

CASE STUDY: FURMAN UNIVERSITY



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Brad Barron

*Associate Dean and Registrar
Furman University*

How Furman Integrated Parchment Send with Ellucian to Dramatically Reduce Transcript Processing Time

One of the nation's premier undergraduate liberal arts colleges, Furman University became a Parchment customer in late March 2010 and delivered its first certified electronic transcript just over three months later in July 2010. Partnering with Parchment, Furman built a completely integrated and automated transcript processing system in record time.

“We went from 0 to 100% in less than 4 months,” boasts Associate Dean and University Registrar Brad Barron. “If you are familiar with how IT integrations work, that’s amazing. Parchment has been a fantastic solution for Furman, including how the solution interfaces effectively with our enterprise-wide administrative system, Ellucian Colleague.”

Results: Dramatically Reduced Processing Time

“With Parchment Send, we were able to decrease processing time from 4 to 6 hours to only 30 minutes, a savings of 87%” says Barron. Now, the university can quickly fulfill all requests whether students want paper or PDF. And unlike the earlier fulfillment system, the Parchment solution notifies requestors throughout the ordering and delivery process. “Parchment knows where all your transcripts go,” he says.

Furman University has also been able to branch out using the Parchment request mechanism to allow students to order replacement diplomas or an Apostille for a foreign country.

Transcript Processing History

When Barron joined Furman University in 2002, he was concerned that there was no record of where transcripts went. “I realized this was a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) problem in addition to a significant service problem,” he says.

“I recognized that we needed to do something quickly to abate potential problems, but it was 2003, and there wasn’t much available,” explains Barron. As a result, he built what he calls the “world’s worst piece of transcript fulfillment software” using Access, which allowed staff to take paper requests via mail, fax, or email; manually input them into the Access database; print the cover sheet and transcripts, stuff them into envelopes, and mail.

“It took three days to fulfill transcripts, and we still didn’t know where they were going,” Barron says. In addition, Furman had stopped collecting a fee for processing transcripts in 1999 because it was too cumbersome to track, which translated into years of lost revenue.

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Updating the Solution:

Parchment Send

"What we got from partnering with Parchment was quite a lot," explains Barron. "Today, the university is able to fulfill requests the same or next business day."

"We have the ability to send PDFs securely, which many students were clamoring for, and we've got a transcript that when delivered electronically looks identical to paper transcripts," he says. "It's the same Furman purple."

Taking transcript requests is now 100% automated, which saves data entry time. Plus, Parchment allows Furman to collect a modest \$5 processing fee from students, which is also a deterrent to students ordering transcripts frivolously.

"Furman has paid nothing out of pocket for our Parchment Send solution," Barron says. "From implementation to sending 20,000 transcripts, it hasn't cost us a cent. Our CFO has not been disappointed with me when I say that this Parchment solution only makes us money. It doesn't cost us anything!"

Praise for PDFs

"I can't say enough good things about PDF files. They are more secure and blue-ribbon certified, and it's easier for the recipient to understand what a legitimate transcript is. PDFs are also less expensive, with no postage needed, and there's less handling with no envelope stuffing or return mail to deal with. I couldn't be happier with folks who request PDF transcripts."

In its 3-plus years of using Parchment Send, Furman has processed 20,000 transcripts, with the use of PDFs growing about 4 to 5% per year. In the 2013-14 academic year, PDF use is at 31%.

"The South Carolina Department of Education still requires paper transcripts," Barron explains. When they begin to prefer electronic documents, "I expect to see a 60 to 40% ratio of PDF files to paper transcripts."

Choosing a Partner

"This is an amazing time," continues Barron. "Furman is far from leading edge when it comes to technology, but we jumped in right as the wave started, and we're prepared to ride it for a long time. I think we definitely picked the right partner in Parchment."

"I can't say enough good things about the relationship we have built with the Parchment team," he concludes. "They have been with us the whole way. Our IT person and the IT staff at Parchment speak the same language. And that has helped us immensely."

BY THE NUMBERS

20,000+
Transcripts in 3 years

3 Month
Implementation

1 Day
Same day
Processing

ABOUT FURMAN UNIVERSITY

- Greenville, SC
- 3,000 students
- Premier Liberal Arts College
- Ellucian Colleague SIS
- 1 full-time transcript processor

Learn More
exchange.parchment.com

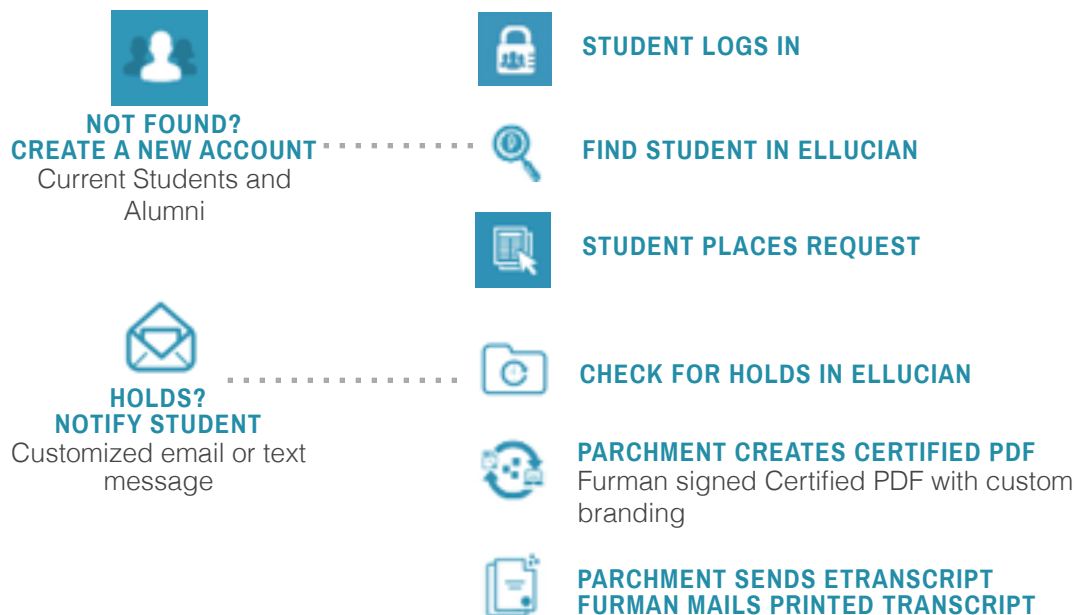
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How It Works

“Parchment is behind the scenes, making it look 100% like a Furman solution.”

Brad Barron
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Note: Blue boxes indicate actions performed by students or administrators

How It Works

Students order transcripts via a portal on the Furman University web site, where current students sign in and alumni authenticate themselves to set up an account. “Parchment is behind the scenes, making it look 100 percent like a Furman solution,” Barron explains. “They are a silent partner for all transaction fulfillment.”

Next, the transcript order is accepted by Parchment, an XML file is sent to Furman, and the requester is notified. The next step is based on what the students order and their financial status. “We may hold the

transcript until they say we should send it out for grades or until they have resolved any financial obligations,” says Barron.

If a requester asks for an electronic copy via PDF, the system pushes out a flat file to Parchment four times a day. Parchment assembles the PDF dynamically and sends it out based on the request. If asked to send a paper version, the system generates a queue of ID numbers that feeds into Ellucian. A staff member prints the transcript, stuffs the envelope, and sends it out.