

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
**TECHNOLOGY
UPDATE**
SPRING 2007

**SERVING
UP
SUCCESS**

On
Community
College
Web Sites

Page 3



Columbia College Achieves eLearning Vision with Desire2Learn

When Columbia College sought to modify its strategic eLearning direction they turned to Desire2Learn for a complete and comprehensive solution. The college selected the Desire2Learn Learning Environment and Business Continuity services to provide it with new educational opportunities and to propel the institution to a new level.

The Challenge

Columbia College required a learning environment that was easy to access for people with diverse backgrounds and with varying degrees of computer literacy. With a limited internal administrative infrastructure and expertise to host and support the online system, Columbia College had high expectations for an "always available" system which included business continuity.

In Search of Answers

Prior to 2003, Columbia College was using a Desire2Learn competitor's product. According to Mike Randerson, vice president of adult higher education, a selection committee was formed in the spring of 2003. Desire2Learn and competitors presented their products, and the vote was overwhelmingly in favor of Desire2Learn. A well-designed, intuitive, user interface for the faculty and students and a reliable, hosted infrastructure were critical variables in the Columbia College decision process. Additionally, Desire2Learn met the need of providing a learning framework that would easily scale as the online program matured.

The Solution: An Intuitive and User-Centric Focus

With an extensive history of being a pioneer in higher education, Columbia College saw the potential of using the

KEVIN PALMER

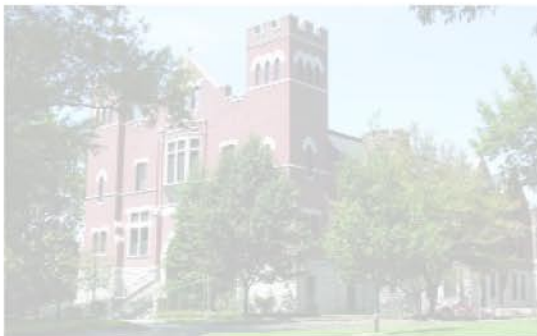
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER,
COLUMBIA COLLEGE

Desire2Learn Learning Environment. As a complete Web-based suite of easy-to-use tools and functionality, it enables the development, delivery, and management of online learning and offers a comprehensive framework for colleges and other institutions to deliver leading edge teaching and learning. The user-centric focus provides the foundation for improving learner achievement and measuring institutional effectiveness. Columbia College discovered that the Desire2Learn system makes online teaching and learning easy and exciting for faculty and students. This system enables institutions to tailor the learning environment to their needs, desired look-and-feel, philosophy, vision, and pedagogical approach, rather than dictating a single approach to teaching and learning.

The key to successful online teaching is to understand that technology merely facilitates the learning process: the real learning takes place in the dialogue - the interaction among students, instructors, activities, and course materials. Through the use of interactive learning tools, instructors can discover innovative ways to make each online experience unique for students. Furthermore, since each student has a unique individual learning style, instructors can create different learning paths based on the content, timing, and preferred learning format for each student.

Desire2Learn Business Continuity

Another key requirement for Columbia College was the ability to



deliver courses through a highly reliable environment with the assurance that in case of a power outage or system failure, its mission-critical system would be recovered with minimal end-user impact. After determining that business continuity was critical to its success, the next consideration was whether to manage this project internally or seek an external provider who could manage it on the school's behalf.

After considerable deliberation on the overall costs associated with hosting a heavily-trafficked and critical system (IT staff, hardware, software and overall infrastructure), Columbia College decided to focus on its core competencies and outsource non-core activities. Desire2Learn understood the business needs of the college and had the expertise to host clients and provide business continuity services. Through a hosted solution, Desire2Learn provided a comprehensive, tailored, and cost-effective service that eliminated unacceptable downtime and ensured reliable recovery and data protection in the event of an unforeseen disaster.

Complete Peace of Mind

The college took a proactive stance by providing an "always available" sys-

tem to students, faculty, and administrators. By relying on Desire2Learn to offer proactive risk management service, Columbia College was assured that mission critical applications would experience minimal downtime if its systems and infrastructure failed.

Desire2Learn Business Continuity Services provides advanced levels of system availability through file server and database clusters, redundant Storage Area Network (SAN) arrays, and tape backups. This highly available infrastructure minimizes the possibility of single points of failure. Furthermore, to safeguard against any data loss, Desire2Learn offers a convenient solution by providing the processes, e.g., outlining an exhaustive list of potential system failure scenarios and proper response activities, documenting detailed steps for system recovery for every failure scenario, and rehearsing recovery processes for all possible failure scenarios. Technical expertise is also provided to help the organization get back on track rapidly. With Desire2Learn, institutions have a tested, dependable solution tailored specifically to their critical data needs keeping the entire institution functional in a crisis and viable in the long run.

About Columbia College

From its home campus located in Columbia, Mo., and 31 extended campuses throughout the United States, including one in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The Online Campus at Columbia College offers more than 500 classes each session and 16 online degree programs.

Results

Columbia College's first session with Desire2Learn was in August of 2003. Today, 12,000 active learners are using the system. The college reports it has been extremely pleased with the level of services and support offered by Desire2Learn. Defining a strategic partnership between a higher education institution and a distance learning application provider can sometimes be difficult: the Desire2Learn team, however, truly understands how to provide an outstanding solution to their clients. The Online Campus continues to experience tremendous growth, attributed largely to the partnership with Desire2Learn. As Columbia College moves forward with expanding its Online Campus, the Desire2Learn system and services are assisting with providing educational opportunities that seemed impossible only a few years ago.

Find more information at www.Desire2Learn.com/SuccessStories
Register for a Webinar:
1 888.772.0325 (U.S. & Can.)
www.Desire2Learn.com/Events

College Streamlines Payroll Process for over 900 Employees

Livonia, MICH. — Schoolcraft College drastically cut the hours of administrative time once needed to track employee data and prepare payroll, and dramatically increased payroll accuracy. Supervisors no longer spend valuable time each pay period reviewing handwritten time sheets or chasing down missed punches for more than 900 employees. Since switching to an integrated, Web-enabled time and attendance system, payroll is completed faster than before. The system enables the college to standardize scheduling across the campus; automatically track wage policies; and analyze employee data for better-informed decisions.

About Schoolcraft College

Located in the metropolitan Detroit community of Livonia, Mich., Schoolcraft College is a two-year public college with 10,000 enrolled stu-

dents in more than 90 programs of study. Associate degree programs include business administration, criminal justice, culinary arts, medical technology, computer sciences, engineering technology and a variety of other disciplines.

Past Methods

In past years, Schoolcraft College tracked employee time and attendance data for more than 900 full- and part-time employees with manually assembled time sheets. This included five classifications of workers, and part-time student employees in food service, facility management, library, bookstore, clerical and other departments. Some employees hand-recorded start and end times; some "clocked in" each day with paper punch cards and an outdated time clock.

At the end of each pay period, departmental supervisors reviewed the time sheets or cards, made cor-

rections, and passed totals to the payroll department. In turn, payroll clerks re-entered employee hours into the college administrative payroll system to prepare the data for bi-weekly payroll. The Human Resources department tracked employee benefits and leave with similar manual methods and by using spreadsheets.

Employees based in a second campus in Garden City, Mich., also processed paper time sheets but had to have them delivered before the pay period had closed, hence many time sheets were estimated for a Monday deadline.

Indecipherable Information

The manual methods posed many challenges for the college. "It took our supervisors more time to decipher the handwriting on the paper time sheets, and the scribbled notes indicating overtime, double-time or premium pay," said Jim Polkowski, executive

director of Business Services. "This was a drain on them each pay period." In addition, student employees were late in turning in time sheets, or misplaced them entirely and relied on their memory to complete the totals. Missing start/end times were common, and it was tedious to track down students and part-time workers for the information. The outdated time clock punches had to be manually tabulated and corrected, and notes were written on the back of the cards for overtime and shift premium time.

Union mandates were also hard to track for food service, facilities management and clerical union workers employed under specific contracts related to overtime and premium pay for snow days and other exceptions. Keeping current with union mandates was difficult for the payroll department. They had to double check that labor data was accurate for payroll processing, and totals were applied to

the correct budget center.

Scheduling Challenges

Scheduling was also problematic in past years. "Essentially, each department acted as an independent unit, with their own method to schedule hourly workers including handwritten charts or home-grown spreadsheets," explained Polkowski. With the high turnover of student employees, it was a hassle to recreate schedule patterns or keep current employee rosters.

Staffing levels in the childcare center, for instance, were difficult to monitor with the manual methods. Child-caregiver ratio mandates must be enforced at all times, and with the inefficient scheduling methods, it was possible to be short-staffed at peak periods. Employee punctuality in the Children's Center is critical to ensure eight classrooms had the proper coverage each shift and to monitor attendance.

See *Payroll*, pg. 7, col. 1

