Strata Information Group

CHALLENGES

- Increase level of service to students
- Encourage online enrollment and increase student retention
- Convince faculty and administrators to embrace workflow changes
- Decrease the amount of time it takes to process an online application
- Adapt to deep state budget cuts that limit funding options

SOLUTIONS

- Assess and analyze efficient alternatives to current business processes
- Integrate Ellucian products: Banner® Document Management and WorkFlow software applications
- Redesign enrollment process for greater efficiency and effectiveness

RESULTS

- Achieved record enrollment
- Nearly 20 percent increase in successful new student transfers from Arizona and Texas
- Estimated 25% of enrollment growth up to $825,000 due to better service to transfers
- Significantly greater effectiveness and efficiency in enrollment management

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Boosting enrollments, extending academic opportunities, and enhancing student services at Eastern New Mexico University

Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU) is the largest regional, comprehensive university in the state. The four-year campus employs 500 full-time employees (FTE) in Portales, a New Mexico town of roughly 12,000 residents, and the university has two-year campuses in Roswell and Ruidoso.

As a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution, ENMU provides academic opportunity to diverse students of all ages within the region, including several neighboring states, such as Arizona and Texas.

Profile

Eastern New Mexico University needed to change the way it was doing business with student admissions. ENMU welcomed new students with diverse academic interests and backgrounds, but was struggling to handle the enrollment demands that were overwhelming its admissions process.

ENMU was eager to receive new students, but the enrollment management services offered to future graduates left many prospects frustrated and confused. Paper applications were mismanaged; online applications were invalidated.

Students eager to attend ENMU were turning to competing institutions that appeared to "have their act together" with regard to welcoming students.

In a collegial, university atmosphere where students are customers, ENMU was failing to provide the high-level of customer service expected of a successful, respected institution. And frustrated prospective students were letting them know about it.

"Workflow is about change. It's about modifying established practices that are not necessarily efficient. SIG is helping us do this so we'll meet our mission of providing the best academic access and opportunities to our students."

– President Steven Gamble, ENMU

Challenges

ENMU had used Ellucian Banner® for about 10 years before working with SIG, but the university wasn't using the tools to their full potential.

"We used to do things manually," said Ronnie Birdsong, Vice President of University Relations. "We did not have the imaging technology to take paper applications and enter them directly into our system. It took a long time. Also, faculty did not have access to student records. The system was too inefficient and frustrating."

ENMU did not take advantage of new upgrades, and many of the "bonus" features associated with the Banner® product, such as WorkFlow software, were going virtually unused.

ENMU wanted to fully implement a more robust and efficient way to capitalize on the rich potential of the Ellucian Banner® suite. A more efficient system would deliver a higher level of service to students by streamlining the technology network on campus that serves as a conduit between students and faculty.

ENMU invited Strata Information Group (SIG) on campus to assess the situation and find solutions with the Ellucian Banner® suite to streamline the enrollment process and create a better environment for prospective and existing students.

Where to Start?

ENMU had various pieces of technology that weren't being used in a cohesive manner. Banner® Student was set up and Banner® Document Management Suite was configured, but they weren't fully integrated. Departments within the same system were not communicating with one another about how they might work together for greater efficiency.

The ENMU admission process was largely paper-driven. There were no automatic approval updates and not much communication among departments. Transfer transcripts were not articulated until the student enrolled, and students were required to have a degree plan on file. This process took up to 5 months to accomplish. ENMU was losing potential students through frustration and inefficiency.

Campus administrators wanted SIG to identify the existing process and redesign it for greater efficiency, with the goal of pulling all of the functionality together.

A comprehensive business process analysis would provide the university with a better understanding and appreciation for the Ellucian Banner® suite.

Developing Solutions

There were some obvious steps to take at the outset. The first thing SIG did was conduct a process analysis—start to finish—to determine how the admissions processes functioned: from student recruiting to submitting an application to how that application was handled afterward.

Additionally, SIG suggested a plan to integrate the Banner® tools to incorporate document imaging and workflow software. ENMU needed to better understand what happens when a student submits an online application: Who is notified? Where does the information go? Who is responsible for moving that information forward?

The workflow process was explained during the assessment, and SIG showed how vital it would be to the growth of the university and the satisfaction of its students. The Banner® Workflow product ensures that people are assigned pieces of work consistently based on the institutionally adopted process. The application is updated in the system, and notifications are sent to ensure that the next steps in the process are completed. The application does not languish or get lost in the system.

"Workflow is helping us correct our processes and procedures. It's making us more efficient and responsive to the needs of our students."
– President Steven Gamble, ENMU

Results

With a robust Ellucian Banner® system in place that is being used more fully, ENMU looks confidently toward a more successful future for its students and the university as a whole. The initial resistance changed. People in many departments became open to doing things in a different way.

As a result of these changes, more students are successfully entering the ENMU enrollment process. Student transfer numbers are upwards of 20% higher than the previous year. Many students are transferring credits from other institutions to continue their education at ENMU. The focus on branching out to places like Arizona and Texas for more students has helped advance this enrollment plan. This would not have been possible without a redesign of the enrollment process.

The university is optimistic about how the efficient use of technology will continue to improve the outlook for students at ENMU.