



CASE STUDY

Chicago State University

Chicago State University (CSU) is a public, comprehensive university that provides access to higher education for students of diverse backgrounds and educational needs.



BACKGROUND

Chicago State University (CSU) has been breaking ground since its founding in 1867. It began as an innovative teacher's college when it was known as Cook County Normal School, serving as one of the oldest public universities in the Chicagoland region. Located on the south side of Chicago, CSU has five colleges – Education, Business, Pharmacy, Health Sciences, and Arts and Sciences – offering over 70 undergraduate and graduate degree-granting and certificate programs. CSU is committed to equity in education, serving as the only U.S. Department of Education-designated four-year Predominantly Black Institution in Illinois and ranked by a Harvard economist in the top 4% of public and private universities nationwide in supporting its graduates' economic mobility.

Such excellence sustained over such a long period of time doesn't happen by accident. It requires dedication, diligence, and integrity. It also requires the ability to act when opportunities present themselves. CSU has all of these traits, exemplified by their recent work with Remote Learner (now a Learning Pool company), their hosting partner of over a decade, on improving their online learning environment. What began with a conversation about site performance blossomed into a multi-faceted discussion about their vision for learning. The result is a learning environment that's equipped to meet CSU's needs as they pursue their next frontier.

THE CHALLENGE

CSU reached out to Learning Pool because of site performance issues. Their site was slow and frequently timing out. Learning Pool's support team diagnosed the problem as an issue of processes unnecessarily taxing the system. They consulted with CSU on some best practices for managing their data and rebuilt the CSU server, which has eliminated all performance concerns. The conversations around the site performance opened the door to exploring other opportunities to collaborate, specifically on user experience and reporting.



THE SOLUTION

After considerable discussions with their Learning Pool Account Manager, Anthony Valdez, CSU committed to implementing Learning Pool's Stream LMS. Doing so came with a lot of questions about how a new version would impact their users' ability to do what they need to do on a day-in/day-out basis.

An up-to-date site gave CSU more than just the latest features. An up-to-date site is more secure and stable, has fewer bugs, offers better performance, and is more compatible with other systems. It also set the stage for everything CSU had planned next.

A New Site Theme

During the site upgrade discussions, CSU expressed concern that their current theme wasn't keeping students engaged and involved. Learning Pool recommended its Altitude theme to slim down the interface and make it more inviting through the use of blocks, slide-out menus and more. Altitude also helped Chicago State to achieve its vision of a user experience that more seamlessly mirrored the school website. "Colors, logos, and other branding elements were really important to creating a smooth transition from their website to their learning environment," says Mr. Valdez.

CSU's administration was careful to get all of their stakeholders involved and invested before launching the new theme. They also timed the update between semesters, when it would cause the least amount of disruption. CSU's careful planning and willingness to try something new have made the launch of the theme a success. "Chicago State was easy to work with," said Kimberly King, Learning Pool Solution Architect. "They were very open to our ideas."

Reporting and Analytics

CSU also expressed concern about its ability to monitor and report on key success metrics, namely engagement and learner retention. Learning Pool recommended a partner solution, IntelliBoard. IntelliBoard allows users to quickly generate intuitive (and attractive) visualization of all of their data, making it easier for CSU to make data-informed decisions. "CSU is thoroughly enjoying IntelliBoard," says Mr. Valdez. "It's giving them all of the metrics they need with a particular focus on retention."

THE RESULTS

Chicago State began its Fall, 2020 semester with an upgraded site, a brand new theme, and the reporting capabilities to monitor its impact. With the tools in hand, CSU is off and running. This string of successes has strengthened the partnership between Learning Pool and CSU as well. Two-way communication was engaged and responsive as the two organizations explored where to go next.

Understanding the unique goals and values of each of our clients is at the heart of who we are at Learning Pool. By providing our clients access to our team of experts, we help turn their vision into reality through a partnership that provides demonstrated value, insight, and ongoing support. We are proud to be partners with pioneering institutions like Chicago State University in helping them increase student engagement and promote student retention.





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