

# The College Crusade Partners with Trilix to Create Custom Membership Portal

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College-access program taps Trilix to create membership portal to better  
engage students, parents, faculty and advisors



**THE COLLEGE CRUSADE**  
of Rhode Island

A Trilix Case Study

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### Organization Overview:

The College Crusade, based in Rhode Island, is the state's largest college access program for low-income, first generation and underserved students. Founded in 1989, its mission is to increase high school graduation, college and career readiness, and college completion for the youth in Rhode Island's low-income communities. At any point in time, The College Crusade is helping about 4,500 students.

### Business Challenge:

As a relationship-oriented organization, the "most important thing we can do is communicate well with our students and our families," says Andrew Bramson, The College Crusade CEO. "I realized early on that if we continued to do things exactly the same way, we would not be able to generate the same positive results anymore. And that's simply because of the pace of change in our industry and the fact that what worked in the past may not work in the future. Our students are changing, their parents are changing, how families get information is changing, student expectations are changing. It became evident that we needed to start making some shifts."

The No. 1 pressing business challenge was to find a way to modernize the ways in which students and families communicate and interact with The College Crusade. One core area of focus was how to automate the organization's manual, paper-based program recruitment process, in which program information would be mailed out and interested students would have to mail in or drop off registration paperwork.

"One of the most important things we wanted to tackle was to make sure that program recruitment is an equitable process," says Emily Winchell McHugh, Special Projects Officer at The College Crusade. "When you enroll students on a first-come-first-serve basis for programs and you're mailing out program information, families closer to Providence—where we are based—have a leg-up on students who may reside in Woonsocket."

The College Crusade was also looking to automate and digitize the record keeping system on its students and families. Instead of maintaining hundreds of folders in file cabinets—that led to the segregation and siloing of data—The College Crusade desired a system that could aggregate updated, real-time information on students and then make that data available at the fingertips of its students, families and staff.

### Solution:

In partnership with Trilix, The College Crusade is creating a custom membership portal that will allow staff to more meaningfully and effectively communicate with families. What's more, it creates a better way for advisors to communicate with students.

In addition to allowing students and families to register directly and digitally for programs and events, the membership portal will:

- Ensure that families are receiving program information in a timely manner, and have an equal opportunity to enroll their children in programs
- Allow all communications to be sent in both English and Spanish
- Centralize student information, allowing parents to update and maintain information like address, phone number, email address, student allergies, etc.
- Present efficiency gains for students and families, as well as The College Crusade staff, with all information being centrally stored
- Streamline processes with staff no longer having to run complicated queries or request information from a database administrator to complete processes like writing grants and checking attendance numbers

“One of the things that most excites me about this project is how it will impact the incredible people who work here,” says Bramson. “Everyone here knows it’s about developing relationships. That’s what gives them the ability to change the economic and social trajectory of students. That’s what motivates them. This new technology will give them more tools for doing that work. If this new portal allows them to live our mission more authentically, purposefully and deeply, then we have achieved what we set out to do.”

### Business Gains:

When completely rolled out, the custom membership portal will have a direct financial, efficiency and connectedness impact on the greater College Crusade community. Immediately, the organization will be able to realize considerable financial savings by eliminating the amount of multi-page paper mailings that are sent to hundreds of students. Over time, The College Crusade also will be able to enjoy time-savings features, like tracking program attendance directly within the portal. Prior to the development of the portal, attendance was taken on paper, which was then handed in to program coordinators, who passed it along to another colleague to enter into the database.

In addition, the team will have access to real-time, updated digital records on its College Crusaders. The application will keep track of pertinent information on students like their grades, academic interests, permission slips, release forms, and real-time attendance data, among other things.

“Once all data is officially housed in the new portal, staff will be able to log in and view real-time information, as opposed to having to wait for uploads into the system, which didn’t happen on an ongoing, regular basis in the past,” says Winchell McHugh. “As a data-driven organization, a lag-time in up-to-date data has a real impact on the work that we do.”

Just six months into the engagement, The College Crusade is already setting its sights on future enhancements and platform rollouts it will introduce through its partnership with Trilix.

“Working with Trilix has been truly wonderful,” adds Winchell McHugh. “I know very little about application development but have always felt that Trilix speaks my language. They’ve made every effort

to ensure that we are fully involved in each step of the process. We don't just say, 'Here's what we need; go out and make it.' We're on weekly calls with the team to prioritize features based on user feedback. We're looking at wireframes before any development happens, and we're testing everything before it goes into production."

"We have complete control over the process and at any given time, I know exactly what the team is working on and when it will be complete," she adds. "When you consider that this is a completely new area of work for us, that also brings along a completely new vocabulary, it has been a smooth process."