

Case Study: Columbus State Community College



To manage rapid growth, Ohio's largest community college leverages PPM to align spending, understand performance and deliver on expectations in a resource-constrained environment.

Institution

Columbus State Community College

Columbus State Community College has been dedicated to meeting the educational needs of its community for more than 40 years. The College has grown from an initial enrollment of 67 students, in 1963, to its current thriving campus of more than 23,000 students. Columbus State is especially proud of its own community. Each member of the faculty and staff is committed to enhancing the educational and employment opportunities of CSCC students.

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Driven by a competitive job market and escalating interest in advanced training, community colleges across the country are experiencing double digit growth in student enrollment. Columbus State Community College, which serves more than 24,000 students in Columbus, Ohio, is no different, recently becoming the third largest institution of higher learning in the state of Ohio. Students across the state are attracted to CSCC's affordability, partnerships with public universities and flexibility with its 85-acre downtown campus, 10 suburban centers and global, virtual campus that enrolls more online students than any college in Ohio. CSCC had its largest fall class ever in 2008 and broke school records with its winter class in 2009.

As a result of CSCC's tremendous growth, there is a greater demand on the college's infrastructure, particularly in the area of information technology (IT). Among the biggest challenges for CSCC's small IT staff is a similar challenge faced by many community colleges and public higher education institutions: the misunderstanding that IT always has the time and resources to take on any project.

"In the past, we have rarely said no to project requests," said Bart L. Prickett, director of I.T. Support Services at Columbus State Community College. "We have always tried to find the resources to meet the needs of individual departments and the college as a whole. In today's environment, return on investment is more important than ever in order to meet the ever increasing needs of our student population when considering project prioritization."

To manage projects in the past, Prickett's team used QuickBase and an IT request system developed in-house. With a growing need for improved reporting, tracking and accountability, Prickett decided to search for another solution. After evaluating a number of portfolio management tools, the college implemented TeamDynamixHE, a Web-based project and portfolio management (PPM) solution that is built specifically for the higher education market. TeamDynamixHE provides the reporting capabilities and flexibility the college needed to manage multiple projects, combine resources and eliminate redundancy.

“It was not uncommon in the past for teams in disparate parts of the college to be working independently on similar problems,” added Prickett. “We have to do a lot with a small staff, and from a resource standpoint, it can be difficult to complete the number of projects needed, particularly if we did not know the true capacity of our project pipeline. We simply did not have the means to track effectively what everyone was working on. Without a quality tracking system, it can be difficult to justify the need for additional resources and manage the timelines of approved, active projects.”

CSCC needed a solution that worked effectively across a large organization. TeamDynamixHE provides CSCC’s staff with a centrally located solution where all IT staff and contractors can access current projects and project information. With TeamDynamixHE’s planning utilities, Prickett’s team can manage project requests, prioritize and score all potential projects, and streamline the project startup and staffing process by managing resources and launching projects directly through the Web. Team members can also access TeamDynamixHE’s customizable personal dashboards for a graphical display of daily responsibilities and current issues. TeamDynamixHE serves as a communication tool across the IT team by automatically notifying members of timelines, deadlines, tasks and information added or changes in a project.

Currently, nearly 175 people representing the college’s I.T. Data Center, I.T. Network and P.C. services, Educational Resource Center, Enrollment Services, Public Safety and the Center for Educational Workforce Development are using TeamDynamixHE’s PPM to manage projects. A few of these departments are also using the TeamDynamixHE TDTicketing module to track help desk incidents and associated efforts for their departments. The help desk ticketing solution integrates seamlessly with TeamDynamixHE PPM, providing a complete picture of resource allocation, capacity and cost of doing business. TDTicketing also helps ensure that tickets are resolved effectively with the proper sign off processes in place.

“TeamDynamixHE has helped us move towards a more integrated planning process,” added Prickett. “We have begun to review initiatives and project requests on a yearly basis. This way, the college will pick the main IT projects that we work on, based on the initiatives identified at the beginning of the year. This will allow us to prioritize more effectively. Once identified, projects will go into TeamDynamixHE, which will help us to better budget our time and resources and provide the college with the analytical data to make more informed decisions. We can also use TeamDynamixHE to walk people through the project development process and the potential ROI for the college.”

While the primary purpose for the TeamDynamixHE solution was to manage IT projects, the college recently used TeamDynamixHE to assist with the opening of its new campus by tracking vendors, consultants and contractors, and maintaining critical timelines for staff and faculty prior to opening. The system’s ticketing module has also provided a way for other departments to track activities, time and generate valuable reports.

“We are planning to further incorporate TeamDynamixHE into our integrated planning process and streamline the projects and initiatives at the college,” concluded Prickett. “TeamDynamixHE provides an excellent way to organize projects and initiatives for the institution. From an efficiency standpoint, we have been able to combine or eliminate closely related projects saving time, money and effort. The ability to track resources and provide reporting allows managers and officers the ability to plan, budget and justify current and future initiatives during fiscally challenging times.”