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Director of Enterprise
Business Intelligence

Oklahoma City Community College uses SAS® Business Analytics to make proactive decisions for student success

Industry

Education

Business Issue

Establish an enterprise informational view of the college with efficient data manipulation and reporting mechanisms to make proactive decisions.

Solution

SAS® Business Analytics

Benefits

Analysts have more than 30 additional hours a week for interpretation due to improved reporting, while data availability across multiple departments stimulates collaboration and data-driven decisions for student success.

Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) is one of the largest community colleges in Oklahoma, with nearly 20,000 students. The administration of this urban college focuses on data analysis, accreditation, project and data management for the Achieving the Dream consortium, strategic planning for the college president's cabinet, and more. All efforts help OCCC achieve its primary goals, which center on persistence, retention and student success.

The many areas of focus – complete with volumes of data and reporting needs – functioned in silos prior to using SAS®. “We had a lot of islands of data without any sort of enterprise information view of the college – that is, a more consistent and improved view of the organization,” says Dr. Jim Riha, Director of Enterprise Business Intelligence. “Through our improved view, we can bring additional insight to the right people at the right time, while changing the focus from arguing about data to having a better understanding of the issues and making more informed decisions.”

Timely information for timely decisions

Before using SAS, OCCC used an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, Datatel, that involved several different reporting solutions. For direct queries to the ERP, the college had to use a query language that only the technical programmers could understand. “Data needs far exceeded the personnel capacity to provide reports and the information people wanted,” says Riha.

Additionally, compiling reports involved a lengthy, laborious process of manually moving data files from one system to another, running jobs overnight to get the data and eventually exporting them to an Excel spreadsheet to view with pivot tables. For example, Senior Research Analyst Joyce Morgan-Dees spent approximately 30 hours a week just to prepare one weekly report.

With SAS, OCCC automatically creates these reports – and many others – each morning. Key people in the president's cabinet, deans, enrollment services, institutional research and academic affairs have immediate access to these reports, with drill-down and manipulation capabilities, via a Web portal. “That frees Joyce's 30 hours to do more valuable things for the institution, such as interpreting the data and providing insights,” says Stu Harvey, Executive Director of Planning and Research.

Factoring for student success

SAS allows for more measureable data, leading to action for improvements. For example, OCCC has enhanced course management by reporting enrollment numbers for courses, monitoring for capacity, etc. Such data enables OCCC to determine whether it should add more academic sections. “The course completion statistics help us measure student success as well,” adds Harvey.

With SAS, enrollment information is gathered each day and available for reporting the following day. Prior to SAS, enrollment reports were created once a week. Now OCCC has timely insight on

“The real value comes when you are empowering people with data to make efficient, effective decisions earlier.”

Stu Harvey
Executive Director of Planning and Research

how many students are enrolling and for which course sections. This has significantly improved the ability of academic deans to adjust their course offerings, schedules and faculty appointments.

Because enrollment data is reported at the same time each year, OCCC now looks at trends over time to assess why they are happening. Harvey explains, “Because we have access to the data so early now, it has started whole new conversations about things, like why are people enrolling in an area earlier this year than they did last year, as we compare the same date and time for the last semester. A lot of discussions are taking place like, ‘this particular program is taking off early, have we done marketing that has caused that?’ And it helps us look at what things we are doing and tie that to a result, asking, ‘why is it that way?’”

By providing reliable data and reports early, OCCC now makes proactive decisions that can make a difference in student success.

Surprise benefits

“There are areas using SAS that we didn’t really foresee using it,” explains

Morgan-Dees. “The physical plant area looks at headcount for courses to help them plan for parking – how many lots they need to have open and who they need to have out there. Safety and Security has said the same thing. It’s helped them in figuring how to utilize the people they have, what time periods are the heaviest, what buildings have the heaviest flow of people.” She also points out that the bookstore uses SAS to keep track of which courses are filling up to ensure that it stocks enough books to meet the demand.

The collaborative outcome

“A tool like this actually drives you to work together,” says Harvey of the way SAS enables better understanding from one area to another. “For example, Student Services sees the importance of course completion statistics in Academic Affairs. Conversely, Academic Affairs learns more about retention and life issues that Student Services considers routinely.”

Why SAS®?

OCCC selected SAS for two reasons. “First, SAS acted as if they wanted our business. They spent quite a bit of time and effort trying to understand what we were about and put forth a lot of

resources in terms of demonstrating their different capabilities,” says Harvey.

“We also chose SAS because we wanted a comprehensive enterprise solution both from a technological and functional user’s point of view,” says Riha. Harvey adds, “We were looking for one vendor that gave us the full package.” The combination of data integration, reporting, analytics and solutions – the platform for SAS Business Analytics – was instrumental in OCCC choosing SAS for its enterprise data approach.

Future plans include incorporating a data mart for human resources position-change control reports and developing a much more robust financial reporting system.

“I think ultimately we want people using this and making decisions on their own,” Harvey says. “At the end of the day, that will manifest itself in better student outcomes. It will result in higher persistence, higher retention and higher course completion because people will be using data and feedback from these wonderful automated systems to change the way they do things.”



**THE
POWER
TO KNOW.**

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