



Customer Story

Elmhurst University Saves Time & Money by Utilizing True Self-Service Reporting & Analytics with Entrinsik Informer

Conversation with Ron Darschewski, Jr., Associate Director of Computer Services,
Elmhurst University

Pain points

- Non-IT staff could not access data without taking time away from IT
- No efficient way for data to be exported or analyzed
- Lack of reporting capabilities and intuitive interface

Results

- End-users across all departments can create their own reports and dashboards quickly
- 3,000 Informer reports and nearly 100 dashboards created and in use
- Scheduled email reports waiting in the inbox of individuals each day



Elmhurst University Customer Story

Challenge

Before implementing Entrinsik Informer, staff members at Elmhurst University were completely dependent on their IT department for report creation. IT staff were spending hours of valuable time writing queries in Query Builder from their Colleague database and manually customizing delivered reports for specific needs. Reports were distributed to end-users as one-off reports or through mnemonics and often times needed to be modified by someone in IT, taking hours or even weeks to complete. Non-IT staff had no way to access the real-time data that they needed without taking valuable time away from IT. In order to run analytics, IT staff at Elmhurst had to manually export data from the database, send the data to another office to run specified analytics externally, then wait for the results to be returned.

Ron Darschewski, Jr., Associate Director of Computer Services and Ellucian Colleague Administrator for Elmhurst University, saw first-hand the problems caused by the lack of an efficient reporting solution. “The major inefficiencies were that end-users required IT to do the work for them; this took hours away from work that IT could be doing, including creating system customization for the betterment of the institution,” said Darschewski.

Elmhurst needed a reporting and analytics solution that would allow end-users to access, create, and run customized reports, as well as streamline the analytics process, all without assistance from IT. Users needed a true self-service solution that would give them access to the real-time data they needed, with full reporting capabilities and a user-friendly interface.

Solution

After first seeing Informer demonstrated at a Datatel User Group (DUG) conference, Elmhurst decided to fully implement the software in 2009. Elmhurst added Dashboards to their Informer platform in 2011 after experiencing a high learning curve and difficulties with another visualization tool. The key features that the University was looking for in a reporting tool were ease of use for the end-user, the ability to report from multiple databases in a UniData environment, and security down to the field and file level of the system. "Informer delivered on all accounts," said Darschewski. "Reporting became easy; end-users could use the system with ease to get the data they needed."

Informer is designed for ultimate ease-of-use, not only in reporting functions but also during the implementation process. Installation takes minutes and Informer's intuitive interface eliminates the need for lengthy training periods. "It was one of the easiest implementations I have ever done. The total time for initial installation took about half a day but we could have done it in about two hours or less. We took our time with it and within a week we had it out to our first end-users."

Informer has also been integrated with other systems on campus at Elmhurst. The Development office uses Informer with their fundraising software, Raiser's Edge, to report on donors and giving, as well as selecting individuals for mailings. The University has also integrated Informer into their time-keeping solution, Kronos, in order to review the data imported from Colleague and checking for inaccuracies as data is moved between the two systems.

Results

Integrating Informer allowed end-users at Elmhurst to create their own reports and dashboards, and evaluate their own analytics within the department. Report writers no longer needed to spend hours writing complicated queries and computed columns in order to create the reports they needed. "The ability to let end-users create reports that link multiple tables (files) without the need to create computed columns to pull data in has saved us hundreds of hours of work on an annual basis." End-users can also now run data analytics themselves, saving hours or days of time and resources outsourcing their data for analysis.

Elmhurst University now has over 3,000 Informer reports and nearly 100 dashboards created and in use. These reports are used by nearly all offices on the campus, from Student Affairs to the Business Office. The ability to schedule reports or saved lists has provided the ability to email reports directly to the individuals that need them and they are waiting in their inbox when they arrive each day instead of waiting at their desk while the report processes.

"One of the newest uses was to determine students that have multiple active programs and then review the billing so that we charged them appropriately. In some instances it indicated an overcharge to the student but it also pointed out several that were being under-billed and we were then able to recoup that lost revenue."

Utilization of Informer Dashboards has been a major benefit for analytics, allowing users to consolidate important data into easy-to-digest visualizations. The University has created dashboards that analyze course utilization, identify potential geographic areas for future recruitment efforts, review participation in career services programs, and compare transmitted vs. non-transmitted financial aid, just to name a few.



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