CASE STUDY · WESTERN IOWA TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

mongoose

How WITCC built one coordinated texting model across nine teams

Overview

Western Iowa Tech Community College (WITCC), a public two-year college in Sioux City, Iowa, was an early Mongoose partner. When Dr. Christina Brandon first brought Mongoose to campus, no one at the college was texting students. Today, nine teams across recruitment, student services, housing, accommodations, and IT text students from one platform, connected to Ellucian Recruit and Ellucian Advise, with WhatsApp available alongside Text.

INSTITUTION	Public two-year community college
LOCATION	Sioux City, Iowa
TEAMS	9 using Mongoose
CHANNELS	Text, WhatsApp
CONNECTORS	Ellucian Recruit, Ellucian Advise

The challenge

Christina has spent more than 22 years at WITCC and now serves as Dean of Outreach and Information Technology. When she stepped into the Associate Dean of Students role, the college couldn't text students, and student communication relied on email.

- → Each department reached students on its own schedule
- → Low attendance at activities, housing events, and visit days
- → No data on who read, replied, or what time worked

Why Mongoose

The college's technology director asked Christina to vet texting products herself. Two criteria shaped the search. Staff across the college, including the non-credit corporate college, had to use the platform without a steep learning curve. Students needed texts to feel like a normal conversation, without a separate app or opt-in step.

~90% of campus visit day registrants now show up, up from roughly 50 to 60 percent before Mongoose.

> "It is not going to take you very long to see an impact, and I think that's what we need now at community colleges."

DR. CHRISTINA BRANDON · DEAN OF OUTREACH AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

> “I felt that each department was doing their own thing. We were assuming that the students were going to read email all day long and pick up everything that they needed.”
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON

> “What I said when I went to vet products is, make me think that I’m sending this message from my iPhone to this person. I wanted that experience to be smooth on both ends.”
>
> DR. CHRISTINA BRANDON · WESTERN IOWA TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A PLATFORM THAT KEPT GROWING

Mongoose’s product roadmap also mattered. As an early adopter, WITCC started before texting templates, AI features, the Ellucian Recruit and Advise connectors, and today’s reporting were available. Christina could see where the platform was headed, and Mongoose responded to the ideas she raised early on. “It’s hard to get all the features that you need, but I knew that we were getting there along the path,” Christina said.

IT owns the capability; departments own the conversation

Christina’s split role shapes how WITCC runs Mongoose. Marketing and recruitment write the templates and nudges together. The IT team watches for new capabilities, tests them, and teaches the departments how to use them.

> “It’s easy to get the product, and it functions for what you want right now, but that doesn’t mean that it doesn’t have new capability to move beyond that.”
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON · DEAN OF OUTREACH AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

01

Connecting Ellucian Recruit and Advise

IT set up and tested the connection between Mongoose and Ellucian Recruit and Ellucian Advise. Staff used to log in to each system separately. “It’s made their lives on the other end much nicer, because it’s one place they have to go,” Christina said.

02

Adding WhatsApp

IT learned about Mongoose’s WhatsApp channel, investigated it, and added it in 2025, before the departments knew it was an option.

SHARED INBOXES VERSUS INDIVIDUAL NUMBERS

WITCC now decides with each team's leader whether a role needs its own texting number or a seat on a shared inbox. The front-desk administrative assistant in admissions, for example, works from a team inbox. "At first, I gave everybody their own individual numbers, and I said, have fun, go text," Christina said. "Then you had to think back from that to see what worked best."

One map of every message a student receives

A working group led by marketing mapped every student communication while the college refreshed its brand and logo. Each area that texts students, including recruitment, financial aid, marketing, student services, and housing, sent a representative to the table.

> **"Now, with one solution in place, we can trace the number of messages that a single student is getting, how often they're coming, and who is responsible for sending them."**
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON

The group's focus was frequency. If admissions and student activities both plan to text the same student on the same day, someone needs to see that before the messages go out.

RESULTS ACROSS CAMPUS

01

Campus visit days you can plan for

Recruitment used to prepare for 100 visitors and see about 60 arrive, sometimes closer to half. With texted invitations, reminders, and two-way replies, about 90 percent of registrants now attend, and students who need to reschedule can text.

02

Laptops that come back

IT texts students in WITCC's one-to-one MacBook program to return their devices. Christina estimates a 10 percent decrease in students who don't return laptops, pay a late fee, or stop responding about the device.

03

Outreach that used to take a mailing

When a recruiter heads to a high school, a quick text lets students know where to find them. Postcards and emails did the same job before, with more work and a lower response.

04

Messages that feel personal

Housing texts every resident on their birthday. "It may seem small, but some of those folks are a long ways from home," Christina said. The accommodations office checks in around midterms, since many students won't call or email but will text back.

> **"It used to be, how many today are just going to show up out of the blue? Now it's so nice to say, this is actually how many are coming. You can make the experience better for everyone."**
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON

VERY FEW OPT-OUTS

WITCC reviews opt-out rates at its quarterly meetings with Mongoose, and they stay very low. Christina credits a simple rule: every text asks the student to do something.

> **"If they get a text, there's an action connected to it, and I think that's important, too."**
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON

GUARDRAILS, LEARNED EARLY

Months after launch, the research department decided to update student information by text.

> **"The phone rang off the hook that day here at the institution, because everybody thought it was a giant scam. We learned very quickly that we definitely have to be careful of what we're asking."**
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON

Today, WITCC reviews texting practices against its FERPA policy and cybersecurity guidance. Texts don't include a student's exact balance or a specific grade. They point students to the secure place where they can see that information.

HUMAN JUDGMENT ON AI, BY DESIGN

WITCC uses AI for quick responses and one-off questions, then hands the conversation to a person for anything deeper. Christina also uses AI to refresh templates that had started to sound alike, pasting in last year's message and asking for a new version.

> **"When it gets to that point where you're still giving that information, and you haven't got to what it is yet, then that's where you have to kick in as the human side of it and be that person."**
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON

WORKING WITH MONGOOSE

Buy-in across nine teams came from results. When colleagues asked whether texting worked, or whether 9 a.m. performed better than 3:30 p.m., Christina pointed them to campaign data in Mongoose. Teams saw that texting helped them work faster and more strategically, without adding to their workload. "Try it. You're going to get more appointments, I'm just telling you," she said.

Christina describes the Mongoose team as "probably the most organized and thoughtful" vendor she works with. Quarterly meetings review how WITCC uses the platform and recommend improvements. After the initial implementation, staff need very little hands-on help, and most answer their own questions through the Mongoose Knowledge Base. "Everybody uses it here, and they're like, I wish every product had that," Christina said.

> **"Most of the time, the suggestions that are being offered aren't to add more, or do more, or cost more. It is: use what we already gave to you, and use it more effectively."**
>
> DR. CHRISTINA BRANDON · WESTERN IOWA TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

WHAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE

- **IT as the engine for new capability.** IT tests and introduces connectors and channels, so departments don't have to research them.
- **Deliberate inbox design.** Each team, with its leader, decides who needs a personal number or a shared inbox.
- **One platform, one view of the student.** Every team texts from one place, showing message volume, frequency, and ownership per student.
- **Clear guardrails.** Texting sits alongside FERPA and cybersecurity policy, and every message carries an action.

LOOKING AHEAD

Christina sees Mongoose taking a larger role in how students get answers. Today, students can ask questions through a website tool that summarizes web pages. She would rather give students one number to text, with each question routed to the right department and answered by staff who know the student and their program.

> **"If you get a text, and I have the information behind that person, of the program, who they are, and what they're doing, my answer might be very tailored instead of that general web summary."**
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON

Her advice to other campus leaders aligning several departments on one approach: build your teams first, then let each one start texting.

> **"Formulate the teams of how you're going to do it, and each team will be able to start working pretty quickly."**
>
> CHRISTINA BRANDON

Want to see what one coordinated texting model could look like at your college?

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