



Doing more with less

How CollegeVine powered
Coker University's growth



C O K E R
UNIVERSITY

"With the help of CollegeVine, we've seen significant increases in our middle and lower levels of the funnel, as Charlie has freed up time for our recruitment team to focus on building relationships with admits and high school counselors. **We're now up 61% in deposits.**"



Katherine Davis

Vice President of Strategic Communications

About Coker University

Coker University, founded in 1908, is a private liberal arts institution located in Hartsville, South Carolina. With a student body of approximately 1,200 students, Coker offers over 40 undergraduate programs and several graduate degrees. The university is known for its round-table learning approach, where professors and students sit together around tables to encourage discussion and engagement rather than traditional lectures.

Coker University prides itself on providing a student-centered experience with a 12:1 student-to-faculty ratio. The institution is committed to preparing graduates for career success while fostering intellectual and personal growth. As a member of the NCAA Division II South Atlantic Conference, Coker's Cobras compete in 21 intercollegiate sports.

The challenge: Ambitious goals with limited resources

In today's higher education landscape, small to mid-sized institutions face increasing pressure to compete with larger universities while operating with significantly fewer resources.

For Coker University, this meant pursuing several strategic initiatives simultaneously with a lean staff:

- Improving retention rates, which stood at 63% in 2022
- Creating a more inclusive environment by recruiting and supporting a diverse student body
- Expanding online and graduate program offerings to reach non-traditional students
- Maintaining enrollment targets despite reducing admissions staff
- Providing consistent, high-quality communication across all student touchpoints

These challenges required innovative solutions that could extend the reach and capabilities of Coker's dedicated but limited team members without sacrificing the personal attention that defines the Coker experience.

Why Coker University chose CollegeVine

Coker University's leadership recognized the need for technology solutions that could help them achieve their ambitious goals while working within their resource constraints.

They were specifically looking for a partner who could enhance recruitment efforts without requiring additional staff, provide consistent messaging across all communication channels, support retention initiatives through improved student engagement at the prospect stage, integrate seamlessly with existing systems and workflows, and offer innovative solutions that would impress stakeholders and demonstrate Coker's forward-thinking approach.



The CollegeVine solution

In partnership with Coker University, CollegeVine implemented "Charlie," an AI Recruiter tailored to embody Coker's unique voice and values.

AI-powered chat and email communication platforms that provide immediate, personalized responses to prospective student inquiries

Integration with the college's existing CRM and recruitment systems to create a seamless data flow and attribution model

Data analytics tools that provide actionable insights into student engagement patterns

A collaborative approach to knowledge development that included Coker staff in conversations with Charlie about the university



The results: Exceeding expectations

61% increase in deposits
in 2025

456 staff hours saved
since launch

Enhanced efficiency: Maintained growth despite reduced admissions staff

Consistent student experience: Despite staff turnover, communications have remained consistent by funneling them through Charlie

Board-level recognition: Leadership and board members impressed by innovative approach



"We shared AI Charlie with our Board of Trustees and donors at recent meetings. They were impressed with the ability to reach more students with more efficient use of our time. Our Board has encouraged our team to embrace new AI technology and they were pleased with the implementation of CollegeVine's AI recruiter."

Natalie Harder
President at Coker University