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OutSystems For Higher Education

Low-Code Lets Higher Education Excel
at Digital Transformation

The balancing act of providing a compelling student user experience and maintaining legacy systems for higher education institutions has become more difficult than ever. The competition to attract and retain students is fierce and, with more choice stemming from new learning models, a college must be able to offer the latest content delivery methods on any platform. However, many of these decades-old—even centuries-old— institutions have amassed significant legacy IT debt and are struggling to provide a 21st-century experience for students. Higher education CIOs have to grapple with serving forward-looking, technology-hungry customers with an outdated infrastructure that requires constant investment and maintenance and cannot always adapt to the needs of the institution and its students.

As a result, higher education must change and adapt to reinvent the way they develop applications and build their IT systems. In 2017, Gartner reported that by 2021, more than 50% of higher education institutions will begin redesigning their student experience with the goal of making it more integrated and personalized. However, with limited IT resources, a backlog of existing applications and tight budgets, CIOs and department heads are forced to make difficult choices and tradeoffs that can negatively impact enrollment rates, customer experience, and operational performance.

Low-code application development can genuinely transform the higher education experience not only for the student but also the IT organization, heads of departments, and operational staff. We believe that to change the organization, you need an end-to-end digital transformation strategy that consists of the following three components.

Georgia Tech

saved $540,000 on programming needs after the first year of using OutSystems
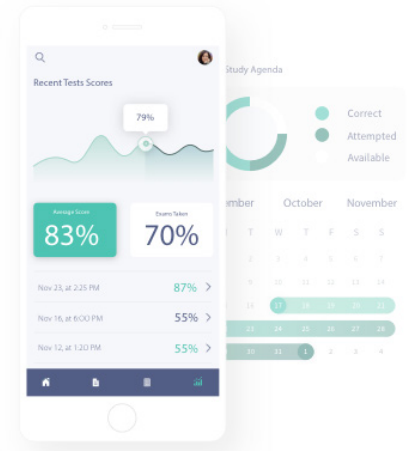
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

eliminated 3,000 help desk requests per year with OutSystems

(1) Digital Experiences: Recruitment, Enrollment, and Engagement

You need a multi-channel approach to reach prospective students because they live on their mobile devices and require the same instant and responsive experiences on any device. They also expect to communicate in a variety of channels such as email, SMS, chatbot, and social media, and meeting these expectations is crucial to the survival of your institution. If prospective students try to enroll in your programs and find that the experience is substandard or they are unable to move between platforms seamlessly, enrollment rates could drop and students could leave before completing their studies.
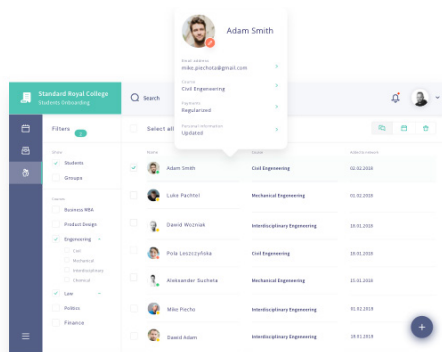
Nor does the need to have a compelling user experience stop once students have enrolled in their courses. In 2017, Wakefield Research Group conducted a study of 1,000 US colleges and found three-quarters of students want their colleges to use their personal information to customize their experience and recommendations the same way businesses do.

OutSystems enables a higher education organization to build seamless digital experiences for recruitment, enrollment, and courses for all platforms. With the OutSystems low-code development platform, your organization can build an application once and run it on any operating system, all with a seamless look-and-feel. You build the core of your app once, and simply customize to each device experience within hours, vastly cutting down on development time and maximizing the use of your current IT resources.

(2) Digital Operations: Improve Data Analytics and Increase Agility

Enrollment, student leads, instructor agreements, payment tracking, and course evaluations: the list of operational processes in higher education institutions has become endless and complex. Many of these processes are documented in spreadsheets, paper, and stored in 3rd party point solutions. These methods of data collection are not only inefficient, but they also cause data inaccuracy that in turn can lead to decisions that are not optimal for students or your institution. Off-the-shelf-applications have been used to try to reduce the need for manual data entry, but the ability to customize these applications is limited. However, infusing new technology into daily processes to reduce costs and waste, all with a limited budget and staff to manage the change, is also a challenge
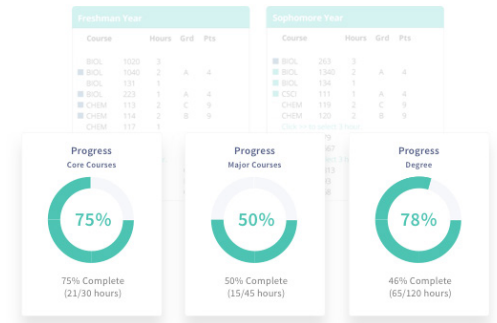
OutSystems platform allows your higher education organization to transfer manual-based processes to digital solutions by enabling you to build applications rapidly for operational processes. With our flexible solution, your college can quickly customize or change your app in a matter of hours versus weeks. Process changes that meet the needs of the students are almost effortless. By reducing manual tasks and increasing the quality of data, you enable your staff to engage more with your students and make better-informed decisions, which leads to better outcomes for all.

③ Digital Core: Unlock the Value of Your Student Information Systems

Student information systems from Peoplesoft, Oracle, SAP, Ellucian, and others have been critical to the success of higher ed institutions for years. However, these systems have been modified and expanded over time and are now more complex and often too rigid to handle the ever-growing needs of your institution and the students you serve. So, instead of enabling innovation, they inhibit it. In a 2018 report, Gartner stated: "Most student information systems (SISs) in use today are built on outdated technology, and that is hampering the ability to deliver new solutions and modern services." Replacing these systems is expensive and disruptive to the organization and student learning.

All of this begs the question, how does your higher ed institution bring your student information system into the 21st century? With the OutSystems platform, your college can easily Integrate apps into any legacy SIS or custom built back-office system. You get a single view of all your data so you can meet student needs and dramatically improve your data analytics. Your institution can deliver innovative solutions all without significant disruption to the student experience.

Digital Transformation From OutSystems

Do you think digital transformation is out of reach for your educational institution? OutSystems can show you that it is well within your grasp. Recognized as a leader in low-code development by both Gartner and Forrester, OutSystems has helped many colleges drastically reduce their application backlog, slash development costs, integrate new apps into legacy systems, and provide a seamless student experience across all channels.

The OutSystems low-code platform enables colleges and universities to develop web, mobile, or mobile web applications in just a few weeks. Using its visual drag-and-drop environment and prebuilt components, your developers can quickly build enterprise-ready applications. They don't have to create every component from scratch, which saves time and money.

Business analysts and department heads can work with IT to prototype new ideas and concepts on joint projects, allowing cross-collaboration between departments and the IT organization, reducing silos, and maximizing the use of resources. And, your developers can also quickly customize and change the application in hours so you can address the ever-changing new needs of your students.

Don't Believe Us? Here's What Our Customers Say

"With OutSystems, I create user features in the morning, and in the afternoon, I deploy them, and the next day people are using them. It's the fastest way to build applications that I've ever come across."

Braxton Bragg
Senior Support Engineer, Georgia Tech

"Adopting OutSystems as our strategic development platform has allowed us to quickly transform into a digital enterprise and deliver new applications efficiently."

Sameer Jaleel
Director, Platforms and
Integration Solutions, Kent State

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