



# Smarter outreach, stronger classes

How Grinnell College engaged  
students earlier to drive  
admissions with CollegeVine



**Grinnell  
College**

# About Grinnell College

Founded in 1846, **Grinnell College is a private liberal arts institution** located in Grinnell, Iowa. Known for its academic rigor, commitment to social justice, and tradition of intellectual freedom, Grinnell consistently ranks among the top liberal arts colleges in the nation. With approximately 1,700 students from all 50 states and over 50 countries, the college fosters a diverse, globally minded learning community.

Grinnell offers a highly personalized educational experience and is renowned for its progressive values, need-blind admission for U.S. students, and commitment to meeting 100% of demonstrated financial need without the use of loans. Grinnellians are driven by curiosity, critical thinking, and a desire to effect meaningful change.

## The challenge: Reaching students earlier

Following a successful 2024 recruitment cycle with a 50% first-source inquiry rate, Grinnell College looked to build on its relationship with CollegeVine to deepen its pipeline for the 2025 cycle.

- Increase early-stage engagement to juniors and sophomores to build long-term interest
- Increase application and deposit rates among new prospects
- Provide hyper-personalized outreach aligned with Grinnell's values of individualized education
- Scale personalized engagement without increasing team workload

# The CollegeVine solution

Grinnell partnered with CollegeVine to launch Sophie, their custom-branded AI Recruiter, designed to reflect the college's distinct identity and values.



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



**Customized knowledge base** reflecting Grinnell's unique history, programs, and community

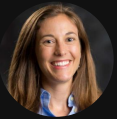


**Data analytics tools** that provide actionable insights into student engagement patterns



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

“Sophie lets us do more without adding to our plates. We’re engaging students earlier and more meaningfully, and that’s showing up in our numbers and in the kinds of conversations we’re having. She doesn’t feel like a generic chatbot, but more like an extension of our team, and that’s why students are responding.”



**Sarah Fischer**

Assistant Vice President of Admission at Grinnell College

# Measurable results: expanded funnel and enhanced engagement

Sophie's ability to surface, attract, and convert high-quality, first-time prospects showcases the strength of the Grinnell and CollegeVine's engagement model. By targeting students earlier in the funnel, the partnership enabled the admissions team to nurture interest from mission-aligned students while freeing up staff to focus on high-impact and time-sensitive recruitment activities.



21%

Admit rate from CollegeVine leads

Significantly outperforming Grinnell's institutional average of 15%.



44

Enrollment deposits  
from CollegeVine leads

Underscoring the CollegeVine  
network's impact on the  
applicant pipeline.



6%

Inquiries from students  
new to Grinnell

Demonstrating Sophie's ability to  
uncover strong leads early and  
drive meaningful net-new  
engagement.

# Measurable results: scalable personalization with measurable time savings

Sophie streamlined outreach with consistent, hyper-personalized messaging across channels driving open and click-through rates well above industry benchmarks.



# 11,048

Staff hours saved

Freeing recruiters for higher value conversations



# 14.5%

Chat reply rate

Demonstrating strong real-time engagement



# 40.1%

Email open rate

Well above industry benchmarks



# 8.4%

Click-through rate

Underscoring Sophie's effectiveness in personalizing outreach

# Looking ahead: class of 2026 and beyond

**Grinnell and CollegeVine continue to scale their collaboration by:**



**Expanding Sophie's outreach** to include voice campaigns with voicemails



**Continue engaging younger students** earlier in the search process



**Relaunching successful campaigns** with updated content and targeting



“CollegeVine's AI Recruiter is a powerful tool. With Sophie, we have solid engagements, such as open and click-through rates, that are higher than industry standards. As Sophie takes information directly from our website and follows custom instructions for more sensitive topics such as admission chances, she can create quality and personalized messages that students benefit from but our staff doesn't have bandwidth for.”



**Heather Park**

Admission Marketing at Grinnell College