

MNSCU'S DIVERSE RIGHTNOW IMPLEMENTATIONS IMPROVE CONSTITUENT EXPERIENCES ACROSS THE STATE WITHIN TIGHT IT BUDGET CONSTRAINTS

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system is made up of 32 separate institutions, each of which has its own objectives and challenges. While it's important to maintain the independence of each of these institutions, MnSCU's central Chancellor's Office is also charged with helping them all achieve their full potential. The effective use of technology across the state-wide system is particularly challenging, since any such technology would have to offer the economies-of-scale associated with the use of a common solution everywhere—while giving each institution the flexibility to adapt it to their specific requirements.

RightNow, it turns out, fit the bill perfectly. As a complete on demand solution for optimizing the constituent experience, RightNow enables MnSCU to deliver a common set of powerful software capabilities wherever they're needed. At the same time, RightNow is sufficiently flexible to allow project leaders at each school to tailor it to their particular objectives.

In fact, RightNow is being successfully applied to more than two dozen schools in the MnSCU system which each have different sets of objectives. These objectives range from improved recruitment and enhanced student services to innovative support for local business communities and a super-efficient IT help desk.

“RightNow is a powerful and highly adaptable technology solution that enables colleges and universities in the MnSCU system to more effectively communicate with their various constituencies and better manage institutional knowledge,” says Paul Wasko, MnSCU's director of electronic student services. “It allows us to implement a highly sophisticated enterprise information infrastructure for MnSCU as a whole, while preserving local control of local initiatives.”

Continuously Expanding Implementations and Benefits

MnSCU first encountered RightNow when it was looking to replace an aging CA Unicenter Service Desk environment that was no longer meeting the needs of its resource-constrained IT department. With more than 16,000 employees dispersed across 53 campuses, MnSCU's IT staff has to handle lots of support questions on a daily basis. The CA system didn't adequately streamline or integrate the management of phone, email, and web communications with end-users. Nor did it provide a way for those end-users to track their own trouble-tickets. RightNow, on the other hand, provided these needed capabilities and—even better—eliminated the costs and infrastructure logistics associated with conventional software.

Once MnSCU's IT department saw what RightNow could do, it began to encourage its use by other departments. Other departments and individual schools soon followed suit and implemented RightNow in a variety of ways. Their implementations, in turn, got other managers in the system to re-think the way they were managing information and delivering that information to their various constituencies.

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Industry: [Education](#)

Goals

- Optimize constituent experiences across all channels
- Help each individual institution fulfill its specific objectives
- Maximize technology return on value across the organization

Achievements

- Improved communications with students, parents, faculty, and communities
- Common application suite readily adapted to diverse operational challenges
- Enterprise license and on demand delivery model to maximize budgets

CASE STUDY: MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



Today, MnSCU's diverse RightNow implementations include an award-winning online information service at Anoka-Ramsey Community College—dubbed “Ask Us”—that provides students and the public with answers to questions about the college and its services through its website. The service is accessible on every page of the site through an “Ask Us” icon and guarantees a response to emails within one business day.

Integrated support and recruitment for Minnesota Online, MnSCU's e-learning service. Like “Ask Us,” this implementation provides students and prospects with fast answers to questions about courses, registration, fees, and other issues. However, this implementation also captures information about prospects when they ask questions, so recruitment managers can build a database of leads—and automate marketing campaigns to convert those leads to enrolled students.

A partnership involving four MnSCU schools and a regional chamber of commerce that links local businesspeople with experts in various fields—such as alternative fuels, HR best practices, or cost accounting. These experts may be MnSCU faculty members or, if there's not a faculty member with the appropriate expertise, individuals from the business community itself.

“The more that people in the MnSCU system see how RightNow is being used in different ways by different teams, the more excited they get about using it to fulfill their own mission,” observes Wasko. “So the proliferation of RightNow across the state has been the result of spontaneous ‘pull’ rather than an imposed ‘push.’”

Balancing Centralized Support with Local Control

An enterprise licensing agreement facilitated the use of RightNow across the MnSCU system by allowing its various institutions to implement multiple interfaces without incremental software costs. MnSCU's central office handles all business and technical issues with RightNow, in addition to providing Tier 1 support for RightNow users across the system. Local project teams manage their own content and configure the software to suit their specific needs. RightNow's intuitive interface design enables these non-technical project teams to perform this content management and configuration without HTML or programming skills.

RightNow's on demand delivery model also supports this localized model. Local project teams don't have to worry about buying and installing hardware, managing OS patches, or dealing with any other IT infrastructure headaches—and neither does MnSCU's central IT department. New RightNow interfaces can be quickly implemented with a phone call and a little bit of team training, without any additional capital expense.

Wasko adds that RightNow has proven itself to be an excellent business partner as various teams across the MnSCU system deploy the technology in so many different ways. “RightNow's employees are able to quickly understand each team's objectives and offer valuable input as to how the software can best be used to fulfill those objectives,” he says. “Our investment in our enterprise license is continuing to pay off in ways that we never anticipated.”

ABOUT MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system is made up of 32 institutions, including 25 two-year colleges and seven state universities. The system serves approximately 350,000 students. It is separate from the University of Minnesota.

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