

FORGING NEW PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Through Innovation and Collaboration



Executive Summary

In 2009, flat online student enrollments at Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP) jeopardized the sustainability of some of their online programs. To stimulate growth, CSP sought to increase the size and expertise of their online enrollment team and boost marketing initiatives for online programs, but lacked the funds and personnel to do so. CSP leadership had a bold vision for growth and needed a partner to bring it to fruition.

In 2011, after meeting with several online program management (OPM) companies, CSP chose to partner with Learning House, a Wiley brand, based on their focused ability to optimize online programs for growth and their dedication to improving students' lives. Through data-proven best practices and the fortitude to innovate, Learning House swiftly enabled CSP to reverse flat enrollment trends with an infusion of 709 online student starts in 2012. Growth accelerated as Learning House provided CSP with the expertise and skilled workforce to achieve 1,359 online student starts in 2018, a 92 percent increase over the first year. Forty-eight online programs have been engaged or introduced, including an RN to BSN and a Bachelor of Science in computer science that were new to CSP and are now the university's fifth- and sixth-largest online undergraduate programs, respectively.

Additional achievements of the CSP-Learning House partnership include:

 Doubled the lead-to-start conversion rate from 2012 to 2018	 2,700+ online students graduated from 2012 to 2018	 2,000+ actively enrolled online students in 2018 (174% growth since 2012)
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"Before we partnered with Learning House, CSP was often referred to as 'St. Paul's best kept secret,' but now the secret is out," said Dr. Kimberly Craig, vice president of enrollment management and tenure-track faculty in the College of Business and Technology at CSP. Now, CSP aims to enroll more online students than any other institution in the region. To achieve this goal, they have extended their partnership with Learning House through 2025 and are now taking advantage of Learning House's instructional design services. The partnership has created a formula for long-term success that promotes collaboration, continuous innovation and process improvement to foster superior student experiences, and the launch of online programs with viable growth potential.



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-Dr. Kimberly Craig



About Concordia University, St. Paul

Founded in 1893, Concordia University, St. Paul is a comprehensive liberal arts university that delivers academic programs designed to respond to marketplace needs by teaching relevant skills and abilities that employers seek. CSP's affiliation with The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and the university's Christian setting allow students to discover and engage their purpose for life, career, and service. Visit csp.edu for information.

Challenges

In 2009, leaders at Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP) knew the sustainability of their online programs depended on innovation. They reached this conclusion after their online learning initiatives began to stagnate.

"We saw enrollments were beginning to plateau, with little growth in undergraduate programs while competition increased," Dr. Craig said. CSP's enrollment team also encountered an increasing number of students who were questioning whether a college degree was worth the cost of tuition. This further hampered CSP's recruiting initiatives and highlighted the need to launch programs that deliver employable skills in a tight job market.

If CSP maintained their status quo, many of their online programs could become unsustainable. The university faced major headwinds to spurring growth. They lacked the significant capital to expand and scale their enrollment team, implement marketing initiatives, or optimize their online programs for market demands.

Fast forward to 2018 – online student starts have more than doubled since 2009. CSP's online programs are not only sustainable, they've launched several new market-driven programs and refined existing programs to generate growth throughout the university. How did they do it? By being willing to adapt, having the courage to innovate, and gaining the support of a dedicated online program management (OPM) partner.



**ONLINE STUDENT
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Solution

CSP engaged Learning House about forming an OPM partnership in 2011. Learning House proposed a strategy to drive growth via data-proven best practices, creativity, courage to try new things, and a student-first mindset. Embracing that strategy, CSP put their trust in Learning House's enterprise approach to managing — and growing — the majority of the university's online programs.

Key tactics included:

- **Robust marketing, enrollment and retention teams staffed by Learning House with capacity to scale as the university grew**
- **Student-first enrollment and advising practices**
- **The removal of barriers to student success**
- **Strategic marketing efforts related to both the university's brand and specific programs**
- **Market-driven upgrades to CSP's online program portfolio**

"After we saw their strategy and company culture matching that of CSP's, choosing which path to take became easy," Dr. Craig said. "And Learning House shared the same passion for improving students' lives that we did."

With the partnership in place, it was time to bring Learning House's strategy from the page to reality. But first, they needed to knock down barriers that had restricted CSP's growth in the past.

Integrated, Expanded Workforce

To jumpstart the partnership, Learning House directly hired enrollment counselors, academic advisors and marketing professionals who were dedicated to achieving CSP's mission. This investment helped CSP more than double their workforce in a very short period without investing a dollar in new payroll costs.

By taking on the cost of staffing marketing and student services for CSP's online programs, Learning House helped CSP de-risk their path to growth. Throughout the partnership, this has cleared the way for both partners to focus on what they do best as they collaborate to deliver extraordinary academic experiences to more online students.

Best of all, a shared passion and culture for student success has helped Learning House teams seamlessly integrate with their partners at CSP. "We don't see them as a separate entity," said Dr. Craig. "They are a true extension of the university."

"They are a true extension of the university."

—Dr. Craig



High-Touch, Student-Centric Enrollment Strategy

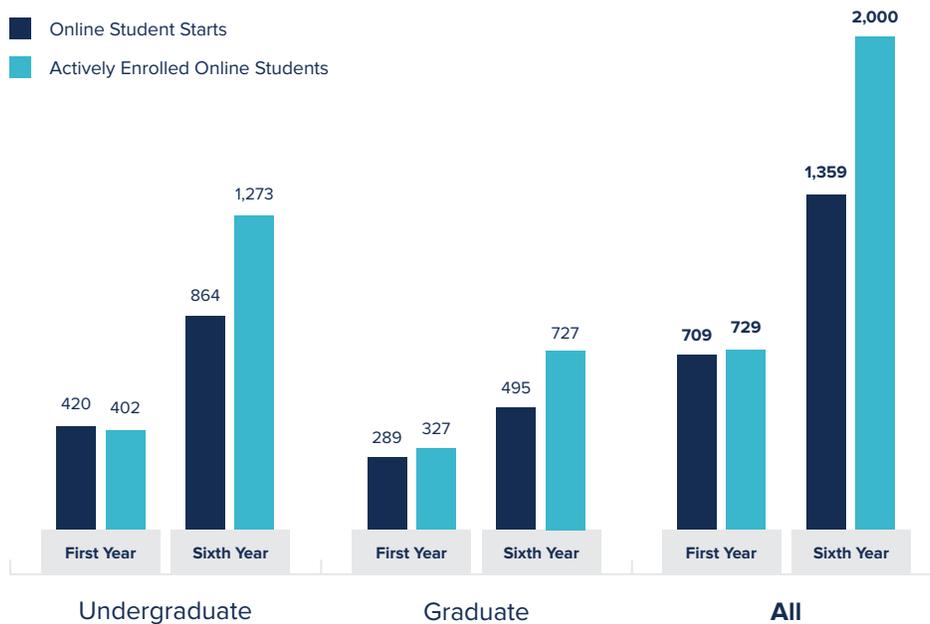
Expanding staff was key to implementing Learning House’s enrollment strategy, especially after increasing the volume of prospective online students through marketing initiatives. When the partnership began, Learning House committed to fully serving prospective students by dedicating one enrollment counselor for every 75 active CSP applicants. Learning House’s ample staffing continues to this day, and it allows counselors to respond to applicants within hours and guide them through an enrollment experience that is tailored to their goals.

“Learning House takes time to meet with students and help them find which academic program fits them best,” Dr. Craig said. During this process, enrollment counselors communicate with prospective students as they prefer — be it a call, email or text — and learn why they’re pursuing a degree. Enrollment counselors also identify roadblocks that could impede success, and after students enroll, they maintain personal contact through the start of classes so students stay engaged.

Learning House applied their high-touch, student-centric enrollment strategy to help CSP reverse flat enrollment trends and start 709 new online students during the partnership’s first year. Learning House’s enrollment team continued to build on that success, culminating in 1,359 online student starts in 2018, a 92 percent gain over the first year. During that same period, the number of actively enrolled online students grew an impressive 174 percent.

Online Student Population Comparison*

First Year (Sept. 2012 – Aug. 2013) and Sixth Year (Sept. 2017 – Aug. 2018) of Partnership



*Students that Learning House enrolled.

Rapid-Response Student Advising

After online students begin a program, support for their education journey seamlessly transitions to a Learning House academic advisor. Advisors develop supportive relationships with CSP online students through regular check-ins and close monitoring of behavior data, which helps identify students at risk of attrition. These measures enable advisors to assist students with navigating barriers they are feeling and connect them with resources that promote success, such as tutoring services.

By the time CSP students complete a program, they average nearly 140 interactions with Learning House advisors, including regular progress check-ins and phone calls to help underperforming students. This support for student success has helped CSP's online programs produce over 2,700 online graduates over the life of the partnership. In June 2018, the combination of support from Learning House advisors, growing enrollments and programmatic refinements led to a 39 percent year-over-year increase in online graduates.

Best-Practice Optimizations

Beyond advising, CSP and Learning House have boosted student success by continuously refining online programs to provide a seamless, student-friendly experience. For example, early in the partnership, CSP scored a major win for students by increasing the number of new online student entry points to six, rather than having standard semesters or trimesters. Flexibility is a student-driven enhancement that adds enrollment access.

"Learning House challenged us to look at all our practices and processes through the lens of a student," Dr. Craig said. As a result, CSP removed barriers and implemented enhancements to gain traction with students in the competitive online marketplace.

Examples include:

- **Offering asynchronous classes for bachelor's programs so students can log into courses on their schedule**
- **Eliminating cohort requirements that had restricted when students could take classes or start a program**
- **Leveling all undergraduate programs to 120 credit hours, which aligns CSP with most public institutions**
- **Transfer-friendly policies that let community college students apply credits toward a CSP bachelor's degree**

"These changes have provided flexibility for students to take control of their education," said Heather Brown, senior director of enrollment at Learning House. "Not every school has the courage to make big changes, but CSP has found success by optimizing their policies to improve the student experience."

Market-Driven Program Expansion

Learning House regularly conducts comprehensive market research to identify new programs that will meet online student demand and prepare students for careers in growing fields. Such research led to the launch of several new programs, including an online Bachelor of Science in computer science in 2013 and an online RN to BSN in 2014.

Because CSP did not currently offer any technical degrees online, Learning House led curriculum development for the computer science program and collaborated with experts to build a quality program in less than a year. This successful launch helped CSP develop trust in Learning House's instructional design team. Now, CSP has tasked the team with building additional programs, including an MSN to FNP program that is currently in development.

“Learning House brought these programs to us and encouraged us to add them to our academic roster,” Dr. Craig said. Rapid increases in student enrollment spurred the RN to BSN and BS in computer science to become CSP's fifth- and sixth-largest online undergraduate programs, respectively.

Learning House's market research has helped CSP optimize their entire program portfolio and focus investments in online programs with the most growth potential. This lays the foundation for CSP to offer programs that prepare students for careers of the future, and for CSP to continually evolve their programs according to students' needs. By strategically integrating career-driven degrees in psychology, health care, and computer science into their diverse mix of programs, CSP has better served the varying goals of online learners — and achieved tremendous growth, as a result.



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Online Programs With the Most Student Starts*
First and Sixth Years of Partnership

First Year
Sept. 2012 - Aug. 2013

Graduate			Undergraduate		
Rank	Program	Student Starts	Rank	Program	Student Starts
1	MBA	85	1	B.A. in Exercise Science	94
2	M.A. in Human Resource Management	37	2	B.A. in Business	70
3	M.A. in Leadership and Management	36	3	B.A. in Management and Leadership	41
4	M.A. in Education – Early Childhood	27	4	B.A. in Human Resource Management	38
5	M.A. in Sport Management	23	5	B.A. in Health Care Administration	34

Sixth Year
Sept. 2017 - Aug. 2018

Graduate				Undergraduate			
Rank	Program	Student Starts	Growth Since Program Launched	Rank	Program	Student Starts	Growth Since Program Launched
1	MBA	139	64%	1	B.A. in Exercise Science	191	103%
2	M.A. in Human Resource Management	84	127%	2	B.A. in Business	109	56%
3	M.S. in Exercise Science**	73	630%	3	B.A. in Psychology**	73	7,200%
4	M.A. in Human Services – Forensic Behavioral Health	41	95%	4	B.A. in Child Development	61	154%
5	M.A. in Education – Early Childhood	37	37%	5	RN to BSN**	59	5,800%

*Students that Learning House enrolled.

**Market-driven program that launched after the partnership began.

Strategic, Expansive Marketing

Learning House’s substantial and strategic marketing investment has been key to growing CSP’s online programs and developing a stronger institutional brand. These efforts are a transformational feature of the partnership, as CSP previously lacked the financial resources to widely promote their online programs. Also, by taking on upfront marketing costs on CSP’s behalf, Learning House mitigated capital risks to the university.

Throughout the partnership, Learning House has heavily invested in marketing initiatives to develop regional – and even national – brand awareness of CSP and the value their degrees deliver. And Learning House has allocated marketing funds strategically, as their efforts have generated 76,000 leads while also doubling the lead-to-start conversion rate over the life of the partnership.

Initiatives include:

- **Targeted campaigns that integrate a range of digital and traditional advertising, including TV, radio, pay-per-click, social media, billboards, transit, and other mediums**
- **A website redesign that improved user experience and SEO**
- **A fully integrated social media strategy centered on both brand and program-specific campaigns, as well as employing social media influencers to reach more prospective students**

“Before we partnered with Learning House, CSP was often referred to as ‘St. Paul’s best kept secret,’ but now the secret is out,” Dr. Craig said. “Learning House was able to lift our brand awareness and has done wonders for us on the marketing side with their thoughtful and ambitious marketing strategy.”

Community Partnerships and Recruiting

Learning House’s marketing strategy has gone beyond advertising and social media to include partnerships with businesses and educational institutions. A regional field team — hired and employed by Learning House — was created for CSP’s market and continues to grow. The team has promoted student-start growth at CSP through strategic relationships with 42 community colleges and 151 organizations, such as corporations, police departments, professional associations and hospital systems.

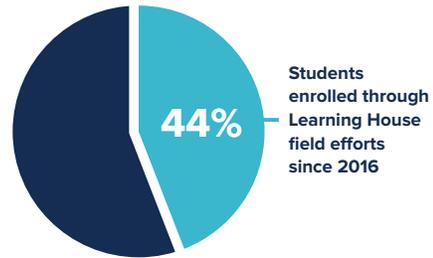
Through these relationships, CSP offers affordable pathways to education by helping:

- **Community college students transfer credits to a bachelor’s degree program at CSP, as well as get access to substantial scholarships**
- **Employees and members of area businesses and organizations advance their careers via tuition discounts for CSP programs**

Dr. Craig praised the field team’s modality-neutral, enterprise approach to supporting CSP. “They are committed to our university, not just the success of our online programs,” she said. The field team has become so important to the university that they now have office space on CSP’s

campus. “In our day-to-day, we forget who works for CSP and who works for Learning House because the integration and partnership are just so seamless,” Dr. Craig added.

Most importantly, the field team has expanded CSP’s online student population. Since 2016, their efforts have resulted in 1,593 student starts — which equates to 44 percent of students who have enrolled through Learning House since that time.



Collaborative Leadership

By partnering with Learning House, CSP has gained enterprise-wide expertise that has sparked growth throughout the university. Trusting Learning House to lead online enrollment, retention and marketing initiatives has allowed CSP’s faculty and administration to increase their focus on delivering an excellent educational experience to students.

But CSP and Learning House aren’t working in silos. They have formed a true partnership and collaborate on innovative ways to serve more students and improve outcomes. “Learning House brought a fresh perspective, prompting us to remove barriers to help students,” Dr. Craig said.

Leaders at Learning House credit CSP’s courageous leadership as a tremendous asset to implementing best practices. “It’s often difficult to convince a university to make changes, even for best practices,” Brown said. “But CSP is open to new ideas and continually pushes us to find solutions with a student-first mindset.”

Putting students first has spurred process improvements and optimized CSP’s entire program portfolio. Asynchronous classes, transfer-friendly policies, additional start dates, market-driven programs — these student-first initiatives have allowed CSP to achieve the growth they desired at the beginning of the partnership. Dr. Craig said the integrated nature of their relationship with Learning House has been key to their success.

“It has been a seamless partnership,” Dr. Craig said. “The best you could hope for.”



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Results

Through their collaborative partnership with Learning House, CSP nearly doubled annual online student starts from fall 2012 to fall 2018. During that period, actively enrolled **online student totals increased 174 percent**. Learning House helped drive this growth by developing a robust online enrollment team, aligning their recruiting initiatives with best practices, and launching relevant, outcome-driven online programs. Learning House further stimulated online student starts by developing new marketing initiatives that have **generated 76,000 leads** and expanded awareness for CSP's brand. The partners also created dependable recruitment pipelines via **partnerships with 42 community colleges and 151 organizations**. In 2017, these efforts saw CSP achieve 5,000 total students for the first time in school history, with the help of over **1,150 online students** that started that year.

However, success extends beyond online student starts, as CSP has improved student outcomes through an eagerness to adapt to market trends and embrace best practices to create an optimal learning environment. Support provided by Learning House academic advisors, in conjunction with student start gains and program enhancements, have helped produce **2,700 online graduates**. In June 2018, **online graduates increased 39 percent** over the same month in 2017. In addition, sustained program refinements have created high student satisfaction, with **93 percent of CSP students saying they would recommend the university** to a prospective student, according to a 2017 survey.

And the partners are only getting started. In Aug. 2018, CSP extended their partnership with Learning House through 2025. They have bold plans for the next phase of the partnership, including utilizing Learning House's instructional design services to enhance CSP's existing areas of study and create new programs with viable growth potential. To begin, the partners are collaborating on an MSN to FNP program that will launch in 2019, with other innovative programs on the horizon.

"Through our recent partnership with Learning House's instructional design team, we are able to build a curriculum for the future," Dr. Craig said. "We will expand programs and the ways in which we deliver these programs. And continue to innovate and not stay stagnant in this ever-evolving world of change."

Launching in-demand programs will help CSP reach their new enrollment goal: 7,000 total on-campus and online students by 2024. Learning House is supporting that goal by continuing to refine best practices, personalize enrollment strategies and implement leading marketing tactics.

"We now have the goal of being the No. 1 online institution in the region. And that's all possible because of our partnership with Learning House."

—Dr. Craig



About Wiley

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About Learning House

Learning House, a [Wiley](#) brand, helps people improve their lives through education. As a complement to the technology-enabled education solutions offered by [Wiley Education Services](#), we partner with more than 60 institutions across the US, Europe, and Australia, and support over 600 degree programs. Additional solutions include Enterprise Learning Solutions, The Software Guild, Learning House International and Advancement Courses. Through our broad portfolio, Learning House delivers more students, more graduates, and better outcomes. For more information visit www.learninghouse.com.