. "Anyone experiencing a problem can quickly get it resolved, and in the process Dynamic Campus is helping us educate the rest of the campus about the role IT plays and the value it provides."

Getting big campus results

Although the help desk has been a visible change, Dynamic Campus has also influenced many of Pfeiffer's behind-the-scenes operations. "Dynamic Campus is not only an integral part of the Pfeiffer team from a help desk or teaching standpoint; they also touch how we operate when it comes to securing our doors and doing our IDs," says Bard. "From a facility standpoint, they're with us every day, and we bounce ideas off each other all the time."

Dynamic Campus has helped Pfeiffer implement a new keyless entry system on its Charlotte campus, with plans to implement it next at Misenheimer and the new Health Sciences building in Albemarle. "Security involves wiring as well as hardware, so they are interfacing with three departments in the process," Bard says. "They are also installing cameras and introducing chip proximity cards. We're a small campus but we are getting big campus results through Dynamic Campus."

No one at Pfeiffer is more pleased than Russell, who is now able to be more strategic. "With Dynamic Campus as part of my professional IT staff, I'm not fighting fires; I'm able to focus on helping Pfeiffer transform using digital assets and technology."

With so much accomplished in less than a year, it's exciting to picture what the Pfeiffer-Dynamic Campus team will achieve in the years to come.

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2806 Flintrock Trace, Suite A205
Austin, TX 78738