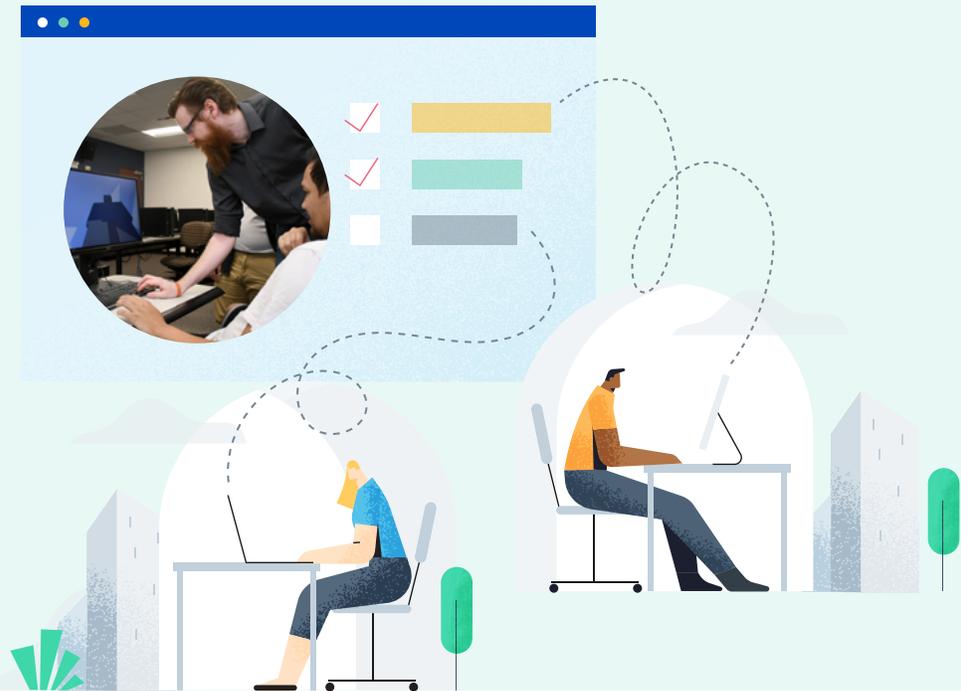


How recruiting, learning, and performing through a pandemic can be done well



SAN JACINTOSM COLLEGE

Employees: 2,223

Industry: Higher Education

Region: United States

Customer since: 2015

Business impact: COVID-19 challenged the higher ed industry to think differently about how it operated, but San Jacinto Community College was able to continue its growth despite challenges.

Products used:

-  RECRUITING
-  LEARNING
-  PERFORMANCE

San Jacinto College has served the citizens of East Harris County, Texas, since 1961. San Jacinto College is among the top 10 community colleges in the nation as designated by the Aspen Institute for Community College Excellence and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction in 2020. The College serves approximately 45,000 credit and non-credit students annually and offers more than 200 degrees and certificates across eight major areas of study that put students on a path to transfer to four-year institutions or enter the workforce.

While the COVID-19 crisis dramatically impacted many industries, higher education faced stronger headwinds than most. Despite pressure from Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other online learning programs, digital adoption in higher ed remained low – a study conducted by Educause showed only 5% of college budgets are dedicated to IT spending. And before the pandemic, only one-third of college students in the U.S. had any online course experience – meaning not only students but also faculty members have been experiencing a major adjustment in a short timeframe. When the time came to move to an online-only model, it showed.

But there are some exceptions. San Jacinto Community College is one institution that has been able to take the pandemic in stride thanks to its pre-pandemic digital investments. Serving the Greater

Houston community, the college is devoted to promoting student success, academic progress, university transfer, and employment. It's spread across five different campuses in Texas — one of which the college was able to open even despite the pandemic-related challenges. And that's because, instead of scrambling to implement a digital infrastructure like most other higher ed institutions, the college was able to stick to its business roadmap, including making critical leadership hires.

"COVID has slowed us down a little bit, but I don't think we've seen that big downturn," said Wayne Wauters, manager of talent acquisition, of their hiring.

And that's thanks in large part to one of those digital investments. While San Jacinto knew that offering digital tools and services was non-negotiable for students, the college also saw an opportunity to innovate for its faculty and staff. So in 2016, the college adopted Cornerstone's tools for hiring and recruiting, learning, and development. By digitizing these three areas of the college's operations, San Jacinto was able to improve processes, effectively transition its staff to remote work, and provide learning and development resources that made the transition easier for faculty. And as a result, the college was able to continue — rather than delay — its growth path.

Revolutionizing recruiting across roles and campuses

The major driver behind San Jacinto's search for a new technology partner was its complex recruiting needs.

"One of the challenges in higher education is that we have so many different types of positions," says Wauters.

That's especially true for San Jacinto, with its staffing needs extending across multiple locations. What's more, each different type of hire requires different processes and involves different stakeholders.

"Instead of having a central group of recruiters," Wauters says, "people who have a staffing need usually participate in the hiring."

San Jacinto needed a system that managed a large volume of applicants and open positions, allowed for a variety of hiring workflows, and was easily accessible by all staff — including those who had never been involved in the hiring process before.

"Cornerstone Recruiting was the only solution that accommodated our varied needs," Wauters said.

In addition to improving internal processes, Cornerstone Recruiting offered a better experience for candidates. Before using Cornerstone, applicants had to wrestle with multiple fields and arbitrary character limits, which, all told, took about 45 minutes to fill out. The average drop-off of new applicants from the old system was high. Wauters estimates that the number of applicants that fill out an application has at least doubled since the college partnered with Cornerstone. In 2019 alone, three years after having Cornerstone, the college made approximately 250 full-time hires.



With Cornerstone, we're able to think: What can everyone do for professional development? We've contracted with some learning content partners — LinkedIn Learning and Skillsoft — and have those integrated into the system."

SHANNA DEMENT
Director, Compensation & HRIS



When the COVID-19 pandemic sent the college remote, having a streamlined hiring system in place meant that the college didn't have to face major delays when it came to filling urgent hiring needs — including faculty and staff for their new Generation Park campus.



Driving recruiting during a pandemic

Leading up to the pandemic, San Jacinto Community College had been underway with the opening of another campus, called Generation Park, located in the northeast corner of Houston. The campus opening was slated for August 1, 2020 — aligning with the start of the 2020 fall semester. Just months before it was set to open, the pandemic forced a transition to altered operations of San Jacinto's locations temporarily and threatened the hiring processes required to make its opening a success. Even before the switch to remote, interviews required a good amount of coordination between staff involved in the hiring process. And particularly for more senior leadership hires, interviews were done in person.

But the San Jacinto team was able to move forward. Cornerstone Recruiting made it easy to continue the faculty interviewing processes despite the altered operations— ensuring that everyone who needed to be involved in hiring could easily access the recruiting platform and move the hiring processes along. Through Cornerstone recruiting, San Jacinto was able to hire not only teaching staff for this new campus but also several administrator positions.

“Cornerstone was really helpful in the area of decentralized recruitment—and now decentralized online recruitment,” said Wauters.

In addition to hiring new employees for the Generation Park Campus, Cornerstone Recruiting also made it easy to set up an internal interest form for existing staff that were interested in moving to the new location.



“And then from there, the hiring committees were able to review those employees that were interested in transferring,” said Brandi Rhodes, the manager of employment at San Jacinto. “With our previous system, we wouldn't have been able to create this type of alternate process for current employees to express interest.”

The Generation Park Campus was supposed to open on August 1 with a hybrid model, but while it opened on schedule, courses were online due to the pandemic.

“I don't think we expected to be 100% online,” Wauters said, “but we had already planned strategically that campus was going to open up more hybrid courses.”



Cornerstone allowed us to easily set up internal interest for existing staff looking at new roles. From there the hiring committees were able to review those employees that were interested in transferring. With our previous system, we wouldn't have been able to create this type of alternate process for current employees to express interest.”

BRANDI RHODES
Manager of employment

Leaning into online learning and performance

In addition to using Cornerstone Recruiting to drive the growth of the college in terms of size and its ability to serve more students — San Jacinto is also leveraging Cornerstone Learning and Cornerstone Performance to foster growth from within. While some of the faculty and students already had experience with online learning because of San Jacinto's forward-looking vision, others are still adjusting or looking to hone their skills. And with Cornerstone Learning, it's easier to make this kind of professional development a priority.

"Compliance training has always been a large focus," said Shanna Dement, Director, Compensation & HRIS. "With Cornerstone, we're able to think: What can everyone do for professional development? We've contracted with some learning content partners — LinkedIn Learning and Skillsoft — and have those integrated into the system. And Cornerstone makes it easy to load in-house developed training as well."



"Playlists allow us to provide supplemental learning for our face-to-face or live virtual training, helping us to design blended learning experiences for our employees," adds Jenn Clark, Manager of Employee Development. "We have been able to engage our new hires by creating a playlist of welcome videos and interactive activities to introduce them to the college prior to their attending our quarterly onboarding session. This helps them navigate Cornerstone and saves us time during our face-to-face sessions because we do not have to go over the information that has already been provided to them."

“

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WAYNE WAUTERS
Manager of Talent Acquisition

Early during the COVID-19 altered operations, Dement said Cornerstone Learning made it easy to push content to faculty—including learning playlists covering everything from wellness to remote technology tutorials to aid faculty in converting their classrooms to the online format.

When San Jacinto first adopted Cornerstone, faculty and staff were hesitant — resistant to change and learn a new system. But according to Dement, all were pleasantly surprised by how simple and accessible Cornerstone was — making not only learning but also annual performance reviews more engaging for everyone.

"The reporting capabilities within the system are very good," says Vickie Del Bello, VP of Human Resources at San Jacinto. The College tracks KPIs using the goals portion of the performance tool and reviews them twice annually (mid-year and end-of-year). In addition to using the report capabilities, Del Bello says, being able to easily track the status of performance reviews has been an asset. Looking ahead, San Jacinto is preparing to perform an all-remote review process if necessary:

"For 2019-2020, we did not complete the end-of-year performance evaluations," said Del Bello. "This decision was made around our process. We have a validation step that occurs once the reviews have been completed. Due to the remote work environment, we knew it would be difficult to complete this process. However, we did make mid-year and end-of-year comments for our goals. For the upcoming evaluation cycle, we will complete the performance evaluations and we will have more time to prepare for virtual validation meetings, if necessary."

Continuing to bring Innovation to higher education

San Jacinto Community College continues to look for new ways to innovate its operations to stay relevant amid an increasingly digital environment. With the help of Cornerstone, the transition has been smooth for faculty and staff – and the updated recruiting system means screening future candidates for remote experience is easy to do.

“The faculty were very willing to adapt to the online environment taking the training necessary to make the shift in their classrooms under a quick timeframe,” said Dement.

Because San Jacinto Community College has made digitizing internal needs a priority, it’s better equipped to offer digital services to students. Wauters, Rhodes, and Dement agree offering more online classes with more flexible learning options has increased accessibility for students – helping the college stay committed to its mission of promoting student success.

Thanks to the new capabilities provided by Cornerstone Recruiting, Learning, and Performance, San Jacinto will continue to evolve and grow no matter what new challenges it’s presented.



Learn how companies around the globe use Cornerstone to give leaders and their teams the tools and training needed to unlock people’s full potential. [Start your demo with Cornerstone today!](#)

