

Growing a Culture of Engagement at the University of Rhode Island

Realizing they weren't fully utilizing their Engage platform, URI committed to building a centralized involvement hub for students and staff, and increased engagement as a result.



Originally founded in 1888 as an agricultural school, the University of Rhode Island is today a major research institution that serves a diverse population of in-state, out-of-state, and international learners. **Ranked the #1 Public University in New England** by the *Wall Street Journal*, URI educates over 16,500 students across its wide array of undergraduate and graduate programs.

INSTITUTION TYPE:
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATION:
KINGSTON, RI

POPULATION:
16,500+

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCT:
Anthology® Engage



The Challenge

Getting the Most Out of Engage so Students Can Get the Most Out of Involvement

URI first implemented Anthology Engage in 2019, but was initially only using the campus-wide elections feature. Realizing that the university was not taking full advantage of the platform, in June of 2023 they hired Lucas DeWitt, a former graduate assistant in the Student Involvement office, as the new coordinator of organization advising and systems management. He was tasked with fully implementing the Engage platform to manage the student involvement experience on campus—a tall order, but a challenge he rose to. “There wasn’t a dedicated staff member to really champion the platform,” DeWitt said. “There was always engagement on campus, but when I first got here, it seemed a little more siloed.” Too, the Student Involvement office was working with processes that occasionally caused confusion among staff and students, such as the online event form where submissions came into a shared email account. This could be tricky to manage with so many people having access to it. Engage offered the opportunity to not only streamline these processes for staff, but to centralize the involvement experience for students.



The Solution

Showcasing Engage’s Value Across Campus

To get started with re-launching Engage at URI, which was branded as URInvolved, DeWitt began with the student senate-recognized clubs and organizations, getting them set up with their own organization pages within Engage and allowing the student leaders to manage those pages. That, he says, has been a big selling point for Engage with student organizations: “They appreciate Engage because they have that autonomy and ownership of their organization page,” he said.



I’ve continued seeing engagement across campus grow, and am seeing a lot more collaborative programs and events.”

—Lucas DeWitt

Coordinator, Organizations
Advising and Systems
Management at
University of Rhode Island

He also got other campus partners involved in the early adoption of the platform. “One of our main campus partner champions that really introduced a lot of new students to [Engage] was our New Student Transitions team,” he said. “[For our] opening week on campus, they put all their events into the URInvolved platform where they were able to track attendance and advertise to all the incoming students, so that was a great way for students to initially get introduced to the platform.” Other campus partners, such as the Multicultural Student Services Center, were also enthusiastic about adopting Engage to manage and promote their events. “I’ve been very grateful because I’ve had strong campus partnerships that have been willing to be guinea pigs,” DeWitt said.

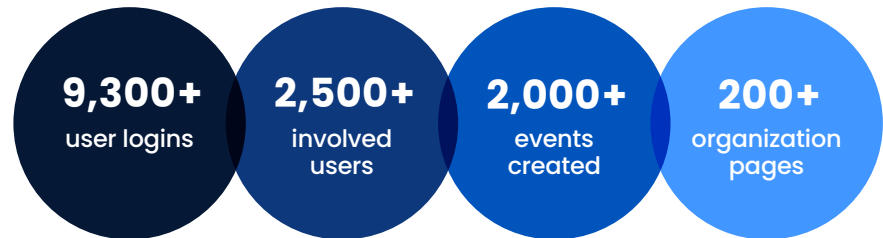
Soon enough, more and more student organizations were utilizing the platform and have continued to do so. “Now it’s starting to become... go to URInvolved if you want to see what’s going on around campus,” Dewitt said.



Insights Delivered

Enhancing Involvement, Engagement, and Beyond

Usage of the Engage platform continues to go up at URI, and constituents across the university have embraced it. “Students love the ability to have everything in one place,” DeWitt said. “Our campus partners like another way to promote the events and activities and programs they’re doing.” Features like events submissions make approval and oversight processes easier for staff, and campus-wide elections continue to be heavily used. Furthermore, DeWitt is excited to increase URI’s use of Engage and explore features that aren’t being used quite yet, such as Paths, as well as leveraging the robust data that the platform provides to not only enhance and improve the student experience, but to support the university’s overall mission as well. DeWitt mentioned that URI’s current strategic plan focuses on student achievement, student success, and fostering an inclusive environment. “Engage kind of naturally just molds into all of the strategic plan initiatives,” he said. The available data already shows the impact of Engage. Since fully launching the platform in August 2023, URI has had over:



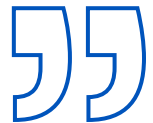
And these metrics have only continued to go up to this point. On the student side, he is eager to use data to show students the tangible value of their involvement. “What I’m really excited about for this upcoming year is helping student organization leaders realize, okay, you did that, but here’s what you learned from that,” he said. “That part is nice, to be able to have those intentional conversations with student leaders to ensure that they can articulate what they got out of their experience.”



DeWitt is also enthusiastic about using data to encourage students to become not only involved, but engaged in their university experience, a distinction he defines as someone attending events or joining a club versus taking on a more active leadership role. “That’s what I’m excited for most, I think, is to really change the perspective of an involved and engaged student here on campus...you don’t have to necessarily be an engaged student, but here is what our data tells us about students that are taking that extra step...this is what our data is telling us about how to be successful, what’s going to prepare you for life after college.”

When asked what advice he’d give other institutions looking to implement Engage, DeWitt said, “It’s perfectly fine to start small...really take the time to slowly build those foundations.” He also mentioned that connecting with other Engage campuses, through events like the **Anthology Together** user conference as well as the **Anthology Community**, was very helpful in seeing and learning from what they were doing. “It’s always nice to feel like you’re not recreating the wheel,” he said. “What works for one university could potentially work for your university as well.”

*It’s been nice to have that sense of connection [with Anthology].
We’re all nerds of higher education when it comes down to it!*



—Lucas DeWitt

Coordinator, Organizations Advising and Systems Management at University of Rhode Island



Epilogue

Anthology would like to profoundly thank Lucas DeWitt for taking the time to share his experience with us, and the whole URI student involvement team for their partnership. We are so excited to see what wonderful things they will do with Engage in the future!

Discover more about **Anthology Engage today**
Learn more at anthology.com

