

Minnesota State University Mankato

When Minnesota State University struggled with delays in workflows and student service due to paper-based processes, it sought a solution to drive greater performance not only on its Mankato campus, but across the entire Minnesota State College and Universities system. Lexmark document management, capture and workflow solutions have saved users hundreds of hours in processing time and significantly improved service to students. By leveraging a hosted solution approach, Lexmark technology is now available to all schools in the system for an affordable cost.

Challenge

Uniting disparate locations

Like many universities, Minnesota State University Mankato faced challenges typical of institutions whose resources are stretched thin, particularly in the areas of campus collaboration and workflow. Documents and data were scattered across a large geographical area, which led to delays in service. Often times, students would wait days to get a response to an admissions or financial aid question, while staff members wasted valuable time digging through files and folders in search of documents.

To address these challenges, the university chose Perceptive Content from Lexmark to improve operational performance and simplify daily workflows. According to Dennis Fling, Systems Manager at Minnesota State University Mankato, paper-based processes were causing these and other delays across the MnSCU system.

"A lot of the colleges have satellite sites, but their main business office is located in a different location," says Fling. "Staff would collect paperwork at the satellite offices, everything from applications, transcripts, financial aid forms and more, and would have to mail or drive the documents to the main office."

Solution

Giving students immediate answers

With Perceptive Content, information and student data is instantly accessible on or off campus through a central, secure repository. Now students get immediate answers to questions, and staff members spend less time managing time-consuming, manual processes. And seamless integration with the university's custom applications enables fast adoption.

Meet Minnesota State University Mankato

In 1995, legislation was passed to create the Minnesota State College and Universities System (MnSCU). This action merged the state's community colleges, technical colleges and state universities into a single system that spans 54 campuses in 47 communities, and serves over 435,000 students in every part of the state. Minnesota State University Mankato is the largest school in the MnSCU system with over 15,000 students and 2,000 faculty and staff members.

- ▶ **Location:** Mankato, MN
- ▶ **Enrollment:** 15,000
- ▶ **Faculty & Staff:** 2,000
- ▶ **Academic Programs:** More than 240

Products in use: Perceptive Content

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Dennis Fling

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“Users now have the ability to see an overview of the entire workflow,” explains Fling. “They can always find a document and know exactly where it is in the process, which has been a huge benefit.” In addition to eliminating processing delays and improving service, storage space has been significantly reduced on campus.

Entire rooms that were previously devoted to file cabinets are now repurposed for offices and collaborative areas. “Space savings on our campuses is a huge issue,” adds Fling. “There used to be entire rooms for files, which have been reallocated for office space. That’s been a big win.”

The flexibility of a hosted solution

In recent years, MnSCU has developed a unique approach to sharing Lexmark technology on all its campuses, from small community and trade colleges to larger urban universities. Each school pays a fee to cover server administration, hardware and system maintenance, which is hosted at Minnesota State University Mankato. By sharing resources in this way, MnSCU can purchase additional modules and services for use system-wide.

Here’s how it works: the Systems Manager oversees solution deployments and acts as a liaison with Lexmark Professional Services for all campus locations, while administrators on each campus take charge of their school’s migration efforts. By socializing expenses across the entire system, solutions are accessible for all users in a cost-effective way. In addition, each school can control the pace of expansion, which frees up financial resources for other projects.

This hosting model not only lowers technology costs for each individual school, but also delivers operational and service improvements that were not possible before deployment. “Every school helps pay for server maintenance and hosting, and everybody shares those expenses, rather than one school being responsible for all the costs,” explains Fling.

Doing more with less

Most colleges and universities have felt the impact of budget reductions and shifting student populations, and MnSCU is no exception. Staff and faculty had to find new ways to drive greater operational efficiency and improve student service, all with flat or declining budgets.

Minnesota State University Mankato and the MnSCU system have met this challenge by leveraging Lexmark technology to drive process automation and make the most out of existing resources. Today, Lexmark solutions are at work for 2,800 users in the MnSCU system and support three terabytes of storage housing over 44 million pages.

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Results

Considering MnSCU’s physical size and number of applicants, it’s no wonder manual workflow processes negatively impacted cycle times. One such workflow was the daily processing of Institutional Student Information Records, or ISIRs. This form includes processed financial aid data from FAFSA forms and other critical sources. Previously, ISIR reports were printed at night, and the next day staff had to scan and manually link hundreds of reports into the system.

Processing 2 million paperless pages

Using a direct print solution from Lexmark, ISIRs are now automatically loaded into the Perceptive Content financial aid drawer when staff arrives in the morning, with no delays or manual processes required. ISIR reports are then sent to a workflow queue, which provides instant visibility to a student’s financial aid application status. According to Fling, automating this process has saved countless hours for the staff members whose job was to scan and link the reports each day.

“This allows us to do all these tasks automatically. We’ve processed almost two million pages that previously would have been printed, scanned and manually linked, and now it all happens behind the scenes.”

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