

Case Study



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Matt Jenkins
Vice President
Valley College



Associates: Business Administration & Health Services Administration

Diplomas: Medical Front Office, Billing & Coding, Medical Clinical Assistant, Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning

Certificates: Nursing Assistant

Campuses: West Virginia (Beckley, Martinsburg, Princeton), National – Online

Challenges

- Poor visibility into recruitment practices and results across three campuses
- Difficulty packaging financial aid for students
- Intensive regulatory reporting schedule

Solution

- Campus Management’s student information system
- Integration with MoodleRooms™ Learning Management System

Results

- Quadrupled enrollment across the three campuses and online program
- Increased retention and placement rates by 25 percent
- Packages three times as many students with financial aid with less staff

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Only a few years ago, if students wanted to take an online class at Valley College in West Virginia, they had to apply on campus. That's right; even though the medium for instruction was the Web, online students had to enroll at the ground school. For a school with visions of growth, expanding into new territories, and the borderless potential of online education, requiring that students drive to campus just to sign up for an online course wasn't good for business or students. But when the new owners purchased Valley College in 2011, this was nonetheless what they found, along with a staff consumed by manual processes, a lack of visibility across three campuses, and other signs of growing pains.

Matt Jenkins, Vice President at Valley College, recalls this time as an example of why even a small school with 100 students needs to consider the scalability and flexibility of its technology from the very beginning.

"At the time I started, Valley College was a one-program campus and had one program online," says Jenkins. "It was a culture heavily rooted in paper and spreadsheets in each department with no real-time access to staff activity, resulting in limited operational and financial visibility, redundant data entry, and data silos. With the opportunities for growth through online education, we were looking at going into markets such as Ohio, Virginia, and the Carolinas, but there was no way we could consider expanding without reconsidering our processes and technology."

Six months after purchasing the school system, the new owners had a next-generation student information system in place. This provided the necessary framework for growth and increased efficiency, and was in marked contrast to the way the institution used to operate across departments and its three campuses: Beckley, Martinsburg, and Princeton.

Improved Recruitment and Admissions

Prior to deploying Campus Management's solution, visibility into recruiting was mostly a paper-driven process. If an executive wanted to see the results of recruiting efforts across the three campuses, that information would have to be requested from each campus and sent to directors by email with an attached spreadsheet. "One of my main goals was just to eliminate all the emails going back and forth. It was a highly inefficient and time-consuming way to communicate and manage a school," says Jenkins.

Paper processes were equally difficult. "If an admissions representative received a lead that didn't work out, they could toss the lead form," says Jenkins. "There was no way to centrally manage marketing for the three locations. We didn't have any visibility into what was working and what wasn't without asking the admissions representatives. We had to take information at face value based on what was reported to us."

With the new system, all that information is centralized and instantly accessible. Executives, administrators, faculty, and staff have single sign-on access to the student information from any location. "I can run a campus that's two or three hours away. I can pull reports, run an admissions start, and see who has been placed and packaged and who has not. I can manage a campus from any location and track conversion, start, and retention rates for each admissions representative in real time," says Jenkins.

Streamlined Financial Aid Processes

Prior to implementing Campus Management's solution, Valley College used local computers to link up with EdConnect and EdExpress to process financial aid. At each campus, two separate spreadsheets were used to track each financial aid transaction. If a student made a payment, an administrator would pull up one spreadsheet to record the payment and another to reduce the student's account balance. "That was two opportunities for error," recalls Jenkins.

As with the lack of visibility into admissions, directors also had no remote access to financial aid processes. As a result, the school was struggling to package 30 students per campus. It could only draw Title IV funding once a month, where a typical schedule is two to three times a month, which delayed packaging times and enrollment processes. "We received reports once a month, and spent the next two weeks of the following month correcting errors in those reports," says Jenkins.

Now if a student withdraws or drops a class, the system assesses the impact to financial aid automatically. "We have set up triggers in the new system for Return to Title IV if the student drops below the minimum requirements for aid," says Jenkins. "As importantly, the same number of financial aid representatives are now processing over 100 students per campus, and spending less time with administrative processes and more time helping students."

On-Demand Academics

Prior to the new system, Valley College maintained hard-copy progress charts and attendance logs for students. Executives had very little visibility into academic progress. “If students or faculty members were having issues, there could be a month or two delay before directors would know about it,” says Jenkins. “Today, we have real-time visibility into student performance. We can open the portal and run GPA reports and access them remotely. If a faculty member has an unusually high number of students failing a course, or a high number receiving A’s, we can see it right away. We don’t have to wait for student surveys or grades to be submitted.”

For online academics, Valley College uses MoodleRooms, and has integrated the learning management system with the new student information system for single entry of grades, activity-weighted attendance, distribution of schedules, and facilitation of other academic information.



Flexible Terms

In the past, students would take two or three courses at a time over a six week period at Valley College. Today, they take one class over a three-week period. The flexibility of the system allows schools to adapt academic schedules according to the needs of its students. For Valley College, this means that students can start programs and enter the system at almost any time and focus on one course at a time. “The old way of doing things wouldn’t have allowed for this flexibility and accelerated pace,” says Jenkins.

Increased Retention

Improving retention is all about monitoring and encouraging students across every touchpoint of the student lifecycle. When a student enrolls at Valley College, the system prompts an acceptance letter and hand-written congratulations card, financial aid packaging, and a career-planning session with an advisor before classes even start. “We make sure that students aren’t left alone to navigate through the school system. We sit down with them as soon as they are accepted and map out a clear path to graduation and career placement,” says Jenkins.

Valley College also looks for early warning signs of students at risk. “With the press of a button, we can see that a student has missed class and call them right away,” says Jenkins. “I can look at Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) metrics. I can see who’s packaged for financial aid. I know who has and hasn’t been placed. This has definitely helped us identify trends and increase retention rates and outcomes,” says Jenkins.

The school has also created a unique retention tool in the system. Any staff member can create what’s called a Distressed Student Activity that triggers a message to the executive director and additional campus staff members if a student is having an issue inside or outside of school. “It’s preset so that staff members can go into the system, open an activity, and add a note about a critical issue or conversation they had,” says Jenkins. “This will prompt an all-hands-on-deck effort to help the student, including the campus director and the lead instructor for that program.”

The process is yielding tangible results, with retention rates up 25 percent since the new owners acquired the institution.

Placement Success

Six weeks prior the date students graduate, the system changes their status to pending graduates, which triggers additional career planning activities and final preparation checkpoints. “I don’t need someone to send me a placement report anymore,” says Jenkins. “I can see who’s about to graduate and what we are doing to place them in careers. This has helped us improve placement rates, in some instances as much as 25 percent over prior ownership.”

Valley College

Improved Reporting and Compliance

As with every higher education institution, Valley College has an intensive regulatory reporting schedule. “If you look at a compliance calendar today, there is some kind of visit or audit happening every month. The information they need is now at our fingertips,” says Jenkins. “It used to be that we had to email spreadsheets between campuses, with every report pooled from these spreadsheets. If we had an audit coming up, it took us days and weeks to gather all the information. We now have all this information in several clicks: reports on student population, financial aid, finance for IPEDS and FISAP, which we then compile into formats and tools that facilitate that reporting.”

The system also helps Valley College with 90/10 reporting. “I can set up the system to run a monthly report for the first six months of the year and every week after that,” adds Jenkins. “We’ve gotten it to where we can track 90/10 throughout the year and have accuracy in our reporting.”

Paradoxically, as regulatory reporting has increased, the workload for gathering the required information has gone down, with staff

saying that it takes one quarter of the effort compared with the old system.

Growth

In three years, Valley College has nearly quadrupled enrollment across its three campuses and online programs, and while the college has added instructors, it only had to add minimal support staff.

“This is a student service business,” says Jenkins. “What makes us successful is having staff spend time with students, admissions, and faculty, instead of researching files, and that’s what Campus Management’s student information system allows us to do.”

The system can also scale as Valley College grows and enters new markets. “Now if a student sees a TV or billboard ad in Ohio, Virginia, or the Carolinas for online classes at Valley College, they don’t have to drive to a West Virginia campus to sign up,” says Jenkins.

About Campus Management Corp.

Campus Management is a leading provider of software, strategies and services which enable institutions of higher education to offer dynamic models of engagement & delivery. Over the past 27 years, Campus Management has supported higher education, both proprietary and traditional institutions, as well as foundations and other organizations through its cutting-edge student information system; constituent relationship management (CRM) software; and finance, human resources and payroll solutions.

Campus Management’s solutions are specifically designed to provide institutions the flexibility they need to compete in the ever-changing higher education landscape by offering products that support changes in education delivery, recruitment, financial aid, finance, human resources, payroll, and regulatory compliance. Today, nearly 2,000 campuses in 18 countries utilize Campus Management to unite campuses and workflows, improve student outcomes and achieve goals.



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