24 x 7 x 365

Providing world-class support for over 5,000 busy adult learners

Profile

CITY/STATE:

San Francisco, CA

OTHER LOCATIONS:

Silicon Valley, CA
Los Angeles, CA
Seattle, WA
Online

INSTITUTION TYPE:

Private, non-profit university

ENROLLMENT:

Total: 5,060 students
619 undergraduate students
4,441 graduate students
80% attending part-time
13% international from
46 countries
Average age: 34

ETHNICITY:

5% African American
16% Asian
7% Hispanic
2% Pacific Islander
33% White
37% Other/Unknown

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>
> —Doug Geier,
> Director of eLearning
> and Instructional Design,
> Golden Gate University

The Challenge

Golden Gate University (GGU)'s mission is clear:

to help students gain the powerful and practical skills they need to succeed.

To make higher education work for students, many of whom are working professionals, GGU offers flexible programs both online and at four campuses. Even its in-person courses are extensively enhanced with robust web components, and some have evolved towards flipped learning models.

Both GGU's students and its instructors are deeply reliant on the university's online LMS and other systems. However, they have diverse levels of expertise, and equally diverse hardware, ranging from very old laptops to the newest smartphones.

Students with full-time jobs often set aside nights and weekends to study and prepare their assignments: some 30% of GGU's help desk calls come on the weekend, with a significant additional portion coming on weeknights.

Most GGU faculty also work professionally in the fields where they teach, bringing a wealth of experience and enthusiasm. GGU supports them with a new faculty orientation, one-on-one instructional design consultations, customized video tutorials, downloadable tip sheets and checklists, training webinars and many other resources. But, faculty often need help desk support—and, like their students, they don't have time to wait for answers when they go online to prepare course materials. As GGU has encouraged them to integrate more robust web functionality into their courses, their need for support has only increased.

As Doug Geier, GGU's Director of eLearning and Instructional Design, puts it, "We provide really good support for our instructors and students, but we rely on the help desk to fill a critical need."

GGU has maintained a small internal help desk that responds to calls during weekday business hours, focusing not only on technical help, but also calls requiring involvement from the registrar or other administrative offices. Until 2011, GGU depended on its LMS provider for technical help desk support outside business hours. But when the university transitioned to Moodle in 2011-2012, that option disappeared.

A flexible, 24x7x365 solution

To fill the gap, GGU considered multiple help desk providers, but concluded that Pearson offered the most flexibility and value. Since then, Pearson has operated seamlessly as an extension of GGU's own help desk, following GGU's own policies and procedures. All help desk services are presented as part of GGU, and the online portal is branded with the university's logo and colors, so callers always see their help desk contacts as part of the university.

Through this close partnership, the help desk delivers 24x7x365 support for virtually any technical problem students or faculty experience, regardless of their location or device.

By GGU's choice, the university only pays for the services it uses on a per inquiry basis, while benefiting from a smooth ramp-up whenever it needs more help—for example, at the start of each trimester, when new students come aboard and must quickly solve login or compatibility issues.

Sometimes, these compatibility issues arise from GGU's own status as a pioneer in online education. "Since we've been delivering online courses for over 20 years," says Geier, "we have a significant portion of media that's very good but relies on diverse browser technologies to run. That can result in plug-in issues." Since not all students know how to install a plug-in—or can explain the problem they're seeing—Pearson's help desk specialists can quickly take control of their desktops and patiently walk them through installation so they can do it by themselves next time.

Pearson's comprehensive reporting helps both partners work together more effectively— not only to improve help desk services, but to help the university succeed in its teaching mission. Customized reports are used to:

- **Identify emerging themes in student and faculty support calls, so Pearson can help prepare new FAQs or knowledge base items, potentially reducing future support calls**

- **Flag individuals whose repeated use of help desk services may signal a need for more training**

- **Provide comprehensive feedback based on followup with every caller, identifying opportunities to improve, such as better agent training**

- **Uncover patterns in escalations, so Pearson and GGU can work together to reduce them**

- **Quickly discover issues that might impact retention of a student or faculty member, so GGU can act to save the relationship**

- **Help GGU discover course-level patterns, improve course quality, and reach out to faculty on issues that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.**
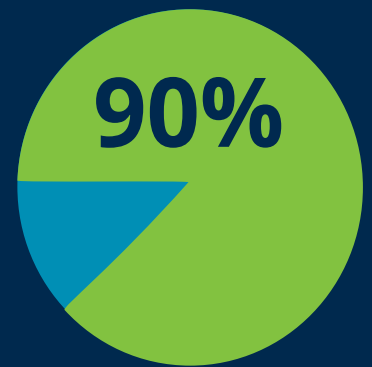
The Results

GGU's Pearson help desk is consistently exceeding 90% first-call resolution, so students and faculty can quickly move forward with their work.

GGU's Geier notes that some calls the help desk can't resolve are due to issues it can't control, such as unplanned system downtime. "When that happens, Pearson can take the calls from students and faculty, offer some assurance as to when it'll be fixed, and make sure our students and faculty don't feel like they're all alone. And sometimes Pearson's help desk is first to know of a problem, and [they] tell us so we can follow up more rapidly."

Working together for more than six years, Pearson and GGU have built a deep and trusted collaborative partnership that has had multiple benefits. "We reached out to Pearson as we integrated Turnitin to improve student writing and prevent plagiarism, and when we recently deployed a new video platform," says Geier. "Pearson's wide higher education support capabilities are becoming ever more critical as we continually expand the utility of our LMS and online course environment."

"Pearson's help desk is incredibly responsive," Geier concludes. "Quite often, when people think of 24x7 outsourced help desks, maybe based on their previous experiences, they have a bad impression. Pearson has been different. Their service is top-notch, it's customizable, and it's helped us come a long way in how we work with students and faculty. Pearson does more than just provide services: this is a true partnership."

90%

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To learn more about Pearson's Help Desk Services, visit pearson.com/help-desk

Pearson

GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY