

CLOUD MAKES MULTI-CHANNEL CAMPUSES COME TO LIFE

Like most higher education institutions, Lorain County Community College (LCCC) must understand and respond to its student population and evolve with the times. So as the traditional base of manufacturing in and around Elyria, Ohio, changed, LCCC began offering new academic programs. This includes one devoted to Micro-Electrical Mechanical Systems (MEMS) manufacturing that appeals to both younger students and adult learners looking to acquire new skills.

“We are keeping ourselves as nimble as possible to adapt to the evolving needs of local industries,” says Jonathan Volpe, vice president of administrative services and treasurer for LCCC. “Our motto here is, ‘student success is everyone’s business.’ Our whole organization works to help students reach their goals, and when students are successful, it benefits our local economy.”

Enhancing student success starts with relevant curricula and communication that personalizes learning for students. It also includes advisors who understand the unique needs of each student, flexible financial aid programs and even a college food pantry to help those on tight budgets stay enrolled.

The student success-focused strategy is working. The American Association of Community Colleges recently recognized LCCC as the top community college in the country for excellence in student success.

MORE IN THE CLOUD MEANS MORE TIME FOR THE CORE MISSION

It wasn’t enough for LCCC leaders to infuse goals for student success into the school’s culture. They also needed to give faculty and staff the underlying tools needed to achieve those goals. That meant replacing legacy enterprise resource planning (ERP) applications, which often burdened staff with manual, ad-hoc tasks and left them little time for strategic activities that would more directly benefit students. LCCC turned to Oracle Cloud as a solution.

“Everything we’re doing in IT today is moving to the cloud,” says Don Huffman, LCCC’s chief information officer. “The cloud helps my department stay lean and focus on the IT

resources the campus needs, rather than on maintaining a data center. It also frees IT to support everybody else in being successful at their jobs and focusing on the success of students.”

Student engagement and student recruiting were the first modules to go live in the ongoing cloud modernization. Oracle Human Capital Management (HCM) Cloud and Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Cloud are now being implemented. LCCC is already seeing a return on its investment. The marketing department recently used the engagement and recruiting tools to promote registration for the Fall 2018 semester, and the technology clearly showed the benefits of enabling modern multi-channel experiences.

Officials were able to target students still making enrollment decisions and then personalize recruitment content for individuals in this group. The marketing staff then monitored responses across multiple digital channels, including email open rates, social media communications, engagement times with the messaging and eventually the sign-up rates for a recruitment event. Within 48 hours, the digital marketing campaign attracted 32 students. This was a significantly better response rate than an earlier recruiting



attempt that didn’t use the sophisticated tools: it had attracted only three students after a week.

“The marketing staff is ecstatic about what they achieved the first time they used these cloud resources,” Huffman says. “They’re excited about using them for additional activities in the future.”

Volpe anticipates similar benefits once Oracle HCM Cloud and Oracle ERP Cloud go live with modern campus capabilities. For example, the human resources department currently manages a laborious talent on-boarding process.

“We expect immediate, tangible benefits for the HR department when we’re in the cloud,” says Volpe. “These will range from processing applications and on-boarding employees faster to managing absences better and giving our faculty and staff many self-service capabilities.”

Similarly, Oracle ERP Cloud will help the college be more efficient and manage budgets more effectively.

“Among other areas, we anticipate a leap forward for financial reporting,” Volpe says. “That will improve decision-making. And as we become more efficient, we’ll have more time to really focus on the big picture of why we’re here.”

MANAGING CHANGE

While successful IT modernizations hinge on choosing the right cloud platform, officials must look beyond technology. Volpe and Huffman say change management has been a critical element in achieving the results LCCC is experiencing so far.

To navigate the process, the college hired Navigator Management Partners, a systems integrator with extensive experience in Oracle implementations and the higher education sector. Navigator became involved early in LCCC’s project as a key resource to help keep the college’s staff informed about the modernization plan and to train people to use the new systems.

“Change management training often comes at the tail end of large-scale IT modernization projects, which

means it doesn’t get the attention it requires. That’s often the underlying reason for the horror stories we hear about unsuccessful system implementations,” says Tim Oberschlake, vice president, Navigator Management Partners. “Change management must begin at the start — with the first rumors that the project is going to take place.”

Navigator’s change management process begins with discussing the overall project with everyone who will be directly impacted by the new systems.

“We explain the plan, the timeline and the potential impact on them,” Oberschlake says.

The Navigator consultants also form a readiness group that includes champions at the college who can help people in their respective departments stay informed about the modernization. Throughout the project, Navigator trains stakeholders and surveys them to gauge their satisfaction levels and understand any concerns.

“It’s been a great benefit for us to have Navigator involved from the start,” Huffman says. “Our faculty and staff appreciate the ongoing communications. The feedback we received was that they never had as much information about a project presented to them in the past, and they appreciated not feeling like they were living in a communications black hole.”

FOCUSING ON WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT

What lessons has the IT modernization project taught LCCC? The most important insights are how effectively modern cloud resources can help colleges quickly address the changing needs of students and help today’s learners succeed by engaging with them across an array of communications channels.

“I would tell people to do away with any investments, such as those for on-premises data centers, that aren’t their institution’s primary focus,” Huffman says. “Let somebody else handle those areas so you can devote every part of the organization to your mission. We’re here to help students succeed at their future careers, and that, in turn, will help the local economy thrive.”

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