

SOLUTION FOCUS: STUDENT ANALYTICS

Challenges

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) had been using a 30-year-old legacy system for student administration, resulting in significant challenges in reporting and analytics. Technical resources were required to provide needed reports. As a result, there was always a long list of information requests and insufficient technical resources to meet the demand. In addition to virtually no ad hoc reporting capability, UMBC had no analytic reporting capability to address a wide array of analytic needs, including retention, admissions yields, course utilization and student performance.

“With every new student orientation cycle, we must ensure we have sufficient and suitable courses available for our students,” says Yvette Mozie-Ross, Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management. “We must make sure our academic advisors can spend their time advising students on academic and career issues instead of searching around for an available course.”

UMBC struggled with “hoards of virtually useless paper reports to support the course-planning process each semester,” says Mozie-Ross. “We often relied on past history to make course-capacity decisions. Unfortunately, these decisions sometimes resulted in some courses exceeding capacity, other courses left underutilized, and needless student scheduling issues.”

Solution

In 2006, UMBC formalized a plan to implement PeopleSoft Campus Solutions, with a target go-live date of Fall 2009. Concurrent to the ERP implementation plan, UMBC selected Blackboard Analytics as the reporting solution for student analytics; however, UMBC leaders decided they could not wait until Fall 2009 to implement Blackboard Analytics solution; UMBC needed to implement improved analytic reporting capabilities now.

UMBC and Blackboard Analytics collaborated on an innovative plan that would enable UMBC to implement the Blackboard Analytics Student Analytics module by December 2006, nearly

three years ahead of the planned Fall 2009 PeopleSoft cutover. This plan required UMBC to rapidly develop an extraction capability to map legacy data to the core PeopleSoft tables used by Blackboard Analytics. UMBC was able to develop the mapping programs in about three months. After some minor refinement, the Blackboard Analytics Student Analytics data warehouse was in production with a nightly load cycle, and deployed to the initial list of key executives, managers and analysts.

In addition to providing UMBC management with the needed analytic reporting capabilities, the approach optimized many PeopleSoft design decisions and improved the quality of the PeopleSoft data conversion process.

QUICK FACTS:

- Honors University and Member of the University System of Maryland
- Undergraduate and Graduate Programs; Research Programs
- Fall 2010 Enrollment - 12,888
- PeopleSoft Financials, HR, Campus Solutions on Oracle DBMS
- Voted number one “Up-and-Coming” National University in 2010 and 2009 U.S. News & World Report America's Best Colleges Guide.



"Blackboard Analytics provided us with out-of-the-box PeopleSoft integration, a solid data framework with customizable business rules, automated data dimensions and metrics, and an easy to use reporting environment," says Kevin Joseph, Assistant Director of Development and Integration.

Impact of Blackboard Analytics at UMBC

"The Blackboard Analytics Student Module is enabling a culture of informed decision-making at UMBC, on an everyday operational level and strategic planning level," says Yvette Mozie-Ross, UMBC Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management.

Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, President of UMBC, recently said, "[On-line retailers] use analytics to predict what books you will want to purchase, but too few institutions are analyzing data about our students to predict the likelihood of their success...I am so excited by Blackboard Analytics - I can ask fifteen different questions in five minutes and get all the answers myself."

Strategic Intelligence: Measuring Initiatives and Improving Future Student Outcomes

UMBC is also using the Blackboard Analytics Student Module to support key strategic goals. "One of the most important things I can do is help ensure the success of future UMBC students," Mozie-Ross says. "To that end, UMBC continues to strengthen its partnerships with area high schools and two-year colleges that serve as our primary feeder schools."

"Using our Blackboard Analytics solution, I create aggregated data views and trend analyses, showing student coursework, grade performance and graduation rates, grouped by area partner schools our students originated from. The Provost and I discuss this data and trends with leaders from each partner school to help develop steps they can take now to help future students be even more successful at UMBC. The Blackboard Analytics Student Module is an indispensable solution for forging long-term strategic relationships with our partner schools and planning now for the success of future generations of students."

Another vital UMBC initiative is its expansion of international student recruiting. "Blackboard Analytics helps determine the ROI of overseas student recruiting projects," says Mozie-Ross. "We analyze student enrollment by country of citizenship over time, comparing these results with related marketing expenses. Blackboard Analytics enables strategic management of our international recruiting, including identifying regions in which we should expand our recruiting efforts."

Operational Management Reporting

"Blackboard Analytics enables us to proactively manage course capacities to ensure a smooth student advising and

registration process," says Mozie-Ross. We use the HigherEd Analytics every day to sort courses by utilization rate, easily identifying courses at, over or well below capacity. The Director of Academic Advising can make informed decisions whether to request additional seats to certain courses or inform advisers to direct students to suitable alternative classes, and steer students towards underutilized classes they will be happy with. Our Academic Chairs and Deans can also make timely and informed decisions about how best to maximize use of limited resources by allocating or reallocating resources. Blackboard Analytics enables campus leaders to be most responsive to course demand and enrollment pressures."

"Many UMBC workgroups and committees typically have a laptop and projector with the Blackboard Analytics solution up and running and ready to go," adds Mozie-Ross. "People appreciate the ability to ask a question during a meeting and getting the answer immediately from Blackboard Analytics. With student and course information available at our fingertips from our Blackboard Analytics solution, our meeting discussions are very focused and results-oriented."

IT Perspective

According to Kevin Joseph, "Blackboard Analytics has enabled UMBC departments to engage in self-service, web-enabled reporting, instead of relying on a certain power user in the IT department. The Blackboard Analytics data model is also very flexible; we are now adding additional data fields and dimensions customized to UMBC's specific needs. This flexibility combined with Blackboard Analytics's proven data model results in rapid deployments, dramatic savings in cost and time, and achieving critical operational and strategic intelligence."



The Blackboard Analytics Student Module is enabling a culture of informed decision-making at UMBC, on an everyday operational level and strategic planning level.

Yvette Mozie-Ross
Assistant Provost for
Enrollment Management

