

University of Virginia Completes PeopleSoft Campus Solutions Implementation On Time and Under Budget

BACKGROUND

The University of Virginia (U.Va.) is distinctive among institutions of higher education. Founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1819, the University sustains the ideal of developing, through education, leaders who are well-prepared to help shape the future of the nation and the world. The University is public, while nourished by the strong support of its alumni. It is also selective; the students who come here have been chosen because they show the exceptional promise Jefferson envisioned. The University of Virginia remains the No. 2 best public university in the 2014 edition of the U.S. News and World Report rankings. The University of Virginia is made up of eleven schools in Charlottesville, plus the College at Wise in southwest Virginia. U.Va. offers 56 bachelor's degrees in 53 fields, 79 master's degrees in 63 fields, five educational specialist degrees, two first-professional degrees (law and medicine), and 54 doctoral degrees in 52 fields.

CHALLENGES

U.Va. was challenged to replace a "homegrown" legacy student system that had been heavily customized over the past 20 plus years, and which included interfaces to multiple additional applications. Within the highly decentralized organizational structure of the University, unique business processes and the customized nature of the legacy system had permitted a variety of approaches to processes. Flexibility in the uses of data in the legacy system meant that converting data into the PeopleSoft system with its rigorous data validation and edit constraints would be challenging.

The scope of the University's Student System Project (SSP) included a number of other initiatives to achieve a state-of-the-art student system; a transition to a paperless admissions application and evaluation process using Apply Yourself, Image Now, and the Common Application; implementing Nelnet in conjunction with Campus Solutions 9.0 for student billing; transitioning from a "cash" to an "accrual" accounting system; and moving from a "homegrown" instructor grade book to Sakai (a community of educators, institutional leaders, and developers who facilitate teaching, learning, and research through open source, open standards software). U.Va. also needed interfaces to enable Campus Solutions to communicate with Oracle E-Business systems for Human Resources, Financials, and Grants Management; Resource 25-room scheduling software for academic space; and Campus Partners loan servicing, among others.



Industry	Higher Education
Services	PeopleSoft Campus Solutions and Portal Implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • Functional Consulting • Technical Consulting • Custom Development • Training • Quality Assurance
Application & Modules	PeopleSoft Campus Solutions 9.0: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus Community • Recruitment and Admissions • SEVIS • Student Records • Financial Aid • Student Financials • Academic Advising • Student and Faculty Self Service • Enterprise Portal
Client Since	2007

The University's decentralized structure created other challenges: because each school has its own registrar and records and advising protocols, it was important to facilitate consideration of the possibility of commonality in business processes and configuration of the system's security to protect data consistency. The tuition model, financial aid, and billing practices that were embedded in the legacy system also provided opportunities for collaboration across the University.

SOLUTION

Sierra-Cedar assisted the U.Va. project team in finalizing a detailed Project Charter that established clear objectives for the project and set guiding principles for the University's implementation approach. One of these principles was that, because it was assumed that best practices had already been built into the functionality of the PeopleSoft Campus Solutions software, modifications to the base system would be held to a minimum; a rigorous modification approval process was defined. Sierra-Cedar worked with the project team to create a comprehensive project work plan at the project's inception that was used throughout the project to resolve competing timelines and schedules, identify key milestones, anticipate stress points that could affect the attainment of these milestones, and assign the exact resources needed to keep the implementation on schedule.

SSP implemented an extensive governance structure and formalized system of communications which included executive leadership, leadership from the schools and leadership from central offices To facilitate shared implementation decisions. U.Va also implemented a "local expert" model where key users from schools and administrative departments came to SSP and worked alongside project team members for brief, but critical, periods during the project. These local

experts helped the team determine the best choices for configuration of the system, identify common processes and data definitions, and clearly distinguish the meaningful differences that needed to be codified. Sierra-Cedar helped U.Va. model several variations of tuition and fees structures so that the University could consider their potential impacts, if implemented.

To confirm that the project remained on schedule and that qualitative measures of success were being monitored, Sierra-Cedar conducted Quality Assurance Reviews. Using a web-based survey of those involved in the project, Sierra-Cedar and the U.Va. project team were able to identify any outstanding issues, assess effectiveness of project communications, and determine readiness for implementation. The Sierra-Cedar Quality Assurance dimension of the project, complemented by periodic IV&V reviews by another agency retained by the University, resulted in recognition for the accomplishments of the project team.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The University of Virginia completed this highly complex implementation project on schedule and under budget. The collaboration across the University fostered by this project has led to agreements on data definitions and new business processes across the various schools. The local expert model helped promote critical buy-in with their home schools and departments. Local experts, who also helped facilitate end user training and served as a first line of help for users during the phased go lives, continue to advise on the maintenance of the Student Information System. While still a complex system for a complex environment, U.Va. has achieved its objective: "To provide the University community with an efficient and effective student information system that supports the University's mission, integrates with existing systems, and adapts to growth and change."

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