

Breaking down bottlenecks and delivering one-call resolution



Key to success

Davidson leverages call center data to constantly modify and improve its process and knowledge base.

Davidson County Community College delights students and staff by providing one-stop student support

With a full-time faculty and staff of almost 300, and approximately 400 adjunct instructors and part-time staff members, Davidson County Community College, in Lexington, N.C., serves close to 17,000 students each year at its two campuses and three satellite education centers. When they discovered inefficiencies that were affecting staff and student retention, Davidson developed a comprehensive strategy to re-think a fragmented student support approach. With a clear vision, they overcame their challenges and stand as a model for other community colleges.

All hands on deck

As a mid-sized institution, Davidson has always seen value in quality student service as a means to student success. They had invested in highly trained financial aid and enrollment staff members to support students with quality advising. However, despite their best efforts, the number of staff couldn't keep up with student need. Phone lines were bogged down with students needing answers to basic admissions, financial aid, and records questions. Their talented staff couldn't capitalize on their training to most effectively serve students with more in-depth questions and needs.

From the students' perspective, they were receiving inconsistent information due to a disconnect between departments, and they would bounce between departments, ensuring frustration rather than answers. Student service—and ultimately student success—were suffering. According to Davidson CFO Rusty Hunt, it was “all hands on deck” during peak periods in the enrollment and financial aid office. Students were dissatisfied, and staff was overwhelmed.

Instead of seeing the issue as a setback, Davidson saw it as an opportunity. Led by President Dr. Mary E. Rittling, they began looking for a solution that would more effectively serve students, decrease call volume, and capitalize on their valuable staff—with the ultimate goal of successful outcomes; one-call resolution, analytics, and ROI.

Davidson considered options: hire more people or create an internal call center. More staff didn't tackle the root of the problem, and like many institutions, they didn't have the infrastructure or space to house a call center. They went with a third option: partner with a third-party call center through Blackboard Student Lifecycle Services.

A goal of 'one-call resolution'

Because one phone call can easily evolve from an initial financial aid question to one about enrollment or records, Davidson instilled a “one-call resolution” vision led by Blackboard. Davidson gathered staff from all departments to sit down and walk through processes and hand-offs in order to populate the knowledge base of frequently asked questions and answers that enable Blackboard contact center advisors and internal staff to stay in sync. “When we started to build the knowledge base, it forced all departments to get around the same table and share all our communications. It helped us develop consistent messaging and language,” says Hunt.

Trained Blackboard contact center advisors refer to the knowledge base that spans all departments so they can personally answer any question on the spot, in the first call from students. “The knowledge base allows us to be more consistent in providing the information students seek, 24/7. Now they're all getting the same answer to the same question,” says Bonnie Jones, Coordinator Student Information Services.

Davidson County Community College



700 total faculty and staff



17,00 Students



2 campuses



3 satellite education centers



140K calls since 2010

“Without the call center, we are taking a guess at what their concerns or needs are because we don't have any hard data.”

--Bonnie Jones

Improvement by the numbers

- › 34K calls in 2010
- › 20K calls in 2015
- › 500 more graduates in 2015 than 2014

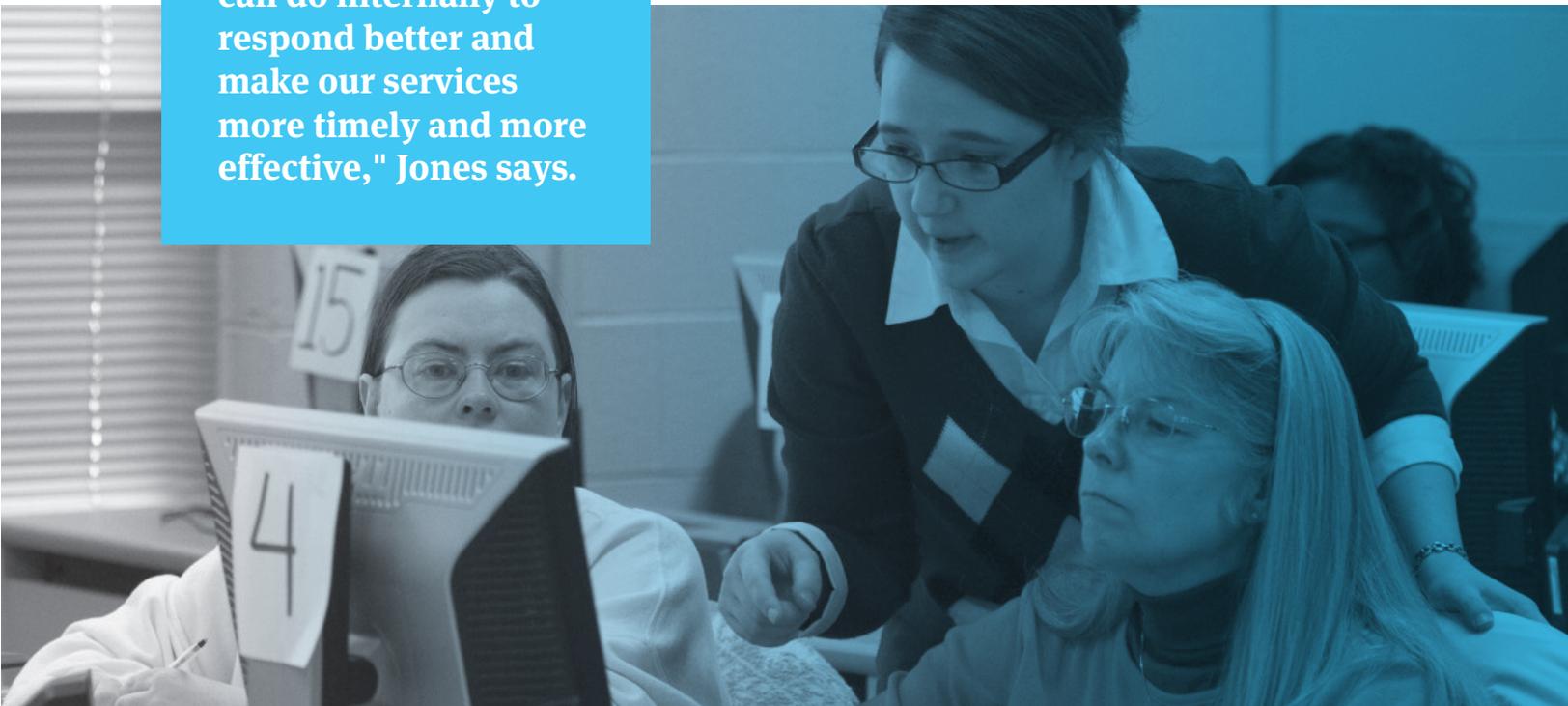
“It isn’t just answering phone calls. Our president challenged us to learn from what our students were telling us. We take the data from the Blackboard call center to find out why they’re calling and what we can do internally to respond better and make our services more timely and more effective,” Jones says.

Data-driven response

As an extension of their team, the call center enables Davidson's highly trained staff to spend more quality time with students and less time answering front-line questions. “We can now spend our 8-hour day more effectively serving students by getting to know them on a personal level to ensure that they are completing the programs that they start and that they are successful,” says Jones.

The call center surprisingly received 34,000 calls the first year (as a mid-sized institution, Davidson had expected 12,000). By the second year they had reduced call volume to 20,000 while increasing access and satisfactions levels. While they accomplished their goal, Davidson didn't stop there. They leveraged data gathered by the call center to continuously modify their student communications and update the knowledge base. By making data-driven decisions, they have taken a proactive approach to student service and can more effectively respond to needs without burdening their staff.

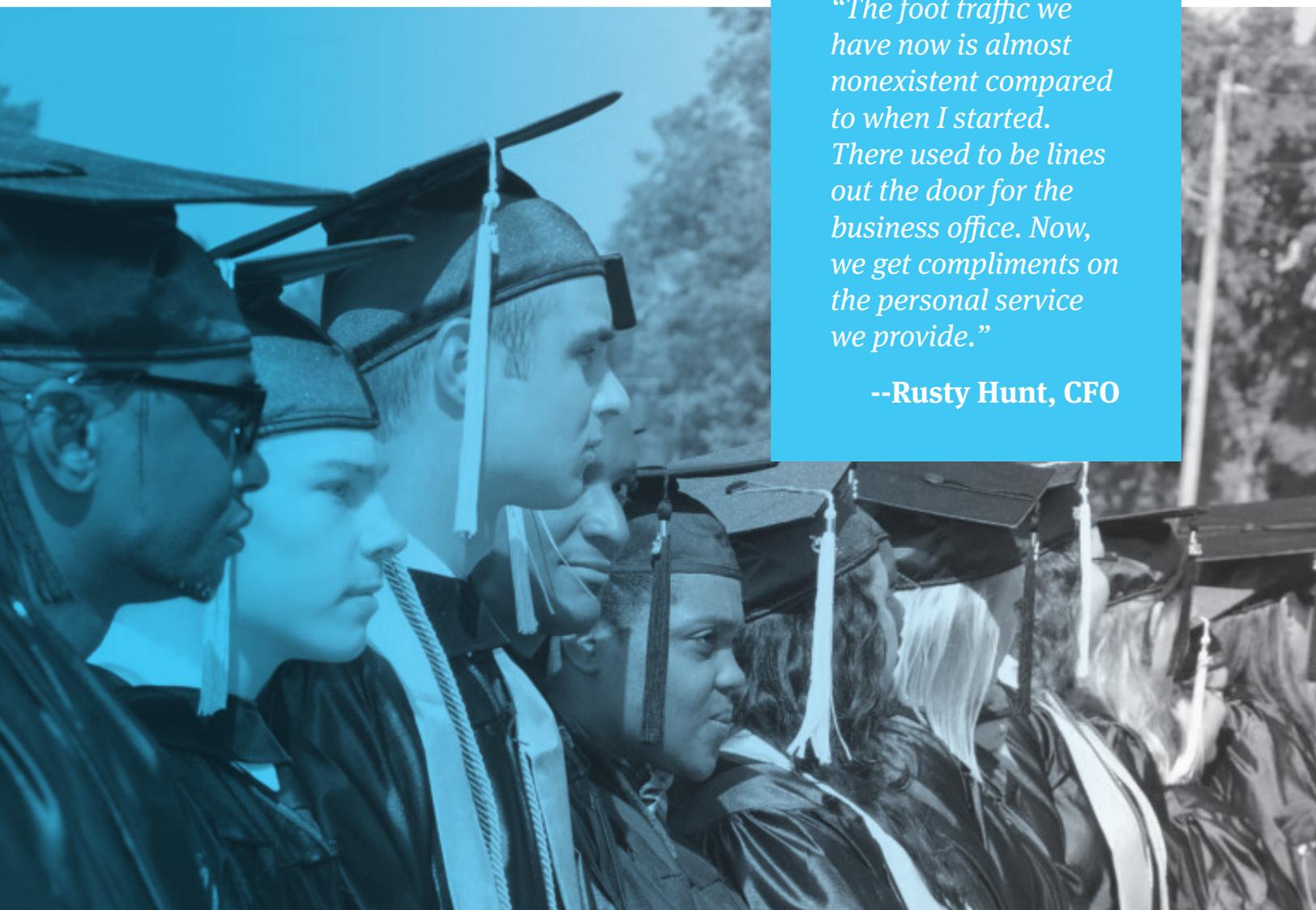
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Realizing return on investment

By reducing call volume by nearly 15,000 calls, Davidson's skilled financial aid staff can now focus on the questions they've been trained to answer. They have improved student service, student communication, and, as a result, student satisfaction. Davidson is growing graduates. They graduated 500 more students in 2015 than 2014 by being more efficient as an organization. "We didn't need to add staff; we were actually able to repurpose staff to provide more value-added options," says Hunt.

By partnering with Blackboard to provide a one-stop student support center and leveraging call center data to continuously improve their process, Davidson has shown tremendous improvements and growth, and is poised for continued success.



"The foot traffic we have now is almost nonexistent compared to when I started. There used to be lines out the door for the business office. Now, we get compliments on the personal service we provide."

--Rusty Hunt, CFO

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