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North Carolina State University drives strategic transformation with Smartsheet

North Carolina State University is a public land-grant research university in Raleigh, North Carolina. The university has an enrollment of more than 37,000 students and offers bachelor's degrees in 106 fields of study, including engineering, statistics, agriculture, life sciences, textiles, and design.

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Customer:
North Carolina State University

Industry:
Education

Organization Size:
Large (1,000-9,999 employees)

Region:
North America

Website:
ncsu.edu

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Adrian Day, Vice Provost for Business Operations and Strategic Resource Management at North Carolina State University

Since its founding in 1887, North Carolina State University (NC State) has focused on excellence in teaching, innovation, and engagement with public and private partners. Today, NC State is the largest university in North Carolina and one of the anchors of the state's Research Triangle.

Background

The university's 2021-2030 Strategic Plan is designed to support an ambitious vision: gaining national (and international) recognition for innovation in education, research, scholarship, and engagement addressing the world's most critical challenges. That macro plan has been broken out into seven prioritized multi-year goals the university has publicly pledged to support moving forward. These goals include: empowering students for a lifetime of success and impact; expanding and advancing engagement with and service to North Carolina and beyond; improving university effectiveness through transformative technologies, cutting-edge processes, and actionable data; and leading in developing innovative partnerships, entrepreneurial thinking, and applied problem-solving.

Fundraising is a key driver of all seven initiatives as NC State pursues aggressive goals and growth plans. *"We're planning to grow our student population by around 40 percent in the next five years, and we want to open a new building for our engineering college,"* says Adrian Day, NC State's Vice Provost for Business Operations and Strategic Resource Management. Day's office distributes funds to most of the university's 11 colleges, which includes faculty and employee salaries.

Solution

As part of its fundraising efforts, the university uses Smartsheet to help run an annual Day of Giving, a daylong event where alumni, friends, parents, faculty, staff, and students pledge gifts to the school, with the ability to specify how their donation should be used. More than $34 million was raised through the 2023 Day of Giving, to support students, faculty, campus programs, research, and facilities. And even beyond just the day of giving, NC State's Division of University Advancement has used Smartsheet to manage a variety of fundraising efforts and internal processes since 2018. *"We track everything behind the scenes in Smartsheet for our Day of Giving event,"* says Margaret Griffin, Web Applications Analyst at NC State.

Customer:

NC State uses Smartsheet to support work execution for a number of different colleges within the university.

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Smartsheet helps us streamline all our processes. We're at the point now where we ask the same question when we have a new process: how can Smartsheet do this?

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Supporting efficiency across workstreams

In addition, NC State uses Smartsheet to support work execution for a number of different colleges within the university. *"Smartsheet helps us streamline all our processes,"* says Savita Sharma, Assistant Dean for Operations, Fiscal Affairs, and IT at the Graduate School at NC State.

Managing these critical workstreams across departments used to be much more time-consuming. Employees worked in disparate tools and spreadsheets, leading to disjointed and even inaccurate information. The Graduate School, for instance, did not have an effective way of communicating the status of funding initiatives to the business operations/resource management team. *"We wanted to be able to provide quick snapshots to show clearly how much money was coming in...We used to spend hours of time every week tracking emails from the Dean to the Provost to manage fundraising lists,"* Sharma shared.

Driving digital transformation

Smartsheet has continued to expand to new use cases within NC State, and with it, the level of impact has been significant. It has grown from just another tool in the tech stack to a platform supportive of the university's overarching priorities. *"We're all working toward the same goal – digital transformation,"* says Day. *"Our Smartsheet usage grew very quickly because the footprint required for training is so minimal."* Now, the university Provost's Office uses Smartsheet to centrally manage processes such as student commitment tracking and budget allocation, in addition to all aspects of fundraising. Capabilities like Dashboards help leaders stay informed of top level metrics and outcomes without the need to sift through all the details, while workflow automation empowers individual contributors to execute with efficiency. *"Because of workflow automation in Smartsheet, we're not emailing back and forth so much to get the latest information,"* Day says.

In a Nutshell:
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Making a transformative impact

Smartsheet provides NC State with more visibility and efficiency than ever before, giving employees more time to focus on supporting the university's strategic goals. *"If I'm in a meeting, I can quickly create a dashboard in Smartsheet and start pulling in data as executive officers talk about project goals,"* says Day. *"By the time the meeting is over, I have a rough dashboard with initial metrics. Smartsheet just helps us speed up the entire analytics process so we can be more efficient."*

NC State can now focus on supporting the university's strategic plan and being good stewards of the university's funds. *"We are all state employees funded by taxpayers, and we have an obligation to put every dollar to the best use,"* Day says. *"Smartsheet enables us to do that, so we can honor the taxpayers that fund our salaries while advancing the university's mission."*

Adds Sharma, *"We have had a lot of conversations about wholesale digital transformation as a strategic initiative for the university. This application has proven to be a strong tool that helps us drive transformation by helping us do our work better and provide better services to our students, faculty, and staff."*

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