

Flagler College

Enhancing the Personal Touch with Web-Based Student Service

Flagler College is a private, four-year, co-educational, residential institution in St. Augustine, Florida. It offers 20 majors, 26 minors, and 2 pre-professional programs in selected studies emphasizing liberal arts, education and business to a student population of 2000. The school is located on 19 acres, in the heart of St. Augustine, 4 miles from the Atlantic Ocean. The centerpiece of the campus is the grand Ponce de Leon Hall, a former luxury resort hotel now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Flagler College takes pride in providing the personal touch and the close interaction between faculty and students that is characteristic of a small liberal arts college. “For all major decisions at the campus, a key question is, how will it effect the quality of interaction between faculty and students?” according to Joe Provenza, Director of Technology Services at Flagler. “We can compete with the state institutions on price, but they can’t compete with us on the personal touch.” Mr. Provenza became the College’s first information officer in 2000.

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Director of Technology Services

The College purchased Jenzabar EX in 1996, initially to support the business side of the institution with Payroll, Accounts Payable, Accounts



Flagler College Campus, St. Augustine, Florida

Receivable, and General Ledger applications. After realizing the benefits of integrating those financial systems, the College decided to extend that advantage to its student information systems, and installed the Jenzabar EX Registration module in time for student registration in Spring 2003. “If you want an integrated view of the student, you have to begin at the beginning,” Mr. Provenza says. “Registration is the engine that drives the train.” The Registrar’s office recognized the benefits of online registration—they knew that the data would be more secure and less prone to errors—but administrators were concerned about losing the personal touch.

Registration is one of the first opportunities for face-to-face interaction with each student each semester. With a simple change, the College was able to ensure that that

would still be the case, even with online registration. Students can only get their passwords from their advisors, in face-to-face meetings. Later, advisors informally check in with all of their advisees—even the most self-sufficient ones—to be sure they are enrolling in the right courses. Passwords are changed each semester, so students and advisors must meet at least twice a year, continuing the personal interaction. Flagler is determined to help students feel like they are part of a community, and this first step each semester supports that goal.

“We had some professors who were a little concerned that they would end up showing students how to use the system,” Mr. Provenza notes. “But the system is so easy to use that students and advisors often log in together and sign up for the correct courses on the spot. I have had some professors come up to me and say, ‘I couldn’t write this stuff down as quickly as I can help them enter it, and be sure it is right.’ I have had students tell me, ‘I just had a nice chat with my advisor, and I know I am

taking the right courses, but’—and this is the best part—‘I didn’t have to fill out those forms or stand in long lines.’”

The College has been so pleased with its success in maintaining personal contact while gaining administrative efficiencies that it is now in the process of installing the Jenzabar EX Advising module. “The administration has seen how we can use technology to augment, not replace the personal touch,” the Director explains. “By using the online advising module, our advisors will be able to have more meaningful discussions with their advisees. Advisors will have all the relevant information at their fingertips to advise a student. Meeting time won’t be wasted adding up hours or searching for requirements.”

Mr. Provenza concludes, “With Jenzabar’s help, Flagler College is using technology not to replace the personal touch, but to enhance it.” ■

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