

# FIVE ADVANTAGES

## Bowling Green State University gained by electronically managing student records

Student service is a key differentiator among higher education institutions. Today's students demand a level of convenience and responsiveness that slow, cumbersome, paper-based processing methods don't provide. As institutions continue to grow their enrollment goals, immediate and efficient student service becomes critical to their ability to attract – and retain – transfer students, non-traditional students and distance learners.

Facing an aggressive enrollment goal to grow its student population by nearly 25 percent by 2020, Bowling Green State University (BGSU) knew it needed to meet demands for improved information access, fast turnaround times, regulatory compliance and disaster recovery in an innovative way. By changing how its student records are managed, the institution gained efficiencies, improved service to traditional and non-traditional students alike and reclaimed office space. Chris Cox, university registrar at BGSU, shares the benefits of going paperless.



# Bowling Green State University (BGSU) lists the strategic advantages that managing student records electronically brings to the university:

## 1. IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO STUDENT INFORMATION

In order to make accurate decisions, information has to be accessible. Utilizing paper filing methods to manage student records makes it difficult to find the information you need, and locating documents often takes up too much time. It's time many registrars don't have.

"Anything I have to do, I have to do it now. Whether it's serving a student, getting information to an executive or providing a response to a student advisor – it has to be immediate," said Chris Cox, registrar at BGSU.

Before implementing OnBase, Hyland Software's enterprise content management solution (ECM), BGSU stored student information in a number of different places. Active records were in file folders, on desks and in filing cabinets in the registrar's office or with a student advisor, an admissions or financial aid counselor. BGSU stored some of its archival student records on microfiche, while others were in paper form and kept in an old tornado shelter in the basement of BGSU's administration building.

Recognizing that paper processes were preventing BGSU from meeting the service needs of its students, the university changed the way it managed its student records, implementing an ECM solution.

"By digitizing our student records, we've improved our ability to access student information," said Cox. "We don't have to search for documents anymore. Staff find what they need with the click of a mouse. We're not wasting time searching for information."

## 2. REDUCED TURNAROUND TIME FOR STUDENT REQUESTS

BGSU's ECM solution offers the institution much more than improved information access. Using the solution's business process tools, BGSU streamlined a number of its processes so decisions happen faster, increasing the level of service BGSU provides to both traditional and non-traditional students.

Cox's office started with moving from paper forms to electronic forms. The result was significantly reduced turnaround times for student requests. As is common among institutions, BGSU students must submit a form to withdraw from an upcoming semester and the form requires approval from several different

offices – seven at BGSU. By changing the process from paper to electronic, a BGSU student seeking to withdraw now accesses the appropriate e-form through an online portal, authenticates their identity and completes and submits the form. Rather than the registrar's office physically routing the form to the different offices, BGSU's ECM solution utilizes an electronic workflow. The form automatically goes to the required parties for approval, which keeps the request moving quickly through the chain of required signatories.

"We're able to do in a day what used to take us weeks," said Cox, "It's the level of responsiveness today's students expect."

Cox added that the electronic forms have added convenience to BGSU's distance learners.

"It shouldn't be so difficult for a member of the military taking classes while in Afghanistan to drop a class," said Cox. "If a student can send an email, they should be able to send a form. It was clear our processes weren't keeping up with the needs of today's students."

OnBase also offers BGSU increased visibility into processes. For example, Cox can pull up a workflow to see where slowdowns are occurring. To prevent the e-forms from piling up, he can reassign the work to others so that approvals are secured quickly.

## 3. EASY DOCUMENT RETENTION TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE

Institutions are stewards of student information, from the time they receive a student's initial application materials to his or her degree completion and continuing through their status as alumni. As such, institutions must comply with a number of regulations and may be audited by a range of entities from the Department of Education, Veteran's Affairs and the NCAA to state boards and accreditation organizations. OnBase makes it easy for Cox to manage compliance obligations. When an audit occurs, student information as well as any supporting documentation regarding grade changes or transaction dates is easily available for review. Cox also uses the solution to keep track of the different compliance expectations, helping BGSU meet document retention schedules and avoid any penalties for keeping documents past their destruction dates.

"Pulling information during an audit is easy. We have all the related background information for any anomaly they may come across to show that we were compliant," said Cox. "I don't lose any sleep over audits anymore."

## 4. DISASTER RECOVERY THAT WORKS

When BGSU's microfiche started to deteriorate, Cox knew he had to quickly find a long-term solution to protect the integrity of student records.

"We just couldn't put off the technology purchase any longer," said Cox. "We had about 200,000 academic records on microfiche. We needed to save that information."

Now that BGSU's student information is stored electronically, it's backed up nightly on multiple servers. Cox has a solid disaster recovery strategy and no longer has to maintain the school's expensive microfiche equipment.

## 5. RECLAIMED SPACE REPURPOSED FOR HIGHER-VALUE USE

BGSU reclaimed the space previously dedicated to housing its microfiche machines. It also turned the tornado shelter into an employee lounge and break room that provides staff with overflow meeting space. Going paperless has also made space planning easier. The registrar's office has a much smaller footprint now, which offers Cox more flexibility when the office relocates to another building on campus next year.

"Getting rid of the paper has really transformed our office," said Cox. "We're more efficient, provide faster and better service to our students and have the flexibility to be more innovative."

Cox added that over the next year he plans to put all of the forms and processes in the financial aid, admissions and registrar's offices online.

"We'll have the option of implementing a one-stop shop for student service, which we couldn't have done well when we were working with paper records," said Cox.

For more information about ways to improve the way your institution manages student records, visit [Hyland.com/HigherEducation](http://Hyland.com/HigherEducation).