

THE TOP THREE BENEFITS OF AUTOMATING TRANSCRIPT CAPTURE AND EVALUATION

How eliminating bottlenecks improves response time and student retention

Higher education institutions face an ever-growing list of challenges. Student demographics are shifting: according to the National Student Clearinghouse — there are more adult learners, fewer full-time enrollments and students who are generally more sensitive to the cost of education. Further, the plethora of education options available means colleges and universities also need to compete over a shrinking student applicant pool.

Admissions departments are under tremendous pressure to meet recruitment goals and target populations, and Inside Higher Ed's latest survey of college and university admissions paints a grim picture: a majority of institutions failed to meet their enrollment goals in 2018. As in recent years, most admissions directors reported concern over filling the class.

In the race to secure best-fit students, admissions and transfer processes need to be agile and adapt to today's digital world. Besides wasting precious time and resources, paper-based, manual transcript capture and evaluation processes also stretch out the decision period — forcing students to wait weeks or even months for an answer on their admission, course equivalency and financial aid status.

Your institution's ability to answer queries quickly and accurately could be the deciding factor on whether a student chooses to enroll in your school. Failing to do so could not only cost you the term's best-fit applicants, but it could also be detrimental to your institution's overall status and appeal.

Getting answers into students' hands ahead of competing institutions begins with eliminating bottlenecks and inefficiencies in the admissions process. This can be done by automating transcript capture and evaluation.

1. Remove manual data entry with intelligent capture

On average, each admissions officer processes more than 400 applications every semester at private institutions, and almost double that figure at public institutions, according to the 2018 State of College Admissions report.

Paper remains the most popular format for academic transcripts, and — although PDF transcripts are rising in popularity — admissions staff still need to manually key in essential course and institution information. This process can take up to 20 minutes per transcript, even for a “simple” document. Multiply that by thousands of multiple-page transcripts in a variety of formats and it's easy to see how schools can speed up this process by eliminating data entry.

An automated transcript capture and evaluation solution removes the need to manually key in data — enabling staff to use their time for higher-value tasks — by capturing information from transcripts electronically. With intelligent optical character recognition (OCR), the necessary information is identified and extracted without human intervention whether the document is received by mail, fax or web. This also allows staff to process more incoming transcripts in less time, while storing all transcript data in a central location enables them to instantaneously pull up required information when questions arise.

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2. Speed course evaluation and verification

The transfer student population is increasing, with more than one-third of students transferring institutions at least once, according to a National Student Clearinghouse report. Further, almost half of transfer students have attended three or more institutions.

With a national average ratio of 527 applicants for every admissions officer, staff are hard-pressed for time, especially during peak periods. But when your transcript capture and evaluation processes revolve around paper, transcript reviews by hand are a time-intensive and laborious process that keep students waiting for weeks. By the time your institution can provide equivalency decisions, qualified applicants may already be looking at other schools or enrolled in courses that award no credit toward their degree, which contributes to student dissatisfaction and attrition.

A solution that automates the evaluation process removes the need for manual review to determine an applicant's transfer equivalency report. Using this tool, courses are compared automatically according to articulation rules in place for each external institution, instantly identifying which credits will or will not transfer. Manual intervention and verification from staff are only required when necessary, which removes process bottlenecks.

3. Consolidate data with SIS integration

Data that is manually entered into your student information system (SIS) may come from multiple sources, which carries the risk of error and for inefficiency. For example, when incomplete documents are routed for faculty review or different versions of the same document exist in the system.

A transcript capture and evaluation solution that integrates with your SIS gives your staff a complete view of the student, cuts out manual data entry and improves the ability to build your articulation database. Staff no longer need to pull up multiple screens to enter information from separate databases. One system shares necessary data with the other to cut down on errors.

Having student data available and easily accessible from one location helps drive faster decision making, allowing institutions to act faster, increase productivity and improve student satisfaction.

To learn more, download the ebook *Winning the race for best-fit students* or go to Hyland.com/Transcripts.

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