DocuSign®

University of Colorado Boulder builds a paperless campus.

The university has streamlined services for students, faculty and staff by digitizing its system of agreement and redesigning core processes across departments with DocuSign.

A largely paper-based system of agreement touches most aspects of campus life at every college or university, from student decisions to financial aid to staff hiring to health and financial information management. A system of agreement generally includes both manual and digital processes, including signatures, and involves all major software platforms used by the institution. The time and costs involved in these processes aren't always obvious. But they can be significant, as the University of Colorado Boulder found when it launched its paperless campus initiative – an extensive revamp of the institution's systems and processes to make them more accessible, efficient and student-centric.

Nestled among the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, UC Boulder serves 31,000 students and employs 6,000 faculty and staff. Three years ago the university began moving to using electronic transaction management tools wherever possible, working toward digitizing its system of agreement and becoming a paperless campus. Key to the transformation is DocuSign, which enables higher education institutions to modernize the preparation, signing, acting on and management of all agreements.

Along with improving security and automating workflows, the school in particular wanted to boost ease of use for student services, from admissions to graduation. "We wanted to build processes that are 0online and digital," according to Mark Diekoff, who is Program Manager for Business Development and Content Services.

"DocuSign fit well into our plans," Diekoff said. Under the new system, students can log into a portal and use self-service tools to complete a range of common tasks that used to require paper documents, from changing courses to requesting an adviser to changing majors to financial aid transactions. "We've tried to digitize the experience for students so they don't need to come to campus" just to complete a form, he added. "Through the online portal, they have what they need to be successful."

Results

$823K
in cost reductions
each year.

74%
of document-based
requests are completed
within one hour.

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Proof of concept
Revamping paper-heavy HR processes

The process of digitizing workflows began with the human resources department, chosen for its paper-heavy processes and the fact that the department was open to rethinking its workflow. With excellent results there, the digitization project quickly expanded to other departments.

Diekoff's team went beyond simply replacing paper systems with digital ones: "We didn't just ask, 'What are you doing that is creating paper?' and then move to replace that," he explained. Instead, they used the project as an opportunity to evaluate systems overall. "We went into departments and analyzed business processes that hadn't been looked at in a long time," he said. "We asked questions like, 'Why are you doing it this way?' The project thus became an opportunity to streamline business processes and increase effectiveness, all while moving to a time and cost saving digital system of agreement.

Key to a modernized system
Seamless integration across campus

DocuSign's APIs and pre-built integrations with a range of other cloud solutions were important to CU Boulder's effort to go paperless. DocuSign integrates well with software from Microsoft, Google, SAP and Salesforce, Diekoff noted. In particular, he said, "DocuSign's integration with Salesforce was huge in ensuring a one-stop shop for users."

With the digital system of agreement now in place at CU, Salesforce can obtain electronic signatures without users ever leaving the platform. To apply for a change of major, for example, a student simply clicks on a link within Salesforce that opens a DocuSign form to be electronically signed, and the completed form is automatically saved back in Salesforce.

As an example of one workflow with multiple integrations with DocuSign, Diekoff pointed to the process by which graduate students apply for a deadline extension. Previously, students had to walk to different offices in different buildings to obtain the necessary approval signatures on a paper based form. Now, Diekoff and his team have built a much more effective and efficient solution that combines DocuSign with several other university systems, including OnBase, a repository for university-related documents that extends across three CU campuses, and Drupal, which is used for web services.

Under the digital process, a student requests an extension via a Drupal-based form on the web. The app then informs the student whose approval is needed — for example, a faculty advisor. DocuSign obtains the advisor's electronic signature and keeps a record of the transaction in case there is ever a question. Then the document is sent on to OnBase, where it is stored in the appropriate file and is accessible to the advisor for review at any time.

"Our goal was to be more effective and efficient, and to increase student engagement. We wanted to make every interaction a positive experience."

Mark Diekoff
Program Manager
Business Development and Content Services
University of Colorado Boulder

Getting results
Going paperless means dramatic time and labor savings

"DocuSign has now replaced any process that created paper within the system," Diekoff said. Three years into the drive toward a digital system of agreement and a paperless campus, CU Boulder completes the majority of document-based requests within six hours – a huge improvement over previous processes. In fact, 74 percent of those requests are completed in under an hour.

With 5,432 active users and over a million pages sent, the new project is "amazing in terms of growth in documents handled over the past several years," Diekoff declared. Time and labor savings, he calculated, add up to a whopping $823,000 over the past 12 months alone.

"We now use DocuSign for basically everything on campus, not just students and faculty," he said. That includes facility management, event management, academic suspension, applicant tracking, grading and much more. "Any process that you can imagine that needs to be initiated and approved across the campus" can be digitized, Diekoff asserted.

Clearly, CU Boulder's dramatic results point to the benefits of examining the campus system of agreement. As paperless campuses become a reality in higher education, working to identify and digitize processes across the institution can dramatically improve the student experience while saving time and money.

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