



Customer Story

Campus-Wide Adoption of True Self-Service Reporting and Dashboards at North Iowa Area Community College Optimizes Decision-Making

Conversation with Greg Bailey, Director of Enterprise Applications, NIACC

Pain points

- Lack of user-friendly reporting and overdependence on IT
- Data could only be accessed in pre-configured views
- Struggle to get data from more than one pre-defined source

Results

- Ability to deliver up-to-date data to support business decisions quickly
- Dashboards created from retention effort data to connect with and retain more students
- Campus-wide adoption of true self-service reporting



North Iowa Area Community College Customer Story

Challenge

North Iowa Area Community College serves more than 3,700 degree seeking students each year and thousands more through non-credit programs with a staff of approximately 300. Greg Bailey, NIACC's Director of Enterprise Applications in the Technology Services department, is responsible for the overall direction, coordination, and evaluation of the Colleague ERP system and related third-party products at the college.

NIACC had been using Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS) since migrating their Ellucian Colleague system to SQL in 2007. The College's Technology Services department was responsible for creating and deploying views of specific data from their Colleague database, and end-users had to teach themselves to use SSRS in order to run reports against these pre-configured views.

"End-users could only access the data given to them in the pre-configured views, and any changes or additional data access would have to be requested, requiring Technology Services to modify individual views and redeploy them, meaning hours or days before users could have the data they needed to run reports," says Greg Bailey, NIACC's Director of Enterprise Applications.

SSRS was mainly used only by the end-users, so support for reporting was minimal and reports that users could create and run were very basic. "Users struggled to get data from more than one pre-defined source, and adding too much data to pre-defined views caused reports to run slowly, says Bailey. "Also, the reporting structure and pre-defined views solution didn't allow for new questions to be easily or quickly answered."

NIACC was also using a SAP Business Objects solution to create dashboards, but found that the skills required to use the software were extensive. Only four employees were using the dashboard solution

and there were various outstanding requests for dashboards that users lacked the Business Objects training and expertise to effectively create.

Solution

NIACC wanted to accomplish several objectives with a new reporting and dashboards solution:

- Implement a reporting solution that could be setup in a way to easily answer questions as they arise;
- Gain the ability to join tables and views in the background giving the end-user access to more data with less reliance on Technology Services;
- Rollout reporting to a wider audience with an intuitive point-and-click solution;
- Take reporting to the next level with interactive dashboards for decision making;
- Take advantage of reporting, analytics, automation, dashboards, and other data analysis capabilities, that would better aid NIACC with decision-making.

NIACC knew they needed a new reporting solution that would give them the flexibility to have their end-users create and run their own reports, along with easy-to-use dashboard creation and data analysis capabilities. They chose Entrinsik Informer.

“Having used Informer (pre-dashboard version) at a previous school, I understood the ease-of-use and power of Informer’s reporting, scheduling, security, etc.,” says Bailey. “Once I participated in a demonstration of Informer dashboards, I knew it could meet our Business Intelligence needs in addition to better reporting.”

After implementing Informer, NIACC hired a new staff member to head their new reporting direction who had no experience with Informer. In just a short time, she was able to become completely comfortable with Informer and could setup security, users, reports, dashboards, analytics, filters, and more without assistance. “Informer is very intuitive and easy to train end-users to either run reports or build their own. “We’re able to deliver up-to-date data to support business decisions in a much shorter timeframe than we could have with other tools,” says Bailey.

“We felt Informer with Dashboards gave us all the functionality and features we need for institutional reporting and data analysis in a solution we could learn and deploy quickly.”

Results

NIACC is leveraging Informer’s end-user friendly capabilities to migrate all offices from SSRS to Informer, with six offices fully migrated so far. An ever increasing number of users are utilizing

Informer with more users being added about every two weeks, without the need for lengthy training or technical expertise.

“Informer is very intuitive and easy to train end-users to either run reports or build their own, said Bailey. “Building the metadata is a breeze and we build what we need as we need it. It is easy to get started and grow from there. The college is pretty excited with what we’ve been able to deliver so far with Informer.”

NIACC has also been leveraging Informer dashboards very heavily, and the entire faculty and staff have access to current dashboards through the College’s Portal.

Recently users were able to quickly build dashboards to illustrate the impact of their retention efforts, causing them to re-think their retention direction. NIACC will now be able to leverage Informer reports and dashboards in re-launching retention in a way to connect with and retain more students.

Just a few examples of the dashboards NIACC has built so far are:

- Enrollment – Point-in-Time: gives college executives an up-to-date comparison of the current year’s enrollment to previous years and allows instant visibility on how it’s doing;
- Persistence Rates – Point-in-Time: shows current rates compared to previous years in registering first-time full-time students for the 2nd year;
- Retention Analysis: shows how retention efforts have affected students returning who were at-risk;
- Section Enrollment Comparisons (coming soon): to assist department chairs in efficient scheduling for upcoming terms based on historical or point-in-time enrollment figures.

NIACC scheduled the point-in-time enrollment and persistence rates dashboards to automatically refresh every morning so the college can keep a close eye on how it’s doing at any given time.

With widely spreading adoption across campus, NIACC hopes to have all their users reaping the benefits of Informer within a very short time. From end-users to executives and staff in Technology Services, Informer has given employees at NIACC the ability to access, visualize, and analyze the important data the college needs to make better decisions affecting the school, its faculty and staff, and its students.



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