Strata Information Group

CHALLENGES

- Leverage investment in the current ERP
- Provide ERP operational knowledge through institution-wide staff training
- Eliminate use of "shadow systems"
- Provide additional online services
- Encourage online enrollment and increase student retention
- Convince faculty and administrators to embrace workflow changes
- Decrease the time it takes to process an online application
- Adapt to deep state budget cuts that limit funding options

SOLUTIONS

- Completed a Post-ERP Implementation Assessment
- Assessed, analyzed, and created efficient alternatives to current business processes
- Developed and implemented customized training workshops
- Integrated Ellucian products
- Created and embraced a cross-functional team

RESULTS

- Improved Service to Students
- Increased Staff Efficiency
- Improved Financial Management
- Enhanced Information Technology Services

Strata Information Group
Information Technology & Management

3935 Harney Street, Suite 203
San Diego, California 92110
(619) 296-0170
www.sigcorp.com

SOUTHWEST
TENNESSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Enhancing the student experience at Southwest Tennessee Community College

Southwest Tennessee Community College (SWTCC) is the largest community college in the state. SWTCC has two campuses and five major teaching sites in its two-county service area and is part of the larger educational system under the governance of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR).

SWTCC offers 100-plus programs of study, which lead to as many as 27 university transfer and career associate degrees, and more than 20 technical certificates.

Profile

TBR purchased the Ellucian Banner® ERP for all institutions within its governance, with the understanding that each institution would need to make significant efforts in implementing Banner. The ultimate goal was to automate operations and streamline information flow across the organization, while empowering the institutions to use this information in innovative ways to achieve efficiencies of scale. TBR looked forward to enhancing faculty and business process collaboration and communication to improve systems integration and productivity across each institution.

The Banner system was implemented using a "cohort" model, with each college assigned to a group in which they shared training, technical resources, and services. Several years after SWTCC went live with Banner, the college found itself still using many manual processes, not realizing the full benefits of Banner's many automated features and functions.

SWTCC's leaders knew the potential power of this ERP system and understood that to leverage its full potential would require an investment of time and resources, thoughtful planning, and an institutional will for change.

Further, SWTCC administrators realized that to improve the effectiveness of the ERP system across all campus departments, they would need to assess the state of the current environment and develop a strategic, actionable plan that would lead to more efficient and effective practices and processes, using Banner as a tool to realize those goals.

"This project has delivered significant and powerful benefits. It is especially important for the college to strengthen its service by using its limited resources more effectively."

–Dr. Nathan Essex, President of Southwest Tennessee Community College

Challenges

A dismal state and national economy, rising unemployment, and a tough job market brought many job-seekers and professionals to college campuses, either to enroll as "first-time" students or to reinforce and enhance their skills. In an "open enrollment" environment such as the one at SWTCC, there is no cap on the number of students who could attend the college, and this presented quite an operational challenge.

Many departments were not using Banner's basic automated features and functions that lead to greater efficiency. Instead, they were using manual workarounds and numerous steps to perform basic functions in high-volume areas such as purchasing, student enrollment, and financial aid. Many processes that could be automated, such as time-keeping, attendance tracking, change of major, and course wait-listing, were simply inefficient.

> *"When we first implemented Banner®, it was an obstacle for our faculty and staff. All we heard about Banner was what we couldn't do. For this project to succeed, we knew we needed to partner with a firm that could gain the trust of our staff and show them what they could do with Banner"*
> *–Dr. Nathan Essex, President, Southwest Tennessee College*

SWTCC leaders understood they did not need "general" Banner training; they needed a customized, tailored, and affordable solution to the college's specific project goals. Finding the right consulting partner to deliver this training and to assist with the many Banner-related activities was going to be essential to the overall success of the project.

Where to Start?

The chief information officer at SWTCC understood that Banner was just a tool. Banner was not broken: SWTCC's processes and understanding of the tool were broken. What the college needed was instruction in how to put that tool to its best use.

College leadership sought to automate the many manual processes affecting students, faculty, and staff to create more time for personal interaction with students. To do this, SWTCC needed an in-depth analysis of current operational efficiency. The information from this assessment would provide the information needed to create a clear and achievable road map.

Getting Underway

SWTCC leaders agreed that a post-ERP implementation process was a necessary first step for all involved. The purpose of the assessment was to provide the college with a roadmap of

tasks that would allow the institution to make the right decisions about prioritizing projects.

After careful consideration, SWTCC selected Strata Information Group (SIG) to complete the post-ERP implementation assessment.

Developing Solutions

SIG brought in a team of highly seasoned consultants to execute the post-ERP implementation assessment across all modules, which consisted of the following components:

- Questionnaires and Interviews
- Banner® Configuration and Setup Review (functional and technical)
- Business Process Analysis
- Final Report and Presentation

SIG consultants did a top-to-bottom, comprehensive assessment based on the documented pain points at SWTCC. The assessment helped SWTCC identify deep-rooted challenges and systemic issues in each department that needed to be addressed with a more customized approach to Banner.

SIG consultants spent long hours working with individuals in all departments— Payroll, Financial Aid, Human Resources, Finance, Student Services and Enrollment, and others—before presenting their findings and recommendations to SWTCC.

Results

This project affected all areas of the institution and took 14 months to complete. There were many achievements along the way, such as the following:

- Automated significant components of the recruiting and admissions processes
- Implemented imaging across the enterprise, reducing paper cost and streamlining processes
- Implemented workflow across the institution to provide the platform to automate many of the manual processes
- Enhanced the student accounts receivable process and improved the student experience
- Fully implemented all automated features in Financial Aid, reducing long lines and students' frustrations
- Implemented on-line purchasing and requisition approvals
- Customized training programs for each department, enabling staff to maintain and support Banner moving forward
- Automated graduation processing
- Implemented a new security policy that defined roles, classes, and access
- Strengthened the relationship between IT and the functional areas

SWTCC leaders are in agreement that the investment in a post-ERP implementation project was a wise one. The project came in on schedule and under budget and exceeded all expectations.

The efficiencies gained during the post-ERP implementation process have had wide-ranging benefits for all departments and students at SWTCC. College departments have a more effective and efficient means of conducting financial, student, and administrative functions, which ultimately allows SWTCC to provide students with better enrollment services and support.