

How innovative institutions are thriving through digital transformation and consolidation

Southern University and A&M College System, Roosevelt University make strategic decisions to become more student-centered

Amidst an increasingly challenging higher education landscape, some leading institutions are finding ways not only to survive, but thrive, through strategic innovation and digital transformation. By using technology to improve efficiency, while streamlining processes and consolidating operations, innovative colleges and universities are creating new ways of doing business that reduce costs, while better serving the needs of students.



SU System transforms digital and business processes

With five campuses across Louisiana, the Southern University and A&M College System (SU System) is a historically Black public university system founded in 1880, serving over 8,000 students. Driven by a state legislative mandate to find ways to improve efficiency and centralize back office operations to reduce costs, while recognizing the need to transform the student experience, the SU System launched a strategic initiative, "BannerSUnited," in 2018.

One of the main goals of the initiative was to consolidate the multiple Banner ERP systems being used across campuses into a single shared application. The new consolidated platform would benefit the entire university system by establishing common business processes and creating significant cost savings. But just as importantly, the consolidation would improve the stu-

dent experience, by creating a common course catalog, and simplifying the admissions and registration processes.

"The consolidation of the legacy Banner systems is a significant step toward realization of a long-term benefit for the SU System," says Dr. Ray Belton, President-Chancellor. "The new Banner platform will facilitate operational efficiencies across campuses and create opportunities for greater economies of scale due to cost savings. Students will enjoy consistent academic experiences regardless of location."

The BannerSUnited project was a complex undertaking, as the SU System was changing both operations and supporting technologies simultaneously. After a careful evaluation, the SU System selected Strata Information Group (SIG) as their implementation partner to assist with creating new shared business processes and poli-

cies, and to provide functional and technical implementation support.

After 18 months, the new consolidated Banner system went live in December 2019. Students in the SU System are now able to move seamlessly between all campuses, and the System has realized significant time and cost savings. In addition, the SU System now has access to improved analytics which help to identify students in need of support, aiding in student success and retention efforts.

"Today's students require their institutions to operate differently than in the past," says Emily Rudin, General Manager of Client Services at SIG. "Centralizing back office services and the ERP created savings for the SU System, and they transferred those savings to improving their student-centric services. The SU System is ahead of the game now, and well positioned for the future."



Roosevelt University acquires Robert Morris University

Roosevelt University is a private institution founded in 1945, with three campuses in and around Chicago and serving 5,000 students. In the spring of 2020, Roosevelt acquired neighboring institution, Robert Morris University, to become a single entity. Each university offered different types of programs and served different students, but both institutions faced enrollment pressures and saw an opportunity to better serve students while ensuring business sustainability. Roosevelt would continue to provide graduate studies and liberal arts degrees, while Robert Morris brought career and two-year programs to the newly consolidated institution.

The leadership of both schools had an ambitious goal of combining all business operations, technologies and data in less than four months, when the average time for similar projects is typically 12-16 months. To attain this objective, the leadership of Roosevelt and Robert Morris selected Strata Information Group (SIG) as their implementation partner.

The combined leadership team from Roosevelt, Robert Morris and SIG quickly developed new business processes, created a new Banner ERP environment and assessed technology and data structures to support consolidation. Implementation included data conversion into the new Banner ERP system, as well as testing, training, troubleshooting and sup-

porting all systems, prior to, during and after the go-live date.

The timeline was achieved, and full consolidation of the two institutions was completed in just four months, and within budget.

"Roosevelt's acquisition of Robert Morris made perfect sense, because they serve different student populations," says Rudin. "If institutions are going to survive in today's environment, they must start looking at themselves as businesses, that are in the business of educating students. To do that, they need to look at the market, and see opportunities to add programs they're not currently providing. Successful mergers and acquisitions like this are an illustration of that strategy."

Since 1987, Strata Information Group (SIG) has helped hundreds of colleges and universities realize the full potential of their technology to improve services for students, faculty, and staff. SIG specializes in project-based IT consulting, staff augmentation, managed services, business process, technical support, and technology procurement services.

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