



Millsaps
College

Millsaps College Uses Datatel Action Planning to Help Maximize Its Use of Colleague

|| SITUATION ||

Located in Jackson, MS, Millsaps College has established a solid reputation for its commitment to academic excellence, having been recognized by *Princeton Review*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and other prestigious publications. Home to some 1,200 students from 32 states and 16 countries, this privately supported, four-year liberal arts institution had been using Datatel Colleague for its student, finance, and human resources data management for nearly eight years when administrators decided to implement self-service functionality that was critical to its mission. At that time, the College was using a third-party financial aid software package, making the move to online registration and other student-focused services difficult.

“Once we began looking into the addition of self-service capabilities on campus, we realized that it made sense to add Colleague Financial Aid to our administrative software suite,” said Gail Waldrop, special projects coordinator at Millsaps College.

Having begun her career at Millsaps College as an accountant and assistant controller, Waldrop was asked to oversee the implementation of the new functionality. Typically, someone with this task would have an information technology background, but Waldrop was up for the challenge. What she hadn’t anticipated, though, was just how critical the integration between Colleague and the College’s separate financial aid and recruitment/admissions software would become.

While at the annual Southeast Datatel Users’ Group (SEDUG) regional conference, Waldrop made a last-minute decision to attend a session on Action Planning – Datatel’s complimentary service designed to help its client sites identify specific actions that address both short- and long-term strategic objectives. Upon hearing that Action Planning works to build consensus on prioritization, ownership, and an overall plan to accomplish goals, Waldrop realized that the service might help the College determine a logical and practical sequence of actionable next steps.

|| SOLUTION ||

The Datatel Business Advisor assigned to Millsaps College visited the campus to conduct interviews with staff members in each administrative office in order to assess the College’s use of Datatel products and services. The role of the Datatel Business Advisor is to collaborate with college staff and executive leadership to develop a plan that best addresses the institution’s business needs, goals, and objectives in multiple areas. The outcome for Millsaps College was a four-phase roadmap for increased efficiency and productivity that included more than just self-service functionality. The Action Plan uncovered the need for additional improvements, including implementation of Colleague Financial Aid and Degree Audit.

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Gail Waldrop
Special Projects Coordinator
Millsaps College

"In addition to adding Colleague Financial Aid and the Recruitment/Admissions module, our Action Plan grew even more as we realized that other areas were not being fully utilized," said Waldrop. "We began to see what these areas could do to enhance the overall performance and efficiency of the system."

Once the plan was finalized, a Datatel Business Practices Manager began the process of helping Millsaps College execute the initiatives outlined in the first two phases.

"Our Datatel Business Practices Manager has been extremely helpful with any request that we've made," added Waldrop. "She has been diligent in obtaining the information we needed to make decisions and given advice for handling issues that seemed beyond my realm of expertise. Datatel worked hard to coordinate a schedule that would work for us and has selected consultants that work well with our staff."

Colleague Financial Aid, Recruitment/Admissions, Web self-service, and Degree Audit were the first to go live, and students have responded favorably to the initial offerings. Introduction of the self-service functionality for faculty and training for Web Registration and e-Advising are the next to follow.

"One of the most positive things about these new enhancements, in addition to the added functionality, is the attitude of our staff," said Waldrop. "As new departments are coming online, other areas are trying to see how they can boost their own productivity. There is a better sense of overall involvement and an eagerness to make the system work to their benefit, which is really great."

As Millsaps College moves forward with implementation, training, and launching new Datatel products – including Colleague Advancement, the alumni development and fundraising component of the Colleague suite – the institution anticipates continued positive feedback from students, faculty, and staff.

"We know we have to be able to compete with other institutions in providing information to our students, and this is just the next step in achieving that objective," added Waldrop. "The more we do to provide technical capabilities for our students, the better able we are to compete. Datatel's Action Planning process has helped us focus our efforts on enhancements that are directly aligned with our institutional goals."



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ABOUT MILLSAPS COLLEGE

Founded in 1890

Enrolls 1,085 undergraduate and 69 graduate students

Offers 28 major and 26 minor degree programs as well as a self-designed major option

Community Enrichment Series offers more than 70 non-credit courses