

WAICU Pioneers Collaborative ERP System Powered by Jenzabar

Discovering the United Strength of Shared Computing

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Working Together to Address the Rising Cost of Higher Education

There's more than safety in numbers, as the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) has discovered. There's also power, efficiency, and economy. And members of WAICU are realizing each of those benefits today—all the result of a collaborative implementation of Jenzabar® software solutions.

WAICU represents 20 private colleges and universities throughout Wisconsin, along with their 57,000 students. Created more than 40 years ago to promote collaboration among these fully accredited, nonprofit degree-granting colleges and universities, WAICU today helps its member institutions work together to enrich programs and advance educational opportunities for students.

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Rolf Wegenke
President, WAICU

As part of that self-help program, in 1992 WAICU inaugurated a long-range initiative to make institutional and association-wide improvements in cost-effectiveness, to address the rising price of higher education head-on. According to WAICU President Rolf Wegenke, “The directors of the WAICU board are the presidents of the member colleges. And when they say we have to do something about rising costs, we listen. Presidents at private colleges have only three choices for addressing their financing: raise tuition, raise more

money, or change the way they do business. The WAICU presidents chose the latter. However, it's hard for small private colleges to achieve the economies of scale available to larger schools. But through the association, we could devote greater levels of professional expertise to the purchasing and project management functions and pool our buying power to secure significant savings and greater control of our own destinies.”

Cutting Costs: the Collaborative Efforts of the Educational Technology Consortium

The association proceeded to examine every phase of operations at every member institution, searching for places to save rather than programs to cut. “[The board] said they wanted to put everything on the table,” says Wegenke, “including some of their back-office functions, because it was clear we were duplicating administrative functions, and there had to be some potential savings there.”

The vision that evolved included an initiative to plan, select, purchase, implement, and maintain an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system jointly. An effective ERP solution was seen by the presidents as about more than the technology, but rather about the strategic positioning of the entire college. Initially, three WAICU member colleges—Lakeland College, Ripon College, and Wisconsin Lutheran College, each with different constituencies and business processes—united to create the WAICU Educational Technology Consortium, which held as its goal the purchase, implementation, and support of that envisioned common administrative system. Explains Wegenke, “A common system not only gives the participating colleges a more powerful system at a better price than they would achieve on their own, but it also establishes the shared infrastructure that is fundamental for future collaborations.”



In 2002, the association secured the funding necessary to pursue its collaborative technology initiative. The association then spent the next three years planning, identifying, analyzing, questioning, and discussing with other institutions what their challenges and timetables were in implementing a common ERP system. From the dean of students to the staff of the registrar's office, faculty and administrators at each member school were surveyed on what they needed and asked to brainstorm about what they wanted. Once a priority was identified, WAICU asked its members what the ideal outcome would be for them—not just in terms of costs, but in terms of a useful product. Eventually a list of approximately 54,000 system requirements was compiled. Only after this exhaustive investigation was complete did the association prepare a bid document and send it to major ERP vendors.

The result: Jenzabar, the pioneer of Total Campus Management™ (TCM) solutions for higher education, emerged as the vendor of choice for the first wave of WAICU members going forward.

Selecting Jenzabar's Integrated Solution for a Common Administrative System

After close comparison of competing proposals, the participating members determined that the Jenzabar Total Campus Management framework—offering a comprehensive approach to software, services, and support—was best suited to meet the unique business needs of those colleges and to adapt to the collaborative business model WAICU had developed. Jenzabar delivers fully integrated software, and each TCM solution is custom-built from Jenzabar's ERP and campus intelligence systems, Internet portal, and constituent relationship modules. Further, Jenzabar offers executive services, technical services, and strategic insight that directly connect their technology to an institution's strategies, objectives, and priorities; and supports every institution's efforts with a strong emphasis on customer care.

Under their agreement, Jenzabar would deliver to the participating WAICU colleges the Jenzabar EX ERP

system, together with Jenzabar's Internet Campus Solution (JICS) and Jenzabar's Learning Management System (Jenzabar LMS)—all part of the association's ground-breaking effort to organize the members through a common online administrative platform. In addition, WAICU licensed Jenzabar's Executive Dashboard to help administrators track key performance indicators. WAICU hired an Executive Director to staff the WAICU Educational Technology Consortium and coordinate implementation and training, with great results.

“Jenzabar staff demonstrated both the goodwill and the adaptability needed to work with WAICU's collaborative business model,” Wegenke says. “Jenzabar went the extra mile to make change work.”

“With the collaborative approach, we are confident that we have the opportunity to be visionary,” Wegenke says. Since the initial three institutions completed the Jenzabar EX implementation, two other WAICU members and Jenzabar EX users, Cardinal Stritch University and the Milwaukee School of Engineering, have joined WAICU ETC.

Maximizing Efficiency and Minimizing Costs with Jenzabar EX

With more than 230 colleges and universities currently licensing Jenzabar EX, the Jenzabar administrative software system is the leading Microsoft®-based solution in the higher education marketplace. Built on the Microsoft SQL Server database, Jenzabar EX has helped drive a greater market acceptance of Microsoft technologies as secure, robust, and affordable platforms that can support the complex operating processes of higher education environments.

As a key component of TCM, the Jenzabar EX solution offers a complete suite of integrated software applications designed to support a wide range of



functional areas, including student services, institutional research, financial and business management, human resources and payroll, communications, and development. Jenzabar EX stores all administrative information on a single integrated database, eliminating the need to enter data more than once, and eliminating the concern that some offices may be using outdated or incomplete information. Jenzabar EX also provides the powerful functionality and flexibility that are crucial to helping institutions facilitate the flow of information, maximize efficiency, minimize costs, and support strategic initiatives.

Jenzabar's Internet Campus Solution, Executive Dashboard and LMS

Along with the Jenzabar ERP system, the WAICU ETC schools implemented Jenzabar's Internet Campus Solution (JICS), an Internet portal that provides secure, role-based access to the ERP system for authorized users, any time and anywhere. The portal also delivers Jenzabar's Executive Dashboard directly to the desktops of selected campus officials, allowing them to monitor institutional operations and initiatives with up-to-the-minute metrics, and take prompt action to intervene when necessary.

In addition, JICS links the participating institution's ERP system to Jenzabar's Learning Management System, providing students and faculty with tools and strategies to supplement traditional classroom learning, including secure access to course information, schedules, class rosters, and transcripts. The campus portal enables faculty and students to communicate via announcements and updates, Web links, threaded discussion, real-time chat, and more. The Jenzabar LMS system also can be used for distance or online education models.

Commitment and Teamwork Lead to Swift, Successful Implementation

The average time spent by colleges and universities in implementing a new ERP system is about 18 months. WAICU's Jenzabar system went live after only 10 months. Wegenke attributes the swiftness in part to the dedication of everyone involved in the project. "The

people on campus were committed because they had participated in the development of the specifications," says Wegenke. In addition, champions were designated at each campus to further rally support. And the association hired an executive director whose full-time job was oversight of the implementation. Microsoft provided additional support, since Jenzabar EX is built on Microsoft's SQL Server database.

"On most college campuses, there aren't a lot of people just sitting around waiting to implement a new ERP system," says Wegenke—hence the need to marshal forces carefully to ensure that the right personnel are in place. "Having people committed to the project is particularly important when it is a joint implementation," Wegenke notes. "Everyone has to go along with the changes being made. And everyone has to stay together."


In less than a year's time, costs for software have been reduced by 80 percent, while maintenance costs have been lowered 40 percent. One member has projected savings of nearly \$1 million over the next ten years on maintenance costs alone.

"Jenzabar staff demonstrated both the goodwill and the adaptability needed to work with WAICU's collaborative business model," Wegenke said. "Some vendors see the association as a barrier rather than as a facilitator. Change from 'standard practice' is hard; Jenzabar went the extra mile to make change work."

Reaping the Benefits of Lower Costs, Better Practices

Lakeland College, Ripon College, and Wisconsin Lutheran College were the first to go live with the Jenzabar system, in July 2006.

And in less than a year's time, the colleges have reaped significant savings: costs for software have been reduced by 80 percent, while maintenance costs have been



lowered 40 percent. Two other WAICU members have joined the consortium. One of the newer members has projected savings of nearly \$1 million over the next ten years on maintenance costs alone. And not only has the Jenzabar-powered initiative succeeded in streamlining administrative functions and reducing costs—it has also increased the consortium’s buying power for future IT projects.

“Everyone ended up enthused about the project,” says Wegenke. “A lot of people were skeptical at first because it was so complex. It was interesting to see, as we moved through the phases of the implementation, how the schools rallied around each other. It was an exciting process. And it worked to build not only camaraderie but best practices as well.”

Breaking New Ground in Collaborative Computing, Consolidated Functions

The association’s collaboration project is unique in academe. “This project moves beyond incrementalism,” states *The College Cost Crisis*, a 2003 Congressional analysis of rising college costs. “Never before in history have private colleges and universities considered as extensive a consolidation of functions short of an actual merger. It sends a message to the entire nation that something transformative has taken place.”

Participation in all of the 20-plus collaborations, including WAICU ETC, is voluntary, but Wegenke predicts even more colleges will buy into the ERP collaboration in the near future, “because it’s clear to see the value of it, the necessity of it for saving costs.”

One of the biggest hurdles encountered by WAICU on the track to success was the notion that enterprise-wide systems are all about technology. “The technology is important,” says Wegenke, “but there’s a tendency to get intrigued by the new toy aspects — ‘How does it work? How did that get done?’ Really, ERP is more about finding the right tool to achieve strategic goals for the institution. Having endless meetings about the technology can be a diversion. There is a risk of spending too much time on the technology, as opposed

to the purpose of building better efficiencies and economies for member colleges.”

An Indispensable Part of the Present, a Solid Foundation for the Future

A full suite of Jenzabar modules was installed for the consortium’s use, and training was coordinated by WAICU, with Jenzabar instructors coming to the participants for on-site training, saving the travel expenses of sending staff off-campus. Administrators and staff took to the system well, notes Wegenke. “People always begin with apprehension, because change is hard,” he says. But once the system was up and running, the wariness dissipated.

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Wegenke says that Jenzabar has laid the solid, stable groundwork for the continued success of shared computing on the consortium’s campuses. And while collaboration may be the “mode of the future,” he says, it has quickly become an indispensable part of the present.

“One of our college presidents, when asked why he was in WAICU ETC, replied, ‘There’s no other choice, because there’s no better way to do this,’” Wegenke relates. Over the next two years, another group of WAICU member colleges and universities are expected to go through a similar selection and bidding process—and, says Wegenke, “there is no question that this first group working with Jenzabar has set the bar very high.” ■

This paper was produced in cooperation with *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Please visit <http://chronicle.com/solutions/Jenzabar/index.htm> to read more.

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