

How Gwinnett Technical College Scaled Student Support with Mongoose Text and Chat

Overview

Gwinnett Technical College, a public two-year institution in Georgia, serves just under 13,000 students—and continues to grow. Over the past five years, the college has experienced more than 40% enrollment growth, an uncommon trajectory in today's higher education environment. With rising enrollment and limited staff capacity, Gwinnett Tech needed scalable, responsive communication tools that could meet students where they are—without sacrificing the human element that defines their student support model. Since adopting Mongoose in 2017 and more recently implementing Mongoose Chat (which they call “Griff”), the college has transformed its support for students across admissions, registration, financial aid, and student success.

Challenge

Like many public institutions, Gwinnett Tech faced increasing enrollment with finite staffing resources. Traditional channels—especially email—were falling short. **Betsy Harris-Brackett, Executive Director**, said, “We are a publicly funded institution, and we share the pain points that a lot of institutions have. When you’ve got higher enrollment than you have staff, adding new technology and trying to stay current with how our students are receiving information is important. We all know students don’t read their emails.”

Students were missing deadlines, overlooking key steps, and reaching out after hours with urgent questions. Meanwhile, internal teams were juggling high call volume and siloed communication systems. Gwinnett Tech also had prior experience with chatbot technology that did not meet expectations. **Carolyn Duven, Executive Director of Student Support Services**, noted, “When we ventured into chat with another product, the smart bot that had pre-loaded scripts that we could train. It was not successful. The bot was not smart.”

Training that tool required building rigid language trees manually—a task the team simply didn’t have time for. Gwinnett Tech needed a conversational tool that was intelligent, scalable, and easy to manage—without requiring a full-time chatbot engineer.

Solution

Gwinnett Tech initially implemented Mongoose to streamline texting around orientation, deadlines, and registration reminders.

“We use Mongoose daily in our interactions with students, replying to text messages and engaging. It has become integrated into what we do across the Division of Student Affairs.”

CAROLYN DUVEN

Teams rely on segmentation, CSV uploads, and scheduled Smart Messages to manage communications at scale. But texting was only the beginning.

Enter Mongoose Chat: A Smarter Bot, Built for Reality

When Gwinnett Tech revisited chatbot solutions, there was hesitation. Carolyn said, “There was a lot of fear around getting another smart bot.” The turning point came with generative AI powered by institutional website content. Carolyn said,

“When we had the demonstration, we created our website called ‘Break the Bot’ to test it. We started asking questions to see what we would get. That really sold us on the quality of the product and how easy it is to train it.”

Unlike previous bots, Griff doesn’t rely on static scripts alone. It pulls from Gwinnett Tech’s own website and content—keeping responses grounded in institutional information. Carolyn added,

“I like the large language model that we use with Griff because it’s dependent on the information that we provide. It’s not pulling from Google or anything else. That makes us feel really comfortable because we have control over how the bot is being trained and what information it has access to.”

Implementation & Impact

24/7 Student Support Without Expanding Staff

Gwinnett Tech’s call center includes just four staff members and a manager. That small team supports thousands of students during business hours.

“ With chat, our goal was to be able to have more students served and to have a tool that would allow people to do multiple uses. Our call center has four staff members and a manager. We have four people answering all the phones during business hours and managing chat.

CAROLYN DUVEN

Chat now absorbs routine inquiries—everything from registration timelines to financial aid questions—before escalating to a human. “Students have to go through these prompts before we’re going to get to a human. So students don’t have to talk to folks to ask basic questions,” added Carolyn. At the same time, chat data has become a diagnostic tool for institutional improvement. Carolyn said,

“ Every time we found gaps, we created a training document and asked those departments to update the information. The bot is taking what we’ve provided—it’s not magically creating new information. We can use the bot as a reflection of what students have access to and use it as a tool to help us improve.

Rather than replacing human interaction, chat enhances it. “My goal would be that Griff, our bot, is not another chatbot that doesn’t answer the question. We can use the tool and the training to ensure the bot provides an accurate, clear, and concise reflection of information students have access to,” added Carolyn.

A Critical Moment: First-Day Crisis Communication

When Gwinnett Tech introduced a new registration system, unexpected issues caused disruptions to students’ ability to access the learning management system on the first day of classes.

No single department had the full picture of what had happened or how to enact a solution. Students were confused. Leadership needed to reach thousands of students immediately. And Microsoft’s 10,000-per-24-hour cap per sender made email unworkable. Texting and chat became the lifeline. Carolyn said,

“ Our IT folks were unable to send out 13,000 emails in a day because the system simply would not allow it. And so we, of course, immediately turned to Mongoose. I don’t know where we would’ve been if we didn’t have Mongoose because we needed to reach every single student who was registered in that moment.

Staff monitored the shared inbox, tagged conversations, searched by student name, and responded in real time. Students reported issues via text and chat, giving leadership actionable data. The result was not just communication, but coordinated crisis management. Carolyn stressed,

“ I don’t think we would’ve been able to respond or feel nearly as competent if we had not had Mongoose to communicate with students through all of those issues.

CAROLYN DUVEN

Metrics That Matter

Gwinnett Tech doesn’t focus on vanity metrics. Instead, they watch opt-outs, response rates, and long-term engagement. For leadership, Mongoose reporting helps justify continued investment.

Carolyn shared,

“ The low opt-out rates and high response rates when we send out Smart Messages are important. The number of students who will respond to a Smart Message a month later because it’s been sitting in their inbox—that’s important.

“We can get a lot of the data out of the system to sell it to our president and to other vice presidents to make the justification about why it’s important for us,” Carolyn added.

The Mongoose Difference

Team-Based Communication

“ We function in teams here at Gwinnett Tech, so the feature of the teams in Mongoose is essential. I can message a student, and I may have meetings all afternoon. Carolyn will see that the student has responded and take that interaction over the finish line.

BETSY HARRIS-BRACKETT

Students experience one consistent voice, even if multiple staff members are involved.

Real Partnership

“ I feel like we have a real partnership. The Mongoose team is great about being able to understand what we are saying we need. They’re very responsive. There’s never a stupid question.

BETSY HARRIS-BRACKETT

“ The Mongoose team translates jargon very easily. I know there’s a lot of technical stuff going on in the background. What’s important to me is how I’m going to interact with that.

CAROLYN DUVEN

Looking Ahead

Gwinnett Tech sees AI as an assistant—not a replacement.



I think we will use AI to help us craft text, to help us wordsmith text messages. Right now, that's a three-person job. One of us drafts it, and then we send it around to make sure it has all the pieces and parts we need.

CAROLYN DUVEN

As chat expands across more web pages and departments, the goal remains clear: keep communication human, clear, and responsive. “Students can tell what’s real and what’s not. Maintaining that personal, human-centered communication will always be key,” Carolyn added.

Conclusion

For Gwinnett Technical College, Mongoose is more than a texting tool. It is the infrastructure that enables scalable support in a high-growth environment.

From daily reminders to first-day crisis communication to AI-powered chat that improves institutional content, Mongoose helps Gwinnett Tech meet students where they are—at scale and with empathy.



If it's our choice, we'd use Mongoose forever and always.

CAROLYN DUVEN

Mongoose Conversation Intelligence Platform

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