LANSA Case Study

College of New Rochelle saves with LANSA ASP solution

The College of New Rochelle (CNR) in New York USA was founded in 1904 and has seven campuses and over 6,000 students. CNR runs its entire administration with the College Administrative Processing System (CAPS) from LANSA business partner DB Systems Corporation. This LANSA for the Web-based ASP solution gives staff and students easy browser access inside the college and at home.

Nancy Girling, director of information systems at the College of New Rochelle, says, "CAPS allows us to investigate the financial aid options available to a student at their first interview and apply for aid online from our system. The browser-based ASP solution allows us to budget accurately and run college administration for 6,000 students and 800 PCs with only four IT and network staff."

Maximizing Adult Learner

Girling explains, "Previously we had individual systems for admission, financial aid and general student administration. There was a lot of duplication of data and effort. The systems were not integrated, it was very difficult to track students and to consolidate information in reports."

"We experimented with client server applications to access information from one system and copy it to the other systems. That became a nightmare with out-of-synch data and one-way transfers. We knew that the solution was to centralize the data, but nobody wanted to give up what they knew and loved."

"We have done a lot of customization through the years, especially in the area of non-traditional student programs and financial aid. Over 80 percent of our students receive financial aid packages, which combine grants, loans, and work study from Federal, State and private agencies, as well as from the College."

"We want to assist them in getting as much financial aid as possible, rather than leaving this quite complex task up to the student. Maximizing aid is critical for our organization and student community."

"We looked at package systems, but nothing seemed to fit. DB Systems, who had been a provider to us for several years, proposed we use CAPS over the Web on their central iSeries server. The proposal was very attractive

"Filling out aid application forms would take hours, now we can do it in minutes"

because DB Systems knew our system very well and their ASP solution didn't require a huge upfront investment."

More than just a Coat of Paint

Kevin Brown, managing director of DB Systems Corporation, explains, "CAPS was originally developed in a mixture of RPG and COBOL. The AS/400 site and internal administration modules were always integrated, but we wanted to provide integration to the outside world. School staff need integrated access to rules, regulations and forms on Government sites and they need to be able to post online aid applications directly from the school system as well. As well, we wanted to open the system up for student access, including preregistration, class schedules and grades."

"We started by Web facing modules with Seagull's JWalk. This gave a browser interface to CAPS without changing the existing RPG and COBOL code. We achieved a more modern look and I could even demonstrate CAPS from a laptop. But underneath, we still had the inflexible RPG and COBOL legacy code. It is like painting a car that has done 120,000 miles. The car may look good, but eventually you need a new car."

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"We looked around for a tool to redevelop CAPS and make things really better. We compared WebSphere and LANSA and selected LANSA as it gave us cross platform deployment, real Web and event driven development and native iSeries performance. All with a single skill set. Everybody has a different learning curve, but overall LANSA was easy for our programmers to learn."

"One of our top priorities was to provide the users with the ability to create their own drill-down reports. We created generic reports that the users can customize and save for subsequent use. In addition to LANSA based reports, we have also provided HTML hotlinks to reports built with WebFocus from Information Builders. We can run the WebFocus reports from LANSA and also call LANSA from WebFocus," adds Brown.

Online Finance Application

"CAPS allows us to investigate the financial aid options available to a student at their first interview and apply for aid and loans with the Federal Government directly from our system," says Girling.

"Filling out the financial aid application forms would take hours, because you would have to look up a lot of tables. With CAPS our counselors can do it in minutes while the student is sitting at their desk."

"Because the financial aid information is available to recruitment and admissions, we can determine the potential aid package for a student and convey it to them along with the other recruitment information. This is very powerful and takes the uncertainty about costs away for student. Students can make a decision whether to go forward with enrolment right then and there, resulting in more enrolments."

"Because we are able to process financial aid requests so quickly, the college receives funds faster and there is less need for us to seek short-term financing from banks. This saves us thousands of dollars in interest."

The Gill Library.

"Online access to personal account information, class schedules and grades is a big advantage, especially for our part-time and commuting students who make up over 80 percent of our community. We experimented with 5250-emulation access from kiosks throughout the campus, but the browser-based interface is so much better and appreciated by our student community."

"With LANSA we have extended our market to Windows and Linux."

"Users now have information and easy reporting at their finger tips and don't need help from IT anymore to print a report or address labels."

"The browser interface is also very attractive from an IT point of view, as we don't have to install or maintain any client software. It requires very little user training and is easier to support. We have about 300 client PCs spread over 20 buildings in seven campuses accessing the CAPS system. Client support used to be a nightmare. The browser architecture is a lot more flexible and support is easy," adds Girling.

Efficient and Cross-Platform

"Sharing information across departments has made us a more efficient organization overall," Girling concludes. "We are now looking at implementing more student Web initiated functionality in the admission, registration and financial aid areas."

"The system is administered by DB Systems Corporation, a very professional and responsive group of people. We pay a monthly amount and don't have to worry about hardware, software or hiring programmers. The ASP solution allows us to budget accurately and run the college administration for 6,000 students and 800 PCs with only four IT and network staff."

"With LANSA we redeveloped CAPS with our own knowledgeable staff," adds Brown. "I estimate that redevelopment costs were one third of what they would have been if we had to call in a team of technical consultants. Because we understand college administration and we care, using our own staff gave us a higher quality end product."

"With LANSA we have extended our market to Windows and Linux platforms and we can offer CAPS in an ASP environment. This is a huge advantage for any solution provider," concludes Brown.

Company and System Information

- The College of New Rochelle (CNR), founded in 1904 by the Ursuline Order, was the first Catholic college for women in New York State. Today CNR comprises the all-women School of Arts & Sciences as well as the School of New Resources (for adult learners), the School of Nursing and the Graduate School. The main campus is located in lower Westchester County, 16 miles north of New York City. The other six campus locations are in New York City. For more information visit: www.cnr.edu

- DB Systems Corporation is a LANSA business partner specializing in college administration software and full-service software development and consulting. For more information visit: www.dbsystemscorp.com

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