

SUCCESS STORY FOR EDUCATION

University of Western Cape

UWC turns around service delivery with integrated student file management solution

Challenge

Managing the records of close to 60,000 past and current students is a monumental task in anyone's books - doing so manually seems unthinkable. This was the situation at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) until mid-2011 when it switched to an integrated document management solution, realising immediate productivity and efficiency improvements.

"Our legacy system was largely manual and reliant on data capturers and thirdparty vendors to digitise and index all our physical records, which were stored and retrieved when needed. This database contained many inaccuracies and we were unable to get a single view of a student's records," explains Harold Jooste, UWC's Manager of Student Administration.

This convoluted system had ramifications across the University, causing frustration for faculties needing to access students' academic records. For example, if graduates returned for additional or supplementary learning, the administrators were unable to quickly pull up an accurate, consolidated record of any past or current student.

The physical storage of student records - which would typically include registration forms, identity documents, past qualifications and results, all amounting to about 20 A4 pages - also meant they were out of circulation if another department or faculty, currently held the files, further frustrating smooth and efficient administration. Such was the backlog in the legacy system that it wasn't uncommon for a delay of five to six working days from request to delivery of a file.

"As you can imagine, this wasn't very good from a customer service point of view, which is why we started the search for a database and document management solution," says Jooste.



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"We are extremely happy with the performance and accuracy of the system and haven't received a single complaint. These improvements also mean we save time and money because we are now far more efficient."

Harold Jooste, Manager of Student Administration, UWC

Solution

Information management solutions specialist Intervate was selected after a tender process initiated by the Student Administration Department in consultation with the University's project management consultants. In a shift away from the traditional approach to projects of this nature, Intervate contracted directly with the Department as opposed to with the institution's IT department.

This gave the Intervate team a close working relationship and understanding of the Department's needs. Intervate director and team leader, Wilhelm van Rensburg says that each Information Management Project is different even though the underlying principles remain the same, and that working directly with the Department smoothed the process.

"We implemented a Microsoft SharePoint 2010 Server and Kofax document imaging and capture solution that has revolutionised access to student information right across the University," he says. "Integration into other IT systems was limited but the solution allows for the surfacing of student file information in almost any system through the use of Web services."

The Kofax imaging and capture part of the system accommodates the digitising of any physical documents that are still handled as part of the registration and administration processes, but provides superior accuracy and workflow capabilities. It also means that this function no longer needs to be outsourced to a third party.

Microsoft SharePoint 2010's strengths come to the fore in accessing the correct information and presenting it in a quick and easy-to-use format. The platform's builtin workflow functionality has also been harnessed to improve data integrity and completeness, for example, being able to interrogate the university's student database automatically to locate missing information such as identity or student numbers.

Results

"The combination of the technologies enabled us to deliver a complex solution in a fairly simple manner, giving university staff the ability to get a consolidated view of up to 31 individual document types related to any student," says van Rensburg. "The Web browser interface also goes a long way towards overcoming user apprehension, or the need for retraining, which was made all the more familiar by designing the front-end to reflect the UWC's branding."

Jooste says there has been great excitement about the new system, particularly the significantly improved service levels.

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