

# CASE STUDY

## GATES MILLENNIUM SCHOLARS PROGRAM INTEGRATES MENTORING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

### BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program began with a \$1 billion grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 1999. Each year, the GMS Program selects 1,000 talented students to receive a “good-through-graduation” scholarship to use at the college or university of their choice. Gates Millennium Scholars receive personal and professional development through leadership programs along with academic support throughout their college career. Students are of minority ethnic background, the first in their families to attend college, demonstrate high academic and leadership potential, and have significant financial need.

Beginning in 2004, the scholarship program added a student mentoring service for academic and personal development. When Kelvin Harris, Senior Relationship Manager, came on board in 2011, he was tasked with making the program more active and robust.

“We wanted to connect students and alumni in long-lasting relationships that would benefit them both personally and socially,” Harris explains. “We were looking for mentoring program software that was cutting edge and included social media elements that would interest and engage today’s millennial students. We’d outgrown the mentoring software solution we were using before.”



## THE CHRONUS SOLUTION

Harris searched the Internet for an engaging mentoring solution. "We saw a demo of Chronus and knew immediately that this was it," he says. "We liked that it looked friendly, customizable, and the students could connect via Skype."

**A collaborative implementation.** After subscribing to Chronus software, the Chronus implementation team went to work. "We provided the Chronus team with a set of overall goals for the program. They explained all of the options that we could explore, and then we built it together. They helped us conceptualize our thoughts and then put those thoughts into the actual mentor program platform," elaborates Harris. The implementation process was complete within eight weeks.

**A valued program.** Today the program is off and running, connecting the GMS community and using those connections to develop students academically, socially, and professionally. Along the way, participants also build friendships and partnerships. Each year, the program adds 1,000 new students, which is easily achieved with the scalability provided by the software. "Mentoring is always at the top of the conversation in our organization. We get new students connected and engaged right away," Harris explains.



**Favorite Features.** According to Harris, the ability to enable both self-matching and bulk-matching in one program is useful. "One of the great features about Chronus is that it allows the students to reach out to each other to be matched and request matching. This is helpful because we're not a large staff. In our previous program, we had to do matching manually. When we have the majority of new students coming in, we also take advantage of the bulk matching to get everyone started in the program quickly."

Harris also mentioned that their staff appreciates the built-in mentoring workflows for mentors and mentees. "The workflows are really helpful, especially for those who are new to mentoring. It helps mentors and mentees facilitate their dialogue and realize the benefits of the relationship sooner."

Finally, the Gates Millennium Scholars program depends on the reporting tools to measure the health of the program. Harris publishes the growing participation rates, evaluates the connection rates, and reviews the areas of the program that the scholars use most. "As an admin of the program, we like the ability to pull the reports that are populated in real time. For example, we're able to tell that we've improved our new student metric – they now join the program in under 24 hours. We also look at the program health because it tells us what areas we need more work in – connectivity or content -- and we figure out how to improve in those areas."

## SOLUTIONS PROVIDED

- ✓ **Software:** Chronus software for mentoring
- ✓ **Services:** Implementation and configuration services including:
  - ✓ Branded user interface (UI) consistent with the Gates Millennium Scholars Program
  - ✓ Import of user profiles and mentoring connections from previous mentoring software program
  - ✓ Individualized admin training sessions
  - ✓ Various other customizations, including a single sign on feature
- ✓ **Favorite Features:** Flexible matching styles, rich reporting, social media integration.



CHRONUS

Unleash the Power of Mentoring

## BENEFITS REALIZED

The mentoring program is a key driver in enriching the student and alumni experience with the Gates Millennium Scholars Program, contributing to a 97% retention rate of first-year students. "The impact that Chronus has on our program is very powerful," Harris elaborates. "The software makes things a lot smoother overall. For students, the impact is valuable – we see them taking advantage of it and connecting. There's accountability for the student to be more engaged with selecting a mentor, freedom to select their own mentor and self-engage in a mentoring relationship. It also enables our students to be more engaged with our staff, asking questions and conveying any concerns."

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In the first year, the Gates Millennium Scholars actively promoted the program to their students via social media, growing membership six-fold from 500 initial participants to now over 3,000.

**Future Plans.** Students are graduating and as alumni, want to remain engaged with the Gates Millennium Scholars Program and the younger students. "A big focus of our organization is 'giving back,' and we're finding that former mentees are wanting to become mentors. We're like a small college and we try to build that type of culture." To accommodate for this growth, the program is considering moving to the Enterprise Edition of Chronus to increase the number of participants, provide video capability, and take advantage of other larger scale program benefits.

In conclusion, Harris shares his final thoughts: "Overall, our experience with Chronus has been great. We appreciate the frequent communication in sharing updates and feedback. The product delivered what we expected and more. We are very impressed with the program, and our sponsors at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are impressed with the level of involvement we've been able to achieve with our mentoring program."

## FEEDBACK

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– Kelvin Harris,  
Senior Relationship Manager



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## ABOUT CHRONUS

Chronus is the leader in mentoring software. Our configurable platform is powering hundreds of successful mentoring programs for some of the worlds largest companies, educational institutions, and professional associations. With unique MatchIQ technology, a guided experience for participants, and the most configurable platform in the industry, Chronus enables mentoring programs to efficiently scale and drive more strategic value for organizations worldwide.



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