

Long-Term Solutions

An Interview with Jennifer Sousa, Head of Strategic Services, Corvias Group



Jennifer Sousa

EDITORS' NOTE Jennifer Sousa drives optimization of knowledge and the collection of insights into the business to develop annual plans, inform more long-term strategies, and help generate thoughtful insights and recommendations. She is also responsible for managing the annual business planning cycle, facilitating strategy and process-design projects, and supporting the implementation of corporate strategies. She previously served as Vice President of Accounting and Assistant Controller. Sousa transitioned her career to strategy after working in the financial management function for more than 15 years where she was heavily focused on procuring and integrating new business into the organization. She received a bachelor's degree and an M.B.A in Financial Management from Johnson & Wales University, and is a graduate of the Leadership Rhode Island program.

How have you grown while working at Corvias?

I joined the company as an accountant 17 years ago and worked as an assistant controller during a period of heavy procurement and when we were awarded many of our partnerships with the U.S. Army. While financial management was certainly part of my job, I was always engaged in working on the business operations as well. There is a large difference between working on the business and in the business. People trained in financial management and accounting usually work in the business, but I was also given the incredible opportunity to work on the business starting right when I walked through the door.

I was able to thrive in this position and, as a result, join the strategy function. I became part of a core team of individuals that worked to grow the company into what it is today with multiple government and higher education partnerships. Now I work very closely with our Chief Strategy Officer to develop and integrate new planning systems across the company that align with our strategic business goals.

Corvias has given me countless opportunities in my career to learn, change, and grow. The most recent opportunity was in 2015 to complete the competitive Leadership Rhode Island program, which selects a group of individuals to come together and solve some of the key issues the state is facing. As a result, I was able to bring my experience and knowledge I gained back to Corvias and put it to use in working on our strategic planning initiatives. I am so thankful for how supportive everyone at Corvias was of my participation and giving me the chance to embark on that learning journey.

How do you contribute to the company culture?

I strive to incorporate as many aspects of our partnership model and our core principles into my life at Corvias, as well as outside the company. Just as we strive to enter into long-term partnerships, I am truly invested in the success of the company, as well as all of my team members at Corvias. Also, because the strategy function of my job is more of a coordinating function that facilitates the execution of our business strategy, I endeavor to learn as much as I can from my colleagues about the company and what their specific needs and goals are. As we say to our partners, the right long-term solutions cannot be developed in a vacuum or silo. It is vital that we apply our partnership philosophy to the internal team at Corvias as well and know that understanding and listening to everyone is critical to our success.

What excites you most about the future for Corvias?

Our future is bright in that as a true partner we plan to bring our unique blend of expertise, innovative financing approach, and access to world-class services to new partnerships and develop long-term, value-add solutions that make a significant difference in people's lives and communities across the country. ●

Bettering Communities

An Interview with Dan McConaghy, President, Corvias Campus Living



Dan McConaghy

EDITORS' NOTE The cornerstone of Dan McConaghy's approach to his life is developing relationships. He believes that investing time to understand and connect with team members, customers, and partners is time well spent. With 25 years in the construction industry, it was his relationships with the people who built the hundreds of buildings he oversaw to which he attributes his success. As President of Corvias Campus Living, McConaghy appreciates the opportunity to have an impact on education – an issue near and dear to him. He is a member of the Board of Trustees for LaSalle Academy and is the K-12 Council Chair for the Rhode Island Department of Education. McConaghy personifies Corvias Campus Living with his enthusiasm for helping colleges and universities solve their problems.

What made Corvias such an attractive place to work?

I've spent my career focused on trying to make the world a better place, but from the construction side. Having partnered with Corvias before officially joining the company, I saw that they were similar in this sense. Corvias is also very client-centric; we really try and listen and put ourselves in our client's shoes so that we can best solve their challenges and better their communities. They can then focus on their own business or mission. For example, with our partners in higher education, we do our best to help them navigate through the waters during these tough times when institutions are dealing with issues such as deferred maintenance and a lack of funds to complete these projects, or student debt rising to the point where online learning has become competition for traditional four-year colleges.

How do you believe the company's core principles are reflected in the everyday culture at Corvias?

Corvias has three core principles – to be the best place to work, the best provider of service, and to give back to the communities we serve. During my time at Corvias, it's been remarkable to see the consistency throughout the organization to carry out these principles and always focus on our core mission of bettering communities. From the receptionists to the Founder and CEO, every person at Corvias one comes into contact with has a consistent, strong, and positive message. We are constantly asking ourselves, "What are we doing to connect and better the lives of others?" Also, people's efforts are acknowledged by others in the organization and rewarded, which makes this work even more meaningful on a personal, as well as a professional, level.

What makes Corvias' approach to developing relationships and forming partnerships so different and successful?

There is an incredible sense of empathy across the organization, among leadership and employees at all levels, of being able to put yourself in your client's position and understand that client's challenges. This allows for our purview to be much broader so we're able to think long term from their perspective in an authentic way about how to solve their problems, as well as how our work can translate into additional benefits for their surrounding communities. It's clear to our partners that we are not interested in a transactional type of agreement; our goals are 100 percent aligned with theirs for the entire length of the partnership.

Does this impact who Corvias will enter into partnerships with?

These partnerships are like marriages in that they last for such long periods of time. We look to partner with people who are just as interested as we are in the broader impact our work can have on the surrounding communities in addition to our direct customers. We've been successful at making sure our clients understand this and it's something that is really starting to resonate with others across the industry. ●