



Running a smooth, forward-facing college.

A consolidated, cloud-based system can streamline operations and help institutions plan for an uncertain future.

Four years ago, Furman University, a 2,500-student institution in Greenville, South Carolina, was stuck in an antiquated tech system that made internal communications and reporting difficult. What's more, the university's ability to consistently manage its finances was getting harder by the day. The shortcomings of the platform, a campus fixture for 24 years, had placed so much stress on staffers that they had begun to create their own workarounds—further weakening the system's integrity and diluting Furman's goal of sparking more meaningful collaborations across campus.

The university decided it was time for a replacement system—one that would help it run a smoother, more efficient and transparent operation. Furman leaders hoped that a top-quality change in technology would help the university monitor a steady stream of transactions in real time, improve its hiring and faculty evaluation practices, and make its interactions with students more timely and comprehensive.

After Furman officials tested two systems from other companies, the university signed on with Workday, a California-based company that develops financial management, human capital management, and student solutions. For more than a decade, Workday has worked to help hundreds of higher-education institutions streamline and upgrade their operations.

With the help of a Workday-certified implementation partner who helped the university manage the on-campus transition, Furman soon had a digital platform that delivered combined finance and human capital management services fully in place. A Workday-built student information system, designed to be intuitive to “digital-native” degree-seekers, was added about a year later.

All worked like a top. But the key to the gains in functionality were that all three systems were unified. And Furman gained another advantage: its campus operations and student services systems were unified within the agile cloud, something that provided a level of connection that Furman leaders couldn't have even dreamed about a few years earlier.

“The capacity of the system is so much greater because it is in the cloud,” says David Steinour, chief information officer at Furman who oversaw the transition. “But Workday has done more than make things run more smoothly. Using the system causes our people to think a little bit bigger—not just about process, but how they can use processes to work better. We've seen a lot of benefits once people have figured out ways to use it.”

In the end, Furman would gain another benefit from its relationship with Workday: a system that would help it make long-term strategic decisions about enrollment, finances, and growth.



About Furman University

- Recognized by Top 50 National Liberal Arts Colleges
- 2,600 full-time enrollment
- Location: Greenville, SC
- 94% placement rate 6 months post-graduation (employed or in graduate school)

Benefits

By selecting the Workday enterprise management cloud, Furman University has transformed to one unified system, enhancing its ability to make strategic decisions in enrollment, planning, finances, and HR, while streamlining operations and securing more data. With Workday, the university can:

- Provide a seamless student services experience
- Accurately plan revenues and expenses across the organization
- Empower faculty, staff, and executives through self-service
- Rely on a higher level of data security that the cloud provides

Only **4.5%**
of campuses have
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72%
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The right tools for planning.

At a time when colleges continue to adapt to COVID-19, which has already forced them to expand the ways they offer education, their leaders still must chart a financially secure future. For too many officials, the crystal ball remains hazy. Their institutions remain mired in old tech systems that limit their ability to look ahead.

Now more than ever, college officials could use some help plotting a course that works toward maintaining an institution's health. There is ample evidence that more colleges should seek out cloud-based solutions. [Only 4.5 percent of campuses have implemented modern, cloud-based student systems.](#) A large number of institutions (72 percent) use student information systems that are at least 20 years old, according to research from the Tambellini Group. And overall college investment in such systems has fallen during each of the last five years—at a time when institutions are under intense pressure to better educate and serve students.

Fortunately, the cloud offers them fresh possibilities, including unifying the functions of several major offices under one system. The unified Workday solution has become a go-to item for institutions that desire more flexibility, reliability, staff collaboration—and the coordinated information they need to make strong decisions about the future.

“We have learned from a big event like COVID-19 that colleges will need to be able to continuously update their plan,” says Shane Topping, director of product marketing at Workday. “The Workday platform allows this to happen in a collaborative way, meaning that colleges can share forecasting models within a single secure application.”

A college concerned about, say, declining international enrollment would have the advantage of collecting and maintaining its enrollment and financial data in a single environment, Topping adds. If deposits from international students trend downward, colleges that use the Workday system can see, using the full range of data, how that will affect overall tuition revenue. Enrollment professionals and other administrators can then strategize—perhaps by recruiting more domestic students—to make up the shortfall.

“The system gives colleges the data and leverage they need to plan,” Topping says.

Workday Applications

- Human Capital Management
- Financial Management
- Student
- Payroll
- Recruiting
- Expenses
- Grants Management
- Adaptive Planning

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Shane Topping
Director of Product Marketing,
Workday

Getting a handle on finances.

Colleges will be able to look ahead with more clarity with a consolidated system that tracks and analyzes all kinds of on-campus and off-campus transactions. These systems are particularly valuable when an institution is under stress or uncertain about key aspects of its financial future.

Using the Workday system to operate more transparently and efficiently, day by day, is a good first step, say leaders at Furman.

Because the university's Workday solution stores and catalogs materials automatically, the university has been able to reduce its reliance on paper documents and streamline its document retention practices.

By replacing its previous solutions—which included a manual system, Microsoft® Excel, for one group of users; an under-developed cloud solution for another group of users; and a credit card reconciliation system for all users—with Workday, Furman was able to consolidate all expense reporting and accounting into a single integrated worklet for every employee.

“We have one consolidated credit card system with our reconciliation and travel reporting,” says Susan Maddux, chief financial officer at Furman. “That’s a huge deal, especially when you consider that one of the core initiatives at Furman is study-away. There’s a lot of expense management that goes on with that.”

The Workday solution receives daily feeds from banks that Furman does business with, as well as from retailers and vendors that seek payments. University staffers can now easily place supervisor-approved orders from those companies and pay for them using the same system.

“I’ve been impressed by the capabilities of Workday,” says Maddux. “We are now nearly paperless between all of our human resources and finance. Reconciling bank statements prior to COVID-19 was a very manual process. Now, it’s just automatic.”

During COVID-19, Workday capabilities became even more valuable. Says Maddux, “Our ability to handle COVID-19 was helped by our being with Workday. All of the functionality that is seamless and paperless has allowed us to go remote and not miss a beat.”

“If we hadn’t implemented Workday, we couldn’t have gone to remote education as soon as we did,” Steinour adds. “Workday was there to do what we needed, just as it was, with no customizations. We really didn’t need to do much at all to make it work in a remote setting.”

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Chief Information Officer,
Furman University

Improving HR operationally.

On most campuses, hiring decisions and staff evaluations often involve several copies of documents that are passed around to administrators and search committees. Creating a paper trail comes with several headaches, including privacy and security.

Making sure everyone has received all those documents is often not fail-safe. Workday Human Capital Management improves efficiency and reliability by automating those functions while making sure that no stray copies with personal information get into the wrong hands.

Workday allows Furman to announce job openings and begin collecting application information digitally as soon as a would-be candidate wants to share it. That information will then be secured and protected within the system.

“When it comes to opening a position, we can start the authorizing process right away,” adds Steinour. “And we can make sure that the right documents go only to the right people.”

The same concern for security and compliance is baked into Furman’s staff evaluation process—with an assist from Workday. “Prior to our implementation, we had to make multiple copies of each evaluation,” Steinour says. “You can imagine how many were floating around campus.”

Moving student services into the digital era.

As students and their parents seek more and more value out of higher education, colleges remain under intense pressure to better educate and serve students. Institutions with an eye toward growth and the future will find ways to make digital access to student services a priority.

At Furman, students who want to make counseling or tutoring appointments, access transcripts, or register for courses have seen benefits from the Workday system.

“We used to have to stagger registration,” says Steinour. “Now, students can work on their schedules before registration and talk with their advisers. It used to take several weeks to register—now, it’s a 15-minute process.” Students can begin making course selections weeks before a registration deadline, Steinour adds, and then finalize their schedules with one or two clicks on the day those selections are due.

The Workday Student system is made to be easy to use for “mobile-native” students. “The experience for students will be much closer to their experience as consumers,” says Topping. “Workday has been listening to actual students in product design sessions, and we have learned students want easy access to information and tasks from any device, from any location.”

Workday functionality includes improving both student access to services and an institution’s ability to develop insights that could improve its educational offerings. By compiling data on the days and times when students prefer to schedule certain appointments, Workday can show when colleges should be making those services most available.

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Workday is not just IT and HR—it’s the entire campus.

Susan Maddux
Chief Financial Officer,
Furman University

And by collecting information related to a student's degree path and major, Workday can help colleges determine the financial outlook for certain professions when that student graduates. "Workday is not just IT and HR—it's the entire campus," says Maddux. "It's seeing student life, academic affairs, and everybody coming together and thinking differently about the way we're doing business or the way that we're processing our business. It has forced us to be more collaborative."

Securing more data.

One pivotal aspect for Furman officials is the extra layer of data security the cloud provides. Workday enables institutions to store sensitive personal and operations data in the cloud, removing much of the anxiety that can come with maintaining it on campus.

"The security piece is more important than anything," Steinour says. "We're moving our data center to the cloud to take advantage of the cost, security, and power supply. It takes a lot of pressure off our IT staff when you can do that."

Configurability is key.

Workday offers the same version of its system to colleges and then follows up with twice-annual upgrades that it delivers to every higher education customer. But that doesn't mean that the system can't be made to order.

What's important for colleges to remember is that much of the configurability of the system occurs up front. The system's code cannot be rewritten, Steinour says, though that often is an advantage.

"You don't need to check for customizations every time there is an upgrade or to see what's compatible with what," Steinour says. "This is the seventh system migration I've done in my career, and it's been one of the smoothest."

The ease of use and the efficiencies Workday offers have helped unite the campus' operations. But it has done more than that. By increasing the levels of communication and offering the opportunity to create and analyze more kinds of data, the system has reshaped what Furman sees as possible.

"I definitely think it's been transformational," says Maddux. "It has allowed us to think more strategically about how we want to do business, how we want to make sure that we are hiring the best and the brightest, and we're giving an opportunity to our employees that they're not going to get somewhere else."

To explore more Workday customer stories, please visit workday.com/customer.

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