



Microsoft Dynamics Customer Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Higher Education

Customer Profile

Louisburg College, in Louisburg, North Carolina, is the oldest chartered two-year church-related college in the nation. It prepares students for successful matriculation to four-year institutions.

Business Situation

The college wanted an up-to-date, cost-effective solution to streamline its automated business management processes, help improve overall efficiency, and deliver consistently reliable data.

Solution

Louisburg implemented Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® as part of a comprehensive solution that included innovative, well-integrated, third-party products.

Benefits

- Fast adoption and easy integration with familiar software tools
- Improved efficiency and productivity in financial management
- 30 percent time savings in payroll
- 50 percent improvement in accuracy
- Extensible solution for changing needs

College Improves Efficiency by Fully Integrating Management Information

“Using Microsoft Great Plains as a single entry point has allowed us to manage our data entry process.... We’ve eliminated redundant entries and have improved accuracy by as much as 50 percent.”

Mark Joyner, IT Manager, Louisburg College

Louisburg College is a two-year institution that offers business and arts and sciences degrees to Central North Carolinian students and prepares them for successful entry into four-year colleges and universities. To better serve its student population, the college wanted to streamline its use of resources and its financial management. Louisburg implemented an innovative, cost-effective, comprehensive solution for its automated business management processes by implementing Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® (now part of Microsoft Dynamics™) in integration with third-party solutions and Microsoft products and technologies. The college has successfully created a single point-of-entry financial management solution that helps reduce accounting staff time by 30 percent and helps increase data entry accuracy by 50 percent.



massey
CONSULTING



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Situation

For more than 215 years, Louisburg College, located in Louisburg, North Carolina, has prepared students for success, offering associate degrees in arts and sciences and business, and sending more than 90 percent of its graduates to four-year colleges and universities.

For Louisburg College, it is critical to provide excellent services in order to continue attracting new students. Financial management is a significant element of the college's success—all of the college's revenues are tuition fees paid by students. For that reason, the college always strives to make its business management more effective and reliable. Specifically, Louisburg wanted to centralize and simplify its financial management, increase efficiency and accuracy of financial administration, and give its administrators better insight into financial information and events.

Business software technology helped the college perform many financial management tasks, but it did not help administrators work as productively and efficiently as they wanted to. The college used a DOS-based software (Munis) to handle receivables and payables, bank statement reconciliation, payroll, and reporting. The DOS system didn't integrate with other technologies, the most important of them a college management system called CAMS for Windows®. Microsoft® Gold Partner Three Rivers Systems built CAMS based on the Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 business database and analytics application. The DOS-based software was not easy to use, and the back-end database written in Common Business Oriented Language (COBOL) was badly outdated. The college wanted to streamline its payroll processes, which were largely paper-based, and looked for a cost-effective solution that could integrate with its existing database and CAMS.

The college's accounting team spent much of its time entering information into disparate software tools and, later, searching for that same information. Accountants entered data in isolated spreadsheets kept by every accountant. It was not easy for the management team to gain a consolidated view of the college's finances, a situation that made decision making difficult. The college wanted to eliminate inaccuracies and inefficiencies, including the tedious re-keying of information.

In looking for a practical solution to its concerns, the college also considered that a new software tool should integrate not only with CAMS, but also with third-party tools specifically designed for schools and with the Microsoft Office System programs in use at Louisburg.

Solution

After considering possible options, the college chose to implement Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains® (now part of Microsoft Dynamics™) as its business management solution. The decision was based on the solution's ready compatibility with CAMS and its ability to integrate with other Microsoft products and technologies as well as third-party software tools. Microsoft Great Plains came at a reasonable cost, offered a flexible, scalable design, and had a strong reputation among a wide range of business management software users.

To implement the solution, Louisburg College chose Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, Massey Consulting. Massey specializes in accounting software implementations and helps its clients automate and integrate solutions for all aspects of business management, from finance to customer service. Massey implemented Microsoft Great Plains in two phases. Each took close to four months. First, Massey implemented the payables management and general-ledger

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Eric Tichenor, Software Specialist, Louisburg

functionality of Microsoft Great Plains. When the college's experience using those capabilities proved positive, Massey returned to implement the payroll, direct deposit, and human resources management tools, which are part of Microsoft Great Plains. Today, 12 employees use Microsoft Great Plains regularly.

By using Microsoft Great Plains Integration Manager, Massey Consulting integrated the business management solution with three important, third-party software tools:

- CAMS for Windows, from Three Rivers Systems, for managing and tracking student receivables
- Mekorma Software's magnetic ink character recognition (MICR) technology, and MICR Check Printing, for the creation of payroll checks
- Aatrix Software's Payroll Reports for processing quarterly payroll taxes.

In addition to the functionality already mentioned, the college uses Microsoft Great Plains to manage its payroll (including direct deposits) and its bank accounts. College employees also use Microsoft Business Solutions for Analytics–FRx® software to build customized financial reports.

“Through its General Ledger and Microsoft FRx Desktop applications, Microsoft Great Plains is now the driving force of our financial reporting,” says Eric Tichenor, Software Specialist at Louisburg College. “It integrated perfectly with our CAMS for Windows system.”

Benefits

The Microsoft Great Plains implementation helps the college realize its goal of practicing efficient, dependable financial management to support its mission of providing excellent educational services. “The centralization of our critical processes, from financial reporting to human resources management, provides substantial time savings and means we're

also saving money,” says Mark Joyner, IT Manager at Louisburg College.

Fast Adoption and Easy Integration With Familiar Software Tools

Says Joyner, “Implementing [Microsoft] Great Plains was in line with our desire to maintain integration with Microsoft products, as well as other applications.”

College employees use the Microsoft Office System applications on their desktops, including Microsoft Office Word 2003 word processing software and the Microsoft Office Outlook® 2003 messaging and collaboration client. The accounting team uses Microsoft Office Excel® 2003 spreadsheet software for the bulk of its accounting and analysis needs. The similar look and feel of Microsoft Great Plains with the college's existing applications made it easy for people to be productive with the new solution from the start. “Whenever you implement a new system, it's important to recognize that training will take time and effort. It's always helpful when the new tool looks familiar,” says Tichenor.

In addition to offering a comfortable software environment that people can easily personalize, Microsoft Great Plains makes it easy to work with business information in the way the college's employees like. For example, they can export data from Microsoft Great Plains to Excel 2003 for analysis and reporting, or to Word 2003 for inclusion in business documents. College administrators also can assess the school's financial health and make sound business decisions with greater ease than before.

Improved Efficiency and Productivity in Financial Management

Integration of Microsoft Great Plains and CAMS is crucial to the college's financial management. The college relies on CAMS for Windows to track critical information, from registration to housing to financial aid.

Accurate, centrally-located information provides the college's managers with visibility into the receivables from more than 700 students. "Our students generate our receivables, so accurately tracking student data is crucial. The ability of [Microsoft] Great Plains to integrate with CAMS lets us very efficiently manage and use this information," says Joyner.

The college's MICR Check Printing software is built specifically for integration with Microsoft Great Plains and, thereby, offers a familiar, comfortable user interface to the college's accounting team. By using information from Microsoft Great Plains, the MICR solution generates printed, signed checks for payroll and accounts payable. It is no longer necessary to imprint signatures on checks, and blank checks no longer exist. "The ability of Microsoft Great Plains to integrate with MICR Check Printing has provided us with an added measure of security and convenience," says Tichenor.

30 Percent Time Savings in Payroll

Louisburg now generates substantial time savings in performing its payroll processes by using the Microsoft Great Plains payroll management capabilities in integration with the college's Aatrix Payroll Reports. "Our accounting staff is experiencing at least a 30 percent time savings," says Joyner. "The process of entering and checking data has been reduced from hours to minutes in many cases."

"We're saving even more time preparing our state and federal taxes with our integrated Aatrix application—as much as 50 percent," says Joyner. Using its Aatrix Payroll Reports, which are specifically designed to work well with Microsoft Great Plains, the college's accountants prepare quarterly taxes working entirely in the familiar Microsoft Great Plains user interface. No file exporting or formatting is necessary, and reports are being

automatically completed within Microsoft Great Plains, thereby allowing the college's accounting team to save valuable time.

50 Percent Improvement in Accuracy

Coinciding with time savings are substantial increases in the level of accuracy the college has achieved with the implementation of Microsoft Great Plains. The college attributes its data entry improvements to its ability to enter information just once into Microsoft Great Plains and have it appear in all components of the business management solution, including the general ledger, bank management, and CAMS.

"Using Microsoft Great Plains as a single entry point has allowed us to manage our data entry process. The CAMS integration has been extremely effective. We've eliminated redundant entries and have improved accuracy by as much as 50 percent," says Joyner.

Extensible Solution for Changing Needs

The flexibility and modular design of Microsoft Great Plains allow Louisburg College to add financial management capabilities and other functionality when the need arises. Based on its success with Microsoft Great Plains so far, the college is adding the eRequisition functionality of Microsoft Great Plains 9.0 to manage purchase requests and approvals completely on the Web. The college is also preparing an implementation of Microsoft Business Portal to give employees access to Microsoft Great Plains functions on the college's intranet.

"We are looking forward to continued benefits as we move forward with our system development," says Joyner. "We're excited about the ability to connect our team to our system online. We're confident that step will provide even greater efficiencies."

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about Massey Consulting, Inc. products and services, call (919) 875-9635 or visit the Web site at: www.masseyconsulting.net

For more information about Louisburg College products and services, call (919) 496-2521 or visit the Web site at: www.louisburg.edu

Microsoft Dynamics

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that enables you and your people to make business decisions with greater confidence. Microsoft Dynamics works like familiar Microsoft software such as Microsoft Office, which means less of a learning curve for your people, so they can get up and running quickly and focus on what's most important. And because it is from Microsoft, it easily works with the systems that your company already has implemented. By automating and streamlining financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes, Microsoft Dynamics brings together people, processes, and technologies, increasing the productivity and effectiveness of your business, and helping you drive business success.

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics, go to: www.microsoft.com/dynamics

Microsoft Business Solutions—Great Plains
Now Microsoft Dynamics GP

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Business Solutions—Great Plains
 - Microsoft Business Solutions for Analytics—FRx
- Microsoft Office System
 - Microsoft Office Excel 2003
 - Microsoft Office Outlook 2003
 - Microsoft Office Word 2003

Hardware

HP DL 380 Dual Processor Servers with 4GB of RAM

Partner

- Massey Consulting, Inc.

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