Case Study

NICE and Nichols College Collaborate to Revolutionize the Market with Citizen Developers

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Higher education

WEBSITE

www.nichols.edu
Location: Dudley, Massachusetts

BUSINESS NEEDS

- Automation education
- Building marketable tech skills
- Operational optimization
- Community service

NICE SMARTCENTER SOLUTIONS

- Robotic Process Automation
- NEVA Assist (Attended Automation)

THE IMPACT

- Time savings in multiple processes
- Increased accuracy
- Improved security
- Greater employee, student and customer satisfaction
- Student and faculty engagement
- Students gain practical experience with emerging technology

ON THE NICE SOLUTION

"The partnership with NICE catapults Nichols College to the forefront of tech business and leadership education, and builds an analytics mindset across the institution."

Glenn M. Sulmasy, President of Nichols College

Nichols College
Learn. Lead. Succeed.

About Nichols College

Founded in 1815, Nichols College is a four-year private, not-for-profit, coeducational institution offering associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees, as well as certificate programs. The school specializes in business and leadership training, and was ranked as the "Best Business Education" by readers of the Worcester Business Journal in 2014 and 2016-2021. Nichols boasts a student-to-faculty ratio of 16 to 1, with 148 faculty members and 175 administrative and support staff.

Case Study

THE THE GOAL

Nichols College takes a distinctive career-focused and leadership-based approach to learning, both in and out of the classroom. Part of that orientation is providing its students with the skills and tools they need to participate in what many have called the industrial revolution 4.0.

In this context, a trustee who had been very successful in the world of finance suggested that the school focus on those emerging technologies that current businesses are finding a challenge to master. If Nichols did so, he argued, the school and its alumni would be positioned to provide critical value to the marketplace and help train others.

That piece of forward-looking advice was perfectly aligned with the culture of innovation and community service at Nichols College. The dean then assigned an associate professor and several students the task of identifying a field of emerging technology to introduce to the curriculum. After some research, they narrowed it down to cybersecurity or robotic process automation (RPA).

The final decision to focus on RPA was due to several factors: process automation resonated really well with Nichols' students; companies partnering with the college identified the topic as important to them; and research indicates that experienced automation developers remain hard to find despite a rapid growth in demand. In fact, it is expected that many companies will have to incorporate employees with IT skillsets to support departmental business applications (such as fintech, HR software, etc.), without dependence on the IT team.

THE SOLUTION

Nichols College next considered how best to reach the goal of providing students the necessary professional skills for RPA, while also creating direct value for small businesses and non-profits. The result was the establishment of the Center for Intelligent Process Automation (CIPA), a center of excellence for experiential education designed to meet the rapid growth in demand for automation experts.

CIPA offers students an unrivaled immersive opportunity to be trained as citizen developers who can support or consult on RPA projects. This includes tackling real-world automation challenges faced by organizations in and around Nichols College.

A partner for revolutionizing learning

NICE was selected for the CIPA initiative following a competitive procurement process. Nichols College sought to ensure that its students are trained on the most cutting-edge technology, with the best support and tools available.

For its part, NICE partnered with Nichols College in the CIPA initiative to help shape the future workforce. With more employees bringing much-desired automation skills to the table, companies and organizations have more options to meet their process optimization needs.

CIPA Director Bryant Richards praised the NICE team and its technology, saying, "NICE Automation Studio is how we think, it's how we teach, it's how our students are brought up - it just clicks with who we are as citizen developers."

Instructors at CIPA leverage NICE's RPA software capabilities and training to provide support and hands-on experience to Nichols students. Students get academic credits for their classes at CIPA, as well as additional credits when they take part in consulting on automation projects at local companies. The CIPA project has garnered such an upswell of support that many students have volunteered to work on improving the CIPA project outside of class and even after graduation.

Starting at home

CIPA leadership adopted a strategy of giving students the opportunity to build automations that are actually deployed within Nichols College. These projects serve as a training ground for students, a source of continuous innovation for the greater Nichols community, and a showcase of what Nichols College graduates can accomplish in the job market.

In close collaboration with the school's IT department, the CIPA team decided to identify automation projects that were targeted, simple and scalable. These included automations in the call center, admissions, management and student communications (e.g., course data, notifications to keep faculty informed, welcome messages, file management, etc.).

With the CIPA strategy and the support of NICE, students learn to think in new ways. They can identify automation use cases, routine steps needed for a business process, and data management challenges.

THE RESULTS

Student-led automation projects in the context of CIPA courses have already had a measurable impact at Nichols College. Among these are:

- Automatic updates of student or employee user access to the Slate platform raised morale, increased accuracy, and improved security by eliminating the reliance on time-consuming and error-prone manual reviews.
- Notifications and class set-up for the undergraduate adult education program was automated, which improved reporting, increased faculty and student awareness, and saved 15-20 hours each year.
- The course syllabus approval process was automated, boosting morale, improving the student experience, enhancing reporting and compliance levels, and saving 20-25 hours each year.
- An automated notification reminds students receiving a scholarship to fill out a form intended to inform benefactors who is receiving the scholarship and how it is being used. This improves compliance with funding requirements and donor requests, streamlines the scholarship process, and saves about 50 user hours each year.
- Notifications go out to professors automatically whenever a student adds or drops a CBE course, eliminating the need for the instructor to manually check for roster changes. This improves employee engagement and reporting, while saving about 36.5 hours each year.
- Attended automation bots implemented at the college call center provided agents with organized information in real time, saving agents time and effort on navigating disorganized data, increasing consistency, and improving the caller's experience.

THE FUTURE

CIPA, as a "center of excellence", is demonstrating the value of citizen developers and how to create them, with the right know-how and frameworks. As the center's activity becomes more widely known and promoted within Nichols College, students from a growing variety of majors are joining the available courses. Regional companies are also discovering the CIPA graduates and seeking them out more actively.

NICE's alliance with Nichols College also opens the door for additional student-initiated research projects and curricular opportunities at Nichols College. These may include new degree and non-degree programs related to emerging technologies.

About NICE RPA

NICE has been setting industry-wide standards in Robotic Process Automation domain for over 20 years. NEVA is NICE's innovative, fully integrated AI-powered automation platform. It unlocks the full power of RPA, combining the best of attended automation with the advantages of RPA and AI-based process discovery grounded in real data and insights. It enables intelligent process optimization while unleashing employees' potential to ensure exceptional customer experiences. We develop and manage our automation suite from a single platform, hold the largest scale automation projects in the market, and are known for driving digital transformation across the enterprise.

www.nicerpa.com