

Jenzabar Brings Document Management to Columbia College Chicago

Improved Workflow and Business Processes Result





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Teaching Unmanageable Documents to Behave

Documents can be like difficult children: hiding just when you need them, not sharing with others, filling rooms with clutter that becomes an overwhelming mess. Yet administrators at Columbia College Chicago have discovered the key to turning even the most unmanageable documents into properly behaved little bytes, thanks to the transformative power of Jenzabar and its technology partner, Feith Systems.

With more than 120 academic programs and 1,500 faculty, more than 11,000 students, and more than 16 buildings spread around Chicago's South Loop, Columbia College Chicago is the largest and most diverse private arts and media college in the nation. Yet the school's size and structure made storing, tracking and sharing paper-based documents a cumbersome—and costly—process, explains Associate Vice President and Chief Information Officer Bernadette McMahon.

Individual departments were using a mélange of data systems that made intercommunication increasingly difficult, and workflow alarmingly inefficient. As the college continued to grow, and its transactions became more complex, the documents generated across the institution began to reach mountainous proportions.

Soon, says McMahon, it became obvious that business processes throughout the college needed improvement—beginning with a better way to manage documents.

Redefining Academic & Business Processes with Jenzabar's Total Campus Management

For years Columbia College Chicago had met campus-wide information technology needs through its long-standing partnership with Jenzabar®, a leading provider of enterprise software and services developed exclusively for higher education. With more than 30 years of combined experience, Jenzabar is the trusted partner of choice to 700 campuses worldwide. Jenzabar delivers comprehensive solutions built on its unique Total Campus Management™ (TCM) framework, combining innovative software,

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strategic consulting services, and client-tailored services designed to meet the specific needs of each institution. The Jenzabar solutions implemented at Columbia College Chicago include an Internet portal, offering students 24x7, one-stop online access to a host of functions; and Jenzabar's Learning Management System, which helps



students manage their college careers more efficiently.

With Jenzabar's integrated TCM systems securely in place, the college turned its attention to the next phase of improving its institutional procedures and processes—a key goal, explains McMahon, under the college's Columbia 2010 initiative, which seeks to enhance the student experience both on and off the college campus through advanced services.

Under the plan, administrative services were recognized as a key component of the campus experience, with the intent being to have every student at Columbia College Chicago “receive top quality, personalized enrollment, financial, advising, counseling, health and academic support.” Yet providing those services in a timely manner was becoming a challenge, owing to the school's continued growth, the rising number of student requests—and the cumbersome process required to retrieve documents, copy them, and send them to appropriate offices. The goal of the 2010 plan was to develop a means of eliminating the paper chase, thereby helping students “take care of business and resolve problems so that they can focus on their educational goals.”

Eliminating Paper Overload, Refining Procedures, Enhancing Service

After much analysis, administrators determined that a critical part of improving institutional practices involved the need for more effective document management. Despite the porting of many student transactions to an online environment, Columbia College Chicago was still overloaded with paper generated from a variety of sources on campus—creating frustrations for students and staff alike.

Filing and retrieving documents had become far too labor-intensive. Expenses for maintaining the army of filing cabinets full of documents were increasing, while available space on campus for records storage was decreasing. And paper flow and the tracking of documents across the college's widespread urban campus became a difficult task at best.

Total Campus Management again offered an effective solution. In response to customer needs and demands, Jenzabar had partnered with Feith Systems to offer higher education clients a complete document management and workflow solution—one that could interface with Jenzabar systems, as well as other software systems already in use on campus.

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Since 1979, Feith Systems has been an industry leader in providing complete content management solutions. Feith's flagship product, Feith Document Database (FDD), was designed as an out-of-the-box solution that includes document management, imaging, workflow, electronic records management/computer output to laser disc (ERM/COLD), e-mail management, records management, and electronic forms. Moreover, Feith's enterprise-wide imaging and document management fully complemented Jenzabar's Total Campus Management solutions by



providing the technology to electronically scan and archive documents in all departments across the entire institution, from student records to purchasing to financials and more.

Beyond providing the technology to capture documents digitally, notes McMahon, the Feith system provided administrators with a powerful set of tools to create the workflow processes required for tracking, retrieving, sharing, and storing those documents—eventually resulting in measurable improvement in workflow, streamlined administrative tasks, and increased productivity. What’s more, because the Feith Document Database interfaced with Jenzabar systems and other administrative systems, the college could begin a major shift in focus: away from paperwork or routine processes, to focusing on the ultimate goal of providing better services for their students.

Says McMahon, “We initially implemented the system for admissions, student financial services, institutional advancement, the provost’s office and advising, among others.” To begin the process, phalanxes of file cabinets were emptied and their contents sent to a scanning service, which transformed the paper into digital images. Loaded into the Feith Document Database, the captured information then went seamlessly into active workflows covering a range of processes, from transcription evaluation to temporary staff requests.

Exploring the Combined Benefits of Document Imaging, Workflow & ERM/COLD

The implementation of the Feith Document Database—with its tripartite arrangement of document imaging, workflow, and electronic records management/computer output to

laser disc—has helped the college realize significant enhancements and advancements in a variety of business processes.

The benefits reaped by the college from its new imaging and workflow system begins with the initial act of scanning all incoming documents, thus eliminating the problem of misplaced paper or files. In addition, electronic storage allows administrators to quickly locate any document by using keyword as well as unstructured searches. The new system also enables staff to fully track the flow of documents. Access to data is easily and safely accomplished via the Web—and confidential documents are given the highest level of protection through the use of department-specific or document-specific security measures in Feith Workflow and ERM/COLD.

The best document imaging solutions should dovetail perfectly with a college’s existing system, making it possible to manage the data with a single application, or with other modules such as workflow, to help move the data around while keeping track of it.

As for workflow, the new Jenzabar and Feith system is allowing Columbia College Chicago to not only streamline but also automate critical processes, including tracking the timetable for disposing of documents via the system’s Record Schedule. The system employs rules-driven and event-driven templates, with ad-hoc routing as well. Unlimited workflows can be set up, and workflow processes extended to the entire community of external users. And the system has now given staff and



administrators a critical tool for managing exceptions for process breakdown.

The ERM/COLD component of the Feith system is designed to capture text files—such as reports, statements and invoices—directly from a school’s student systems. Once obtained, data is then compressed by as much as 95 percent, with 5 million pages taking up only a single gigabyte. Supporting documents may be stored and automatically indexed into the same File Cabinets as scanned images, thus allowing for compound documents, and the overlaying of data on forms for printing, faxing or electronic display. Annotations are easily added, and reports can be delivered instantaneously to pre-defined users based on report type. Furthermore, data is maintained in ASCII format for easy export to spreadsheets and other tools.

On the server side, the Feith system operates under the same configuration as Jenzabar systems, running on any Microsoft® Windows® or UNIX® server; and is ODBC-compliant, capable of connecting with Oracle®, Microsoft SQL Server, Informix®, and Sybase® databases.

Rethinking Business Processes, Reaching Goals

Future plans for the Feith Document Database address such workflow processes as grant applications, admissions review, tuition remission, and more. And while the college “is not yet ready to throw away all its paper documents,” McMahon says, “by gaining the ability to store digital documents off-campus, we’ve gained back physical space.”

Beyond solving the storage dilemma, McMahon adds, an interesting byproduct of

the implementation was a far-reaching revamping of many of the college’s business processes. “The hardest thing about implementation was making sure that our business processes were not overly complex,” McMahon says. Assisting with that task was Marsha Heizer, who was brought on board as director of business processes.

McMahon continues: “We would lay out the business process and then ask, why are we doing things this way?” Most often, that analysis would lead McMahon and Heizer to a restructuring—and improvement—of the workflow. And, adds McMahon, the combined Jenzabar and Feith system enabled the college to “be sure that every component works more efficiently and to streamline our processes.”

A Perfect Fit

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Jenzabar provides a full suite of integrated systems, from enterprise software to constituent relationship modules to campus intelligence systems, delivering an end-to-end solution that results in measurable improvement in real-time decision-making, operational efficiency, and constituent satisfaction.

At Columbia College Chicago, notes McMahon, Jenzabar provided a proven way to integrate the administrative and learning sides of academic life, to build a total and



meaningful online community for students.

At the center of that initiative was the implementation of Jenzabar's Internet portal, which gave students a single point of access to a range of administrative applications—including online registration, financial aid, billing information, advising guides and more—as well as Jenzabar's Learning Management system.

Through TCM, Columbia College Chicago empowered students with self-service, helping them to manage their own college careers more efficiently, whenever the need arose, any time and anywhere. For faculty, TCM was equally empowering, giving them a potent communication tool with which to better instruct and inform students.

By integrating the Feith document management system into the Jenzabar Total Campus Management solution, McMahon and her colleagues found a way to significantly leverage data storage, retrieval and tracking in their pursuit of refining and advancing administrative processes—all, ultimately, to enhance services to the students, the college's main constituency.

Finally, says McMahon, “our technology supports our goal of optimizing business operations and building a more effective institution.” ■

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