ECM Agility for Higher Education

Harnessing Technology to Achieve Institutional Efficiency
and Responsiveness

Laserfiche®

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Introduction

With their focus on fostering understanding and creating consensus among faculty, staff and stakeholders, colleges and universities have not traditionally been known for their ability to react quickly and flexibly to changing conditions.

According to the 2010 EDUCAUSE Current IT Issues Survey, however, this is changing. In fact, this year's survey shows that the issue of "Agility, Adaptability and Responsiveness" has become even more important to institutions of higher learning in 2010 than it was in 2009, pointing to the value of technology that enables institutional agility. It also points to the increasingly strategic role of IT professionals within academic institutions, since they are responsible not only for evaluating and implementing agile technology, but are now becoming more and more responsible for identifying the departments and processes that can most benefit from it as well.

In its Top 10 IT Issues of 2009 Survey, EDUCAUSE notes, "Being agile during times of relative calm is challenging enough, but doing so in a rapidly changing environment requires IT leaders to be aware of the challenges facing the institution at large and of how their services help meet those needs." In other words, knowledge of technology is no longer enough. Today's IT professionals must also be well-versed in the business, goals and missions of their academic institutions in order to drive the adoption of the most appropriate, most agile technology.

It's no surprise, then, that in 2010, EDUCAUSE's discussion evolved beyond "awareness" to "strategic partnership." This year's survey notes that "now more than ever, IT leaders need to be an integral part of campus-wide discussions," and highlights the fact that "when departments plan as silos… inevitable conflicts arise."

The Big Picture

- To succeed in today's competitive and rapidly changing educational environment, the ability to be agile, adaptable and responsive is becoming increasingly important at colleges and universities around the world.

- To enable organizational agility, the IT department must become a strategic partner with a clear vision of the institution's future—and a plan for how technology can pave the way.

- When departments plan as silos, conflicts arise. Therefore, the IT department should encourage standardization of systems wherever possible.

- Institutions that use an agile enterprise content management (ECM) system to standardize their approach to information management increase collaboration and information sharing between departments, automate core business processes and minimize ongoing maintenance demands for IT personnel.

- An agile ECM system offers individual departments and campuses the flexibility to adapt their work processes to changing conditions, increasing organizational efficiency and responsiveness.

To mitigate these conflicts and demonstrate their strategic value, IT professionals should encourage standardization of systems wherever possible. However, they must ensure that the systems they choose are agile enough to meet the needs of many different departments, and flexible enough to adapt quickly and cost-effectively to changing conditions.

This is where enterprise content management (ECM) comes into play, specifically agile ECM. Agile ECM systems allow organizations to centrally and securely manage all their content—and make it available via a wide range of third-party applications such as SIS, ERP, billing and more—while still offering individual departments and locations the flexibility to adapt their work processes to changing conditions. And in comparison with traditional ECM systems that demand extensive domain expertise from expensive programmers, analysts and consultants, agile ECM systems can be configured locally by in-house line-of-business experts, cutting costs while simultaneously increasing adaptability and responsiveness.

Kristin Nace, fiscal services director for Texas A&M's Health Science Center, notes that ECM "provides an enterprise architecture that has eliminated information silos across multiple campuses by creating a central point of control for our records…. I regularly get requests from our departments to set up additional folders, processes or even repositories. I knew people would love the product, I just didn't expect they would love it this much."

Leading colleges and universities of all sizes are turning to ECM to dramatically improve the productivity and responsiveness of the entire institution. Pressured by regulations and driven by a clear need to streamline operations, these institutions are harnessing the power of ECM to:

- Anchor their information management infrastructures, eliminating departmental information silos and providing timely access to all relevant content through the applications users know best.

- Automate core business processes, improving staff productivity and the level of student service.

- Ease administration and maintenance demands on the IT department by standardizing on an extensible, interoperable and rapidly deployable solution.

This white paper outlines the benefits associated with implementing ECM for individual departments, the IT department and the institution as a whole.

As more and more content flows in and out of colleges and universities—and as regulatory and compliance mandates increase—the need to control unstructured content and improve data governance is increasing.

Enterprise content management has moved way beyond the old finding-and-filing days to become a foundational component of data governance. Best-in-class ECM is integrative middleware that expands organically throughout the institution, crossing departmental boundaries and integrating with other applications and legacy systems to manage and process information—eliminating data silos along the way.

The Dangers of Data Silos

Managing multiple departmental systems is expensive and complicated for IT staff, who have to keep track of information that's spread over multiple locations. More often than not, these siloed systems end up compounding the problems they were supposed to solve.

The agile institution values technology that allows it to be quick, resourceful and adaptable, rapidly and consistently delivering results in the face of uncertainty and change. It recognizes that data silos prevent key stakeholders from gaining a holistic view of the institution's priorities and performance. Therefore, it seeks ECM that is built on an open architecture—maximizing interoperability and simplifying integration with existing systems in multiple departments and locations. For example, ECM that is built on the Windows Workflow Foundation (WF) allows IT professionals to integrate primary applications and existing workflows into ECM workflows using WF and the .NET framework.

Eliminating information silos sometimes raises concerns about data security, but data silos do not protect confidential information. On the contrary, they complicate information security by requiring IT staff to manage data in multiple systems. Agile ECM systems have robust, role-based security features that prevent unauthorized departments and employees from accessing protected information. And by centralizing control of records spread across disparate content repositories, institutions ensure that data is consistent, reliable, useful and available, simplifying enterprise risk management and compliance.

By standardizing on an agile ECM system, academic institutions boost performance by increasing information accessibility and security across campus, eliminating data silos and enabling key stakeholders to make better-informed decisions.

Robson Agnew, former records manager at the University of British Columbia, notes that when it comes to standardization, "The more folks you have using [your ECM system], the more benefits you realize from it. Although most departments act independently when it comes to their software decisions, in fact, we're all interconnected. A unified ECM system is a great thing for any university."

ECM at Work on Campus

ECM has many benefits beyond those described in this white paper. The following diagram provides a quick overview of how ECM can help specific departments on campus.

ADMINISTRATION

Advancement
- Streamline donation processing
- Integrate with donor management applications
- Protect donor privacy with powerful security features

Business Office
- Automate the HR onboarding process
- Organize payroll documentation for easy storage and retrieval

Chancellor/President
- Scan incoming mail for electronic distribution
- Manage meeting agendas
- Improve staff efficiency by eliminating paper-based processes

Finance
- Automate AP/AR processing
- Accelerate the procurement process
- Simplify audits of financial records

Legal
- Manage contracts
- Simplify litigation preparation
- Rapidly respond to e-discovery requests

Provost
- Create a faculty records management standard
- Secure sensitive and confidential personnel files
- Accommodate individual schools' unique filing systems and primary applications

Public Affairs
- Automate press release approval
- Create a searchable press release portal
- Organize and store records related to community events

Research Administration
- Organize proposal templates
- Facilitate auditing and compliance
- Automate grant and contract management

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

- Manage faculty records
- Store and route reprints for peer-review articles
- Centrally and securely track student grades

ADMISSIONS

- Accelerate admission processing
- Automate financial aid processing and disbursement
- Automate transcript processing

FACILITIES / PHYSICAL PLANT

- Organize building plans and schematics
- Grant tradesmen remote access to documents
- Automate project approval process

OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

- Manage and distribute case knowledge
- Control access to reports and evidentiary records
- Deliver building plans, HAZMAT reports and other intelligence to first responders via the Web

STUDENT SERVICES

- Guarantee student record security
- Accelerate housing assignment
- Organize and store assessment test results

Standardizing on ECM doesn't just provide a consistent way of viewing, storing and accessing information, it also gives the institution a centralized, flexible and secure way to create automated, repeatable processes in every department.

With ECM, user rights and privileges can be configured so that individual schools, departments and even individual users retain control over their own filing structures and business processes, while the IT department retains central control over information storage, disposition and security. Not only does this speed and simplify collaboration by automating content-related activities, it offers centralized control of records and ensures that data is consistent, reliable, useful and available. In this way, standards and security are enforced, but no one is compelled to adopt an aggravating or time-consuming new practice that does not make sense for a particular situation.

Agile, intuitive ECM that balances central control with local flexibility helps institutions of higher learning provide better service and respond rapidly and flexibly to changing conditions. More specifically, ECM enables colleges and universities to:

- Facilitate disaster recovery.
- Enhance business office efficiency.
- Quickly disburse financial aid.
- Centrally manage faculty records.
- Guarantee student record security.
- Automate accounts payable processing.
- Facilitate facilities management.

Facilitate Disaster Recovery

It's crucial for colleges and universities to plan and prepare for operational interruptions. Agile ECM plays a key part in disaster recovery planning, securing records and limiting the cost and effort of salvage and restoration.

- Ensure that administrators, maintenance employees and local police and fire departments can instantly access critical documents—including building plans, E-sized drawings and maintenance forms—via the Web in case of an emergency.

- Protect against file loss and damage in the case of a fire, flood, theft or other disaster.

- Organize architectural drawings, schematics and operations manuals by school so they're easily accessible in times of crisis.

- Instantly reconstruct damaged or destroyed repositories and provide immediate access to authorized personnel.

Monica Baccardax, IT project manager for the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University Medical School, notes that it was a huge relief to staff "when they realized that our ECM system serves as a backup should documents be destroyed. They no longer [had to] worry about losing paper documents."

Meanwhile, David Haugland, associate vice provost at the University of Southern California (USC), explains that "Disaster recovery has really been the catalyst for enterprise-wide adoption of ECM."

Enhance Business Office Efficiency

The business office—responsible for recruiting new faculty and staff, administering payroll, managing contracts and grants and dealing with correspondence—must deal with a large volume of documents every day. Using agile ECM increases efficiency and cuts costs by eliminating paper-based processes, improving information accessibility and decreasing the need to store paper documents.

- Automate key business processes such as accounts payable processing, agenda management and contract management, among others.

- Improve staff productivity by removing the need for time-consuming manual filing.

- Increase transparency by providing a secure public portal that grants vendors, reporters and other interested parties with access to information.

- Digitize and barcode timesheets for easy storage and retrieval.

- Free up space for faculty offices or classrooms by eliminating the need for file cabinets.

- Cut costs by decreasing the need for overnight shipping and mailing.

The Chancellor's Office at a large university in Southern California scans, indexes and distributes the university's incoming mail using an agile ECM system, giving approximately 150 staff and faculty members across campus instant access to relevant items. The university's communications coordinator notes that mail gets to recipients much faster than it did when people had to deliver hard copies around campus by hand. She also appreciates the fact that the ECM system allows readers to annotate documents so that other recipients can quickly see if there is any follow-up action that needs to be taken.

Spotlight on Accounts Payable Processing

In the Chancellor's Office at California State University, the accounting department uses the business process management (BPM) tools in its agile ECM suite to automate accounts payable processing as follows:

- An invoice is scanned into the system.

- Laserfiche Workflow automatically routes it to an approver, who receives notification via e-mail.

- Approvers access the invoice by clicking on the link in the e-mail, opening their Approver Folders in Laserfiche and double clicking on the invoice.

- After reviewing the invoice, approvers provide payment information (or explain why payment is denied) by inserting sticky notes with purchase order and/or chartfield information.

- Using a drop-down menu, approvers either approve or deny payment.

- Workflow then automatically routes the invoice back to the A/P technicians.

- Laserfiche Quick Fields extracts index field data from the invoice. An integration with the university's A/P system allows Laserfiche to autopopulate additional fields, eliminating the need for manual data entry into Laserfiche.

"Laserfiche is very user friendly, and the automation saves our staff a lot of time," says Terry Hamilton, the former A/P manager who served as the project lead in USC's Chancellor's Office.

"One huge advantage of Laserfiche over other ECM systems," Hamilton adds, "is that it is very easy for system administrators to add template fields, which adds a lot of flexibility to adapt to changes in the way we process our invoices. Laserfiche also tracks changes to documents and keeps a record of who has seen or worked on any given invoice, increasing the level of control we have over document security."

Quickly Disburse Financial Aid

Every day, students submit applications, promissory notes and copies of birth certificates, passports, tax returns and more to the financial aid department. An agile ECM system enables the team to quickly and easily capture, organize and process the paper and electronic documents required to disburse financial aid to qualified candidates.

Agile ECM can help the financial aid department:

- Streamline the collection of financial aid materials by scanning them into the electronic content repository.

- Capture metadata such as name and student identification number so that staff can easily search the repository and quickly retrieve needed content, improving student service.

- Eliminate the need for manual data entry by auto-populating template fields.

- Automatically route documents to the correct financial aid counselor for review and approval, accelerating processing time.

- Grant simultaneous access to financial aid files, eliminating the need to copy and transport documents.

For example, when the University of Utah's financial aid office receives a document, staff scans it into the ECM repository, where it's stored as an archival-quality TIFF file. They then apply a digital template to the document and enter key metadata, including the student's name, ID number and social security number. Finally, they use the template's Status field to instantly route the document to data entry personnel.

IT staffer Jeramy Berry says, "In the past, it would take us at least six weeks to process a student's paperwork. Now we can process the documents in two weeks… We can disburse money to students a lot more quickly."

Centrally Manage Faculty Records

Whether your institution is a small, private college or a statewide university system, Agile ECM offers a central point of control over all your information assets. With it, the institution establishes enterprise-wide standards and security policies for faculty records while at the same time giving individual schools the ability to store information and configure business processes according to their specialized needs.

- Easily meet recordkeeping requirements with DoD 5015.2-certified records management functionality.

- Ensure consistency of information with custom templates.

- Improve staff productivity by automatically indexing and filing incoming paperwork.

- Instantly fulfill data-driven, specialized queries of records.

- Protect confidential personnel files with granular, role-based security.

- Streamline the faculty credentialing process.

Owing to the volume of files the University of California's (USC) Provost's Office was required to keep as the custodian of faculty records, it needed an agile solution that could centralize and standardize records while simultaneously accommodating the unique filing systems and primary applications of 17 different schools spread out across the university's six-mile-wide campus.

The Provost's Office purchased an agile ECM system and—using a standardized field template based on the naming conventions and filing habits of each of USC's respective schools and colleges—Faculty Services Coordinator Desiree Brown helped to design a master set of faculty records that serves as the gold standard for all schools, eliminating the inefficiencies and redundancies of duplication.

"I call them 'the gold files' because they're such gold to me," says Brown. "Something that used to take ten minutes to find, now it's a matter of seconds."

Many other schools and departments within USC have adopted Laserfiche as a result of the Provost Office's success, including Marshall School of Business, Keck School of Medicine, the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences, Career and Protective Services and Facility Management, among others.

Guarantee Student Record Security

Administering records access under FERPA consumes staff time. An agile ECM system with granular security functionality helps you design and implement a security policy that works within your existing environment to balance document compliance, security and accessibility.

- Implement DoD 5015.2-certified records management to simplify compliance with recordkeeping requirements.

- Eliminate misplaced files, files lost in transit from off-site records storage facilities and inappropriately accessed files.

- Control confidential records, and prevent them from showing up in a repository search.

- Guarantee security all the way down to individual words with blackout and whiteout redactions.

- Log system activity to demonstrate compliance with regulations.

The Dalhousie University Medical School discovered that an agile ECM system enables staff to quickly and reliably access student records without burdening them with complicated and time-consuming new ways of working with files. The system was structured to mirror the filing hierarchy and classification codes that were already in place.

Dalhousie's Baccardax notes that when it comes to student records and federal regulations, "certain types of information cannot be shared unless approved by an authorized person. Our ECM system enables us to set the access rights so that information is available only to authorized staff."

Facilitate Facilities Management

Whether you work at a small, private college or a statewide university system, managing the institution's facilities is a big job. Responsible for ensuring the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of all buildings and grounds, this department benefits from using an agile ECM system that:

- Organizes architectural drawings, schematics, safety documents, sustainability reports and operations manuals by school so they're easily accessible.

- Enables staff to retrieve blueprints, maps and E-sized drawings onsite from wireless-enabled laptops.

- Automates the project approval process, allowing supervisors to easily prioritize work requests according to urgency.

- Uses audit trails to monitor and report system activity to administrators.

- Assigns security rights and privileges by group or individual user.

According to former Records Manager Robson Agnew, the land and buildings department at the University of British Columbia uses Laserfiche WebLink to grant its tradespeople read-only access to documents: "Our tradespeople access manuals and plans from the system using WebLink, while our 'power users' have the security rights to retrieve pretty much whatever they need."

Agile ECM Administration: What the IT Department Needs to Know

Long deployment schedules and a lack of systems interoperability present two key challenges to the successful implementation of technology on college and university campuses. Unfortunately, the ECM marketplace is rife with solutions that are difficult to deploy, confusing to configure and complex to administer. This is why it is essential to stay away from vendors that have cobbled together a set of complicated tools that require major investments in programming or professional services.

By selecting agile ECM tools that can be configured locally yet controlled centrally, the institution gives individual departments the ability to configure local solutions and avoids using consultants, programmers and in-house IT staff for all but the most strategic ECM tasks.

Agile ECM solutions are engineered for maximum scalability, interoperability and ease of administration. Maintenance is simple because agile ECM systems provide extensive support for standard Windows administrative tools such as MMC, Event Tracing for Windows, WMI and the Windows Event Log. Flexible configuration allows departmental databases to reside in separate locations with individualized security settings.

Furthermore, agile ECM systems offer rapid deployment, streamlined development and easy integration with a wide range of applications such as:

- Accounting.
- Enterprise resource planning.
- Student information systems.
- Mainframe/database applications.

Advice on ECM Adoption from an IT Manager

Dennis Raulie, manager of the administrative computing technology services department at Texas A&M University Corpus Christi, has had great success streamlining his institution's business processes and reducing its paper consumption with Laserfiche. He has a few words of wisdom to share with other IT managers looking to implement an agile ECM system:

- **Don't forget about end users when you're evaluating systems.** No matter how many business benefits an ECM system can deliver, if end users don't buy into the new solution, it will sit on the shelf collecting dust. To help staff get up to speed quickly, look for an ECM system that includes familiar Windows features, such as right-click menus and flexible folder structures. "Our users liked the simplicity and speed of Laserfiche. They also liked the ease of use. It was a much more intuitive ECM system than they were used to," Raulie states.

- **Change can be hard, so aim first for small victories that win internal champions and inspire organic adoption—not just demand it.** For Raulie's first project, he targeted the institution's accounting department, where hundreds of data forms a day were printed, scanned and manually indexed by student workers. In the past, staff were often a month behind in the filing. Since implementing Laserfiche, however, the department is now working in real time. "Get people like that comfortably productive and enthusiastic," advises Raulie. "They talk about the success and the word spreads."

- **Solicit input from department and unit managers to increase group ownership of the project, and obtain administrative buy-in with regular progress updates.** "Department managers are the team members who 'know the flow.' Their input is crucial." Updating administrators with reports of the success and progress of the implementation is also a key component. "It's not bragging if it's true," Raulie notes.

- **Create a test environment where users can experience the software at their own pace.** "Build a 'sandbox' repository for users to play in and let them learn the controls," he says.

- **Offer continuous training opportunities for your users.** "If you think the price of training is too high, consider the price of ignorance," he warns. Raulie recommends taking advantage of training videos, technical white papers, forums and other training materials available on the Laserfiche Support Site.

- **Customize the ECM system to fit your specific needs**. Using the Laserfiche Software Developer's Kit (SDK), Raulie and his team created a "Report Upload Bifurcation Engine" that processes continuous BFF/FAMIS report files, and splits them into individual reportlets that are uploaded into Laserfiche. "In the hands of someone who knows Visual Basic, [creating processes like this] should be a snap," he says.
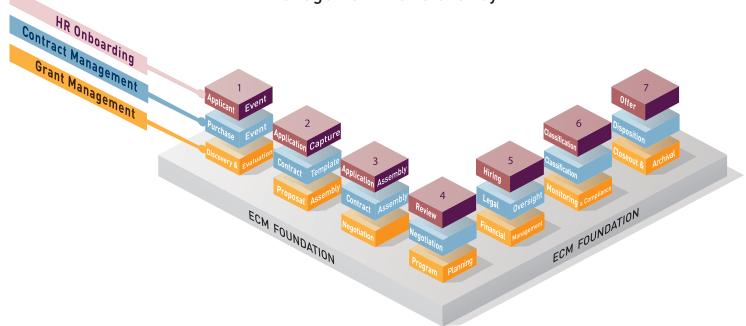
The ECM Shared Services Model

Many academic institutions have concluded that if ECM functionality is to be offered to the enterprise, it makes sense to offer that functionality as a shared service—a way to cost-effectively meet the content management needs of large user bases with diverse requirements for various components of ECM functionality. After all, enterprise information management is literally that: information shared across departments or functions.

The shared services model is particularly attractive to IT departments because it allows them to develop business processes that can be repeated across the enterprise, enabling optimal resource efficiency, cost and service performance.

When using ECM to deliver shared services, information capture and retrieval are just the beginning. The most common processes used as part of the ECM Shared Services model in academic institutions are HR Onboarding, Contract Management and Grant Management.

SHARED SERVICES
Management Flows Overlay

A Simple Shared Services Maturity Model

When setting up shared services delivery with your ECM system, it's critical to know where to start, where you want to go and how you are going to get there. This can be done using a maturity model, which offers a pathway of best-practice milestones. Here is an example of a simple shared services maturity model:

- **Localize your best practices.** Analyze the processes conducted by different departments and calculate their lowest common denominator. Figure out which process is most efficient—and then make it repeatable so you can roll it out to the entire organization. Many colleges and universities start with processes conducted by multiple departments such as hiring or contracts.

- **Thoughtfully standardize across the institution.** Although standardization can have a utopian veneer, it's best to be ruthlessly practical. Look at your metadata models, and consider implementing a master model like the Dublin Core Set. On the delivery side, develop a standardized skill set for your staff. This allows you to bundle competencies and refine your service culture.

- **Consolidate.** A very wise technology deployment expert once explained that the key to excellence in information delivery is to standardize the central system and customize the delivery. This allows information access to be dynamic. Deployment-wise this means consolidating all of your content into one ECM system and integrating to allow the users to access content through any application. The interfaces through which staff accesses the ECM system are customized based on their needs or departmental roles.

- **Cost benefits.** This is where the economies of scale kick in. You've developed your service level agreements and are rolling out a menu of ECM functions in terms of head-count. At this stage your focus is no longer just internal optimization. You are actually creating value for the institution through your service offerings.

- **Continuous review.** Now that you've optimized your processes and developed your skill set, you must constantly refine your menu of offerings. Auditing is continuous and proactive. Quality improvements are implemented using formalized change management processes like Six Sigma.

Colleges and universities have always struggled to balance centralized control with departmental autonomy. On one side lie the back-office policies and support systems that govern how work is done. These systems are designed to make the institution more efficient and may be mandated by leadership or required by law. On the other side sit knowledge workers, equipped with skills and expertise developed through years of experience. These managers and frontline employees understand the importance of process, but they bristle under too much top-down discipline. They want the freedom and flexibility to create their own processes—and study after study shows that the more employees feel empowered, the more productive they tend to be.

According to recent research conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit, 80% of the organizations that have implemented formal initiatives to improve business processes over the past three years have faced employee resistance. Three major causes of this reluctance to change were:

- The new process added more work (31%).

- Employees had little or no say in determining the new process (31%).

- The new process didn't map to the way employees thought their jobs should be done (28%).

By granting individual facilities, departments and users control over their own filing structures and business processes, agile ECM solutions enable colleges and universities to neutralize these objections to change. A central committee establishes templates and standards for managing content, and then local decision makers determine the best ways to work with it within their individual groups.

In this way, filing structures and automated workflows can readily be configured to mirror existing processes and procedures, guaranteeing swift system acceptance and enthusiastic use. Local decision makers are also able to easily make changes to their processes and filing structures midstream in order to meet changing business or market conditions, all without sacrificing the institution's control over its information infrastructure—or having to possess deep technical expertise.

Business Benefits

In addition to the benefits that accrue to the various departments that use the agile ECM system, the institution as a whole will also gain:

- **Elimination of data silos.** Data silos are dangerous for many reasons, but primarily because they prevent key stakeholders from gaining a holistic view of the institution's priorities and performance. Best-in-class ECM systems are built on an open architecture to maximize interoperability and simplify integration with existing systems in multiple departments and locations. By increasing information accessibility and collaboration throughout the institution, colleges and universities boost performance by enabling key stakeholders to make better-informed decisions.

- **Increased security.** Stringent privacy laws dictate that colleges and universities protect student and faculty information. ECM stores this information in a secure repository that limits access by user, folder, document and/or data field. Agnew notes that Laserfiche allows "different folks to have different levels of access. Laserfiche makes it easy to set up, whether we're determining security by user—say by an individual staff member—or by group."

- **Enhanced productivity.** Instant search and retrieval eliminates time spent looking for missing documents. In addition, workflow functionality automates collaborative business processes, eliminating redundancy by reducing the need for manual data entry and automatically routing documents to the appropriate people for review. Tina Livingston, director of budgets at Texas A&M Kingsville, says, "Our new electronic filing process has greatly reduced the time required to respond to inquiries. Previously, we had to go to the filing cabinets, pull folders and make copies. Now, we look them up in Laserfiche and e-mail them to the customer. No paper, no file cabinets and no hassle."

- **Cost savings.** "We've saved an estimated $1 million in real estate costs—and that's annual—because the space we previously used to store files can be used for other things," says the manager of logistics and sustainability at a large Canadian university. "We also estimate that we save 500 staff hours every year, simply by eliminating manual processing." Roberta Priesmeyer, retired business administrator at Texas A&M's Department of Entomology reported that the department expected to receive an initial ROI of $54,000, but actually achieved an ROI of $272,000 within one year of implementing its agile ECM system.

- **Support for sustainability initiatives.** Students today are not merely comfortable with the digital world, they demand it. "Students are already living in a paperless world, and we have a responsibility to live up to their expectations. The students are our customers. We serve them and this is what they are asking for," says the Canadian manager of logistics and sustainability. Paperless practices are environmentally friendly, and they speed up student service in two ways:

  - Giving staff immediate access to student information, so that inquiries can be answered faster.

  - Giving students direct access to their information via a secure Web portal, so that they don't even have to make inquiries with staff.

Conclusion

In sum, if agility is something your institution strives for, standardizing on an agile ECM platform can help you achieve your goals. By leveraging enterprise content management, colleges and universities enhance their information management strategy without hampering the productivity of the IT group or departmental employees.

Laserfiche®
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The Laserfiche Institute teaches staff, resellers, and current and prospective clients how to use Laserfiche most effectively. As part of this mission, the Institute conducts more than 500 Webinars each year, covering a variety of topics. The Institute also hosts an annual conference where members of the Laserfiche community attend presentations and network to share ideas and learn best practices. Additionally, the Institute conducts a number of regional training sessions and provides resellers with content for more than 100 user conferences each year.

The Institute also develops and distributes educational material through the Laserfiche Support Site. On this Website, clients can access training videos, participate in online forums and download technical papers and presentations that help them become savvier ECM users.

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