collegevine

Scaling smarter

How UVA Wise expanded student engagement while freeing up staff time

UVA WISE

"We've gone from a manual, paper-based admissions environment to fully digital in just a few years. AI gives us the next step forward in a real way to empower our staff and better serve students."

Jeffrey Baylor
UVA Wise Enrollment Leadership

About the University of Virginia's College at Wise

The University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA Wise) is a public liberal arts college nestled in the Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia. As an extension of the University of Virginia, UVA Wise blends academic excellence with a mission of regional transformation and access. Known for its close-knit campus culture and forward-thinking leadership, UVA Wise is investing in digital innovation to support students from their first inquiry through to graduation and beyond.

With a rapidly growing applicant pool and a renewed focus on retention, the college is embracing AI to evolve from paper-based processes to a scalable, student-centered infrastructure built for the future.

The challenge:
Managing growth with limited capacity

Over the past two years, UVA Wise has seen **a remarkable increase in applications from just 1,000 to over 6,500,** signaling a period of significant momentum and opportunity. However, that growth brought new challenges:

- Managing large volumes of applications with a lean admissions team
- Addressing inconsistencies in financial aid communications
- Improving student retention and graduation rates
- Training faculty and staff on modern digital tools to reduce dependence on manual systems
- Enhancing student engagement at every stage of the lifecycle from prospect to enrolled student

The CollegeVine solution

With enrollment rebounding but operational pressure rising, UVA Wise partnered with CollegeVine to launch TJ, their custom-branded AI Recruiter, designed to reflect the college's distinct identity and values. The partnership is designed to address both immediate capacity challenges and long-term goals around enrollment, retention, and student support.

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

Increased efficiency of financial aid and merit aid offers within budget constraints

Personalized support for every prospective students, such as guidance on navigating scholarship and financial aid steps

Data analytics tools that provide actionable insights into student engagement patterns

Customized knowledge base reflecting UVA Wise's unique history, programs, and community

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

Measurable results:

Increased communication scale and reach

TJ delivered consistent, hyper-personalized outreach across channels, achieving open and click-through rates far exceeding industry benchmarks.

19%
SMS reply rate

Showcasing strong engagement from prospective students.

537
Qualified leads

Through 3,723 outbound calls that reached 1,000+ unique contacts.

43%
Email open rate

Well above industry benchmarks.

6%
Click-through rate

Underscoring TJ's effectiveness in personalizing outreach.

Measurable results:
Always-on phone lines creating tangible outcomes

TJ enhanced outreach through personalized inbound and outbound calling, driving answer rates that outperformed industry norms.

25+
Staff hours saved

Freeing recruiters for higher value conversations

1,400+
Unique contacts

Demonstrating TJ's strength across broad engagement

24.8%
Answer rate

Well above industry benchmarks

Measurable results:
Increased operational efficiency

Operational efficiency gains

- **Time Savings**: Over **5,350 staff hours** added as additional capacity
- **Staff Focus**: Admissions team able to dedicate more time to high-value recruitment activities
- **Lead funnel expansion:** Admissions team able to nurture early interest from mission-aligned students and strengthen future applicant pool.
- **Process Improvement**: Streamlined recruitment workflow with consistent messaging across all channels
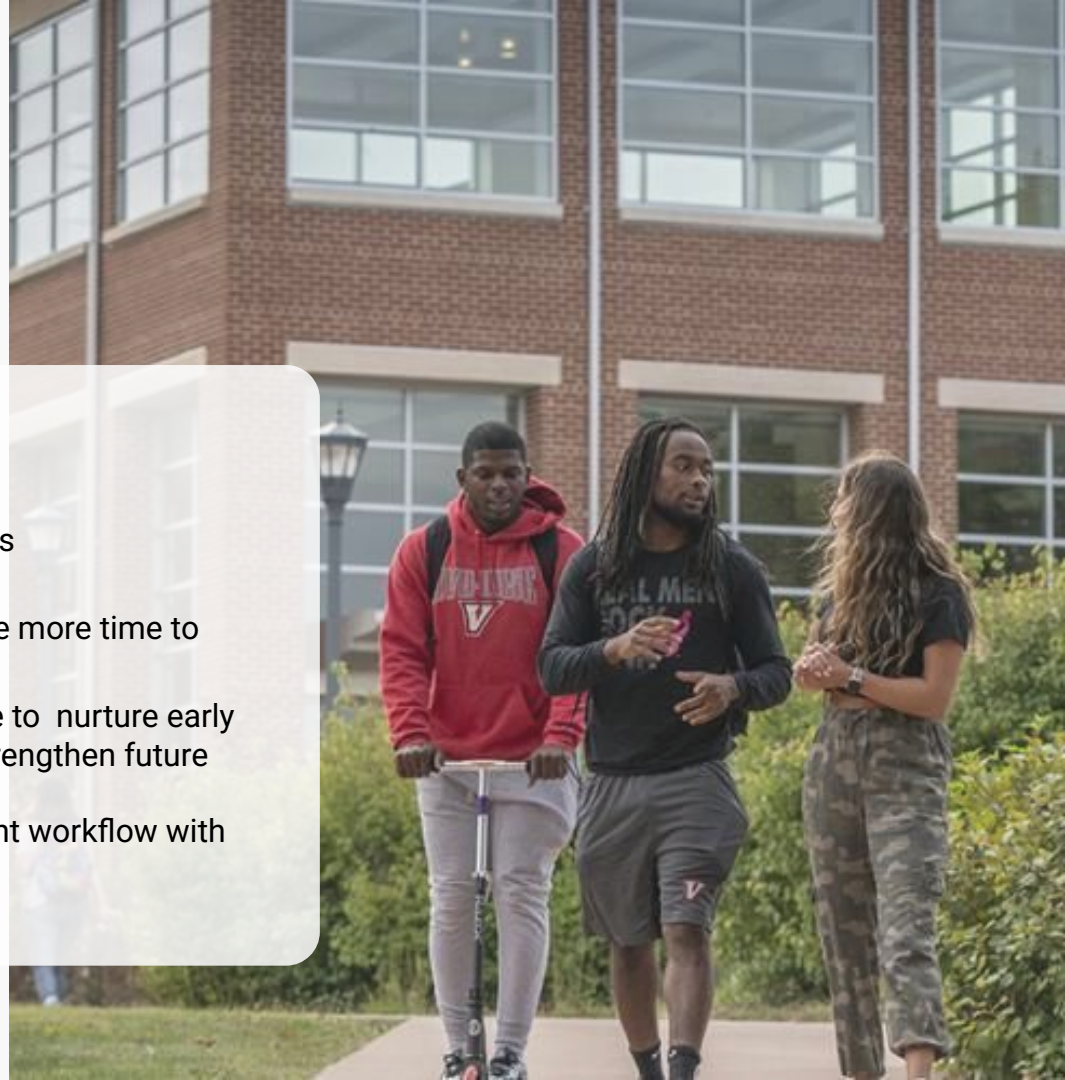
Taking it
one step further:
Bringing AI
to campus life

UVA Wise and CollegeVine are deepening their partnership by launching an AI One Stop to support student affairs and enhance the campus experience.

Early results: 576 simulated student interactions saved 96 hours of staff time.

Key benefits of the AI One Stop:

24/7, personalized, multilingual support: available in over 50 languages, offering around-the-clock assistance to students, parents, and alumni.

Increase student engagement: students feel more comfortable asking AI for help, leading to higher satisfaction, better retention, and stronger academic results.

Automated administrative tasks: handles inquiries and requests via email, text, web chat, and phone, freeing staff to focus on complex issues.

Integrated data analytics: built-in tools surface trends in student behavior, helping staff prioritize high-impact interventions.

Cross-departmental integration: files support tickets and handles requests across campus units, enabling streamlined service.