TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS
CASE STUDY

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Brandeis University Partners with Huron for a Successful Transition to Workday Student

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

The Jewish community in Waltham, Massachusetts, established Brandeis University in 1948 as a coeducational research university welcoming faculty and students of all backgrounds and beliefs. Today, Brandeis is a leading university serving approximately 3,400 undergraduate and 1,900 graduate students and offering 44 undergraduate majors, 40 master's, and 17 doctoral programs. The university's liberal arts focus is defined by a broad and critical education that prepares students for full participation in an evolving society. Brandeis is ranked 31st in Best Undergraduate Teaching, 40th in Best Value Schools, and 42nd in National Universities in the 2022 edition of *U.S. News & World Report: Best Colleges*.

SELECTING AN IMPLEMENTATION PARTNER

After going live with Workday Human Capital Management and Workday Financial Management, Brandeis University embarked on its Workday Student deployment in fall 2019.

Brandeis kicked off the Student project by assessing the processes previously used for its HCM and finance deployments and identifying and leveraging lessons learned and best practices. Jim La Creta, chief information officer, and Anne Marando, associate vice president of information technology services at Brandeis University, began preparing for a collaborative and far-reaching change management initiative that extended across multiple administrative departments and all faculty and students. The Brandeis team decided to investigate third-party implementation partners to support them in deploying Workday Student while prioritizing change management.

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The Brandeis Workday Student project team consisted of approximately 30 stakeholders across all departments touched by the student system. This group worked collaboratively to identify critical requirements for selecting an implementation partner and published an RFP. Brandeis chose a few standout firms from the bidding vendors to meet with the team and provide in-depth presentations of their services, experience, and differentiators. After the vendors addressed follow-up questions from the Brandeis team, the selection team used a custom evaluation matrix to rank the implementation partners based on their technical skills, higher education expertise, familiarity with Workday Student, change management expertise, and ability to adapt to Brandeis's culture. Marando notes that Huron's experience and knowledge in organizational change management were key differentiators and won over the Brandeis team. At the end of 2019, Brandeis selected Huron as its Workday Student implementation partner and signed a contract with Huron in January 2020.

WORKDAY STUDENT IMPLEMENTATION WITH HURON

The Workday Student project began in January 2020, and when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, the project team continued to work remotely. Leveraging lessons learned from its previous Workday deployments, Brandeis met with the Huron team at the start of the project to discuss the university's culture and expectations. La Creta reports that the Huron team was exceedingly strong technically and functionally. According to La Creta, there were no adverse effects of working remotely, and instead, it encouraged an optimistic tone and a focused and productive project. La Creta notes that Huron facilitated open and frequent communication and collaborative decision-making and issue management. Huron was committed to developing and maintaining strong relationships with the Brandeis team, and Huron consultants meshed well with the Brandeis staff across the functional areas and its technical team. Marando met with Huron's project management leadership team weekly and had separate weekly check-ins with Huron's project management director. She notes that the Huron

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> *Student ambassadors participated in testing the student system and shared information and updates to the Brandeis student community through social media.*

consultants managed Brandeis staff expectations well and prepared Brandeis when specific milestones required more resources. The same consultants who started the deployment with Brandeis have remained dedicated to the project throughout the implementation.

Brandeis found that backfilling staff hours in the Registrar's Office was necessary because staff were not only pivoting from the legacy student system to Workday Student, but the COVID-19 pandemic also heavily influenced registration and required shifts in registration requirements.

The university implemented a phased rollout of Workday Student and began going live with early registration functionality for one of its schools in April 2021. This first registration rollout served as a pilot, and Brandeis went live with the full campus registration for the remaining schools at the end of July 2021. Brandeis deployed the remaining Workday Student modules in fall and winter 2021, rolling out some final components in spring 2022.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

With valuable insight from Brandeis's previous Workday deployments, the university recognized the importance of change management, especially with a student deployment that reaches across the entire campus. As such, Brandeis issued a separate statement of services for change management, and Huron's strength in this area was critical to the implementation's success. Huron contributed three change management consultants: a Change Management Director supported by a Change Management Manager and a Coordinator. Internally Brandeis dedicated its Workday Engagement Manager to lead the change management workstream, supported by two additional staff members. Other Brandeis staff joined in the change management initiative as needed to contribute their subject-matter expertise or develop Workday Student-related communications for the broader campus community. Brandeis also brought in 20 to 30 students, including the student union president, as change management ambassadors. The student ambassadors participated in testing the student system and shared information and updates to the Brandeis student community about the new Workday Student system through social media.

BENEFITS

While Workday Student has been live at Brandeis for less than a year, Marando reports that the university has received positive feedback from students, particularly around Workday

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Student's degree planning module. The module includes visualizations that map out the course requirements across majors, and it tracks student progress toward degree completion. The Workday Student self-service functionality also allows students to manage personal information, register for courses, add or drop classes, view course schedules and grades, and obtain a status on financial aid.

From an architectural standpoint, Marando and La Creta report the university benefits from deploying finance, HCM, and student on a single platform. The system provides a single source of truth and new opportunities for strategic reporting and decision-making by aggregating previously siloed data, such as data for enrollment and financial aid. La Creta notes that another benefit of Workday is its robust security infrastructure and continuous delivery model that facilitates consistent updates and compliance with regulations without causing significant disruptions or burdening internal IT staff. The Workday system deployment overall combined with Brandeis's change management initiative has encouraged a more collaborative culture as departments work together to adopt the new system and functionality, overhaul business processes, and transition roles and responsibilities.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

In 2018, well before the start of the Brandeis Workday Student project, La Creta hired an external project manager to work with the Brandeis team to review the university's student business processes and work with staff members to understand their expectations for the new student system. This pre-work provided a strong foundation when the project started and allowed the internal Brandeis team to identify and collaborate on critical areas of change management while they built trust in the project manager.

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Before deploying Workday Student, Brandeis also developed a structure for IT governance and decision-making for Workday Student as part of its university-wide IT governance strategy. The university established two separate committees: one for the Workday Student implementation and another for the Workday systems in production, including Workday Human Capital Management and Workday Financial Management. La Creta underscores the value of senior leadership involvement and support in adopting governance protocols and throughout any enterprise administrative system implementation to encourage confidence and adoption of new processes and protocols. The Brandeis project team relied on the President, Provost, and other senior leaders to endorse its governance framework.

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> *A centralized system allows Brandeis to collaboratively and incrementally build standardized operations and processes that enable more business continuity.*

La Creta highlights that enterprise system deployments provide valuable opportunities to analyze operations and business processes, address redundancy, and centralize information technology functions. At Brandeis, the Workday system requires more collaboration between administrative and IT departments than previous systems. As part of the transition, the Brandeis human resources information services department has become a part of the IT services department.

Further, building efficient processes using Workday Student's workflow capabilities requires IT and functional staff to shift their roles and responsibilities. La Creta reports that IT staff collaborated heavily with functional staff to define their roles based on operations in the new system. Brandeis brought representatives from different schools across campus with IT staff to discuss their current processes and how the new system will accommodate them. The IT services department led discussions on how configuration differs from the customizations in the past. Previously, each school customized the legacy system uniquely, which was challenging to manage. La Creta notes that the centralized system allows Brandeis to collaboratively and incrementally build standardized operations and processes that enable more business continuity.

PROJECT STATUS AND NEXT STEPS

Post Workday Student go-live, Brandeis is leveraging student feedback to work with Huron to refine Workday Student's scheduling and registration functionality. By the Fall 2022 registration period, the university plans to offer a more user-friendly and searchable interface so students can search by instructor, time, modality, and class size. Brandeis also continues to refine dashboards, student data, and accessibility accommodations in the system. Reporting is another focus area, and the Brandeis team is working to create more reports and dashboards. Brandeis is also restructuring its governance group. The university is rolling its Workday Student governance group into an overarching Workday governance group comprised of subcommittees per functional area for HCM, finance, and student.

REFERENCES

Tambellini briefed with Jim La Creta, chief information officer, and Anne Marando, associate vice president of information technology services at Brandeis University, as part of this research. Tambellini also used publicly available information for this study.

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The purpose of this report is to provide higher education institutions with information about the objectives, solutions, and outcomes related to the utilization of technology in colleges and universities across the US.

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