

How Central Arizona College modernized their student information system

When they needed a new SIS that would allow them to fully meet the needs of their learners – and support to go along with it – CAC turned to Anthology.



Central Arizona College's mission is to engage diverse communities in quality learning experiences for lifelong success by providing accessible, educational, economic, cultural, and personal growth opportunities.

For decades, though, Central Arizona College had struggled with a legacy student information system that was unable to keep pace with its evolving constituencies and needs. Chris Wodka, the college's chief financial officer, traced the issue back to the original implementation. "The system was robust, but the original setup, configurations, support services, and training weren't aligned with our needs. So over time as we added campuses and looked to the future, it became clear that the current system wasn't going to work."

The other issue was the changing higher education landscape. Enrollments for most institutions throughout the country were down and competition was up as more online programs emerged.

"Our legacy system didn't have the modern CRM tools that our recruitment department needs to improve engagement," said Cameron Sanders, director of enterprise application services at Central Arizona College. "We also didn't have degree audit capabilities that would allow students to track their progress in our programs."

INSTITUTION TYPE:

2-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATION:

COOLIDGE, ARIZONA

ORGANIZATION SIZE:

4,000

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCTS:

- Anthology **Payroll**
- Anthology **Reach**
- Anthology **Student**
- Anthology **Finance & HCM**
- Anthology **Cloud**

“[Anthology] has been committed to our transformation and success throughout the selection and implementation. They’ve made it clear they’re not going to allow us to fail.”

Chris Wodka
Chief Financial Officer,
Central Arizona College



Student Enrollment was looking for ways to improve constituent engagement and services. “Our main goal was to be more efficient for our students, faculty, and staff,” said Veronica Duran, dean of Student Enrollment at CAC. “But with the setup of our legacy system, we were often turning to our IT department to create the workarounds and reports we needed to gain greater transparency and efficiencies.”

In terms of academic delivery, CAC had been experimenting with competency-based education and needed a modern system that could also support nontraditional programs.



Selecting the right solution

CAC created an ERP Selection Committee that included representatives from all the key areas across the institution, including enrollment, student services, financial aid, finance, HR, faculty, and module users. This would not only ensure that the technical and business requirements were met, but would promote cultural adoption across the institution. “We had the full support of our president and full buy-in from every department,” said Wodka. “If you don’t have this, you’re not going to get the system-wide cooperation you need down the road to ensure a successful transformation.”



Gaining a true partner

In replacing its legacy system, Central Arizona’s primary concern was as much about the vendor’s commitment to the college’s success as the quality of the product. “Our main goal was to receive the implementation, integrations, training, and ongoing support we needed to really use these products to their full capabilities,” recalled Duran.



Gaining insight from peer institutions

When Anthology became a finalist among the many vendors who responded to CAC's RFP, the next step was to look at other institutions using Anthology platforms. "In addition to reference calls, we were able to visit with one of [Anthology's] client institutions here in Arizona," said Duran. "Being able to look at their processes and how [Anthology] and the institution set up the system was very beneficial."

Anthology also invited CAC team members to the company's annual users' conference, at the time called CampusInsight, prior to the final selection. "We were able to meet with experts from [Anthology] in our different areas," recalled Luisa Ott, executive director of accounting services at CAC. "I was able to talk with finance experts about how we wanted to configure our processes as well as explore best practices and pros and cons with [Anthology's] current customers."



Implementation and Project Management

The college chose Anthology Cloud/Microsoft Azure, Anthology's SaaS option for deploying the new student information system, CRM, finance, and HR and payroll solutions. Sanders pointed to today's challenge of finding and affording qualified IT professionals as one of the main catalysts for moving to the cloud.

"It's hard nowadays to attract and pay for the necessary IT talent to support an institution's infrastructure. Moving to the cloud was a no-brainer for us because it addressed a lot of those issues we struggled with previously," said Sanders. "We were able to go from six servers to two, with four virtual servers now managed by [Anthology]. As importantly, four ERP functional analysts who used to be database programmers are now physically located in frontline business offices during the implementation. They assist directly as needed to get a feel for what's needed."

For CAC, Anthology Cloud powered by Microsoft Azure is a win-win. "[Anthology] maintains and upgrades the applications, but we still have the same level of control as far as our users and the permissions within the ERP," added Sanders. CAC's Blackboard® Learn instance was already in the cloud, but the college didn't want to take a piecemeal approach this time. "We needed a fully integrated system in the cloud," said Wodka. "It's where everything in the industry is headed."

Sanders managed the implementation steering committee that ensured the needed coordination and communication during the ERP implementation. "We are unique in our project management approach. I have [Anthology] and CampusWorks working closely with me to ensure

a successful transformation. It's really a triumvirate." Anthology even helped Sanders in his preparation for PMP testing and certification. "My role as director of enterprise application services is to oversee the ERP systems, so it was very important that we all spoke the same language. [Anthology] was very supportive with materials and advice for gaining the certification."

Implementation of Anthology[®] Student began in January 2017 and went live in late September 2017, with financial aid automation vcompleted around mid-October, and was followed by the implementation of Anthology[®] Reach, Anthology[®] Finance and HCM, and Anthology[®] Payroll.

"We have a number of staff members in my department who are testing the student system and making sure that the information is feeding over correctly from the legacy system into [Anthology]," said Duran at the time. "The communication between [Anthology] and CAC has been wonderful. Everybody is very responsive and on top of it in a very timely manner."

"[Anthology] has been really great about communicating with us, providing deliverables, and meeting timelines, which is very helpful considering we're all trying to do our day-to-day jobs as well," said Luisa Ott.



Training in preparation for go live

In addition to train-the-trainer instruction from Anthology, several CAC staffers attended the CampusInsight Annual Users Conference as a client institution in the spring of 2017. In fact, CAC sent the largest contingent from one institution, with more than 20 attendees.

"We not only benefited from attending sessions but [Anthology] set up meetings for us," recalled Duran. "Making those connections during the sessions with other institutions and being able to get key information about their implementations was very helpful as we look forward to go-live."

Products highlighted in this success story:

 Anthology **Payroll**  Anthology **Student** Anthology **Cloud**

 Anthology **Reach**  Anthology **Finance & HCM**

Learn more at anthology.com



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