Columbia University

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The nation's most prestigious schools are often the ones exploring the latest innovative solutions. This is certainly true of Columbia University. Registrar Barry Kane identified a need for Parchment more than half a decade ago. Although his students had the capability to order their transcripts electronically at the time, Kane wanted them to be able to send them in the same way.

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Barry Kane, Registrar
Columbia University

The partnership between Columbia and Parchment started from such a simple idea, but it's grown into a mutually beneficial and supportive relationship for both parties.

Outsourcing Credential Operations

Although Kane initially looked to Parchment simply for transcript delivery, he began to realize the company could provide so much more. "As we began to consider [delivery], it became increasingly attractive to outsource our entire transcript operations," he explained. This idea included generating and delivering both electronic and printed records. "At the time, Parchment was the only company that could do both."

Yet, in his words, it would be an oversimplification to say that was the only reason why Columbia chose Parchment. In terms of electronic transmission, he identified Parchment as the leader in its field. Kane also felt the company positioned itself to remain an industry leader. "I felt Parchment had sufficient depth and resources to remain cutting edge," he said.

Onboarding Parchment. Transforming the Student Experience.

When Parchment launched at Columbia in 2013, Kane saw the number of electronic transcript submissions jump in number, quickly climbing from 0 to 76 percent. That didn't surprise him, yet he didn't praise the school for finally getting where he felt it should have been 10 years ago.

Instead, he looked for ways Columbia could keep improving through their partnership with Parchment.Today, he's particularly interested in incorporating the work of Tom Black (while he was registrar at Stanford) into the platform and creating transcripts that provide more in-depth information, such as professor bios, syllabi and more.

Even though that project is still in the works, Kane has already seen digital credentials help students in ways paper transcripts cannot. One story he recalled involved a student heading to an interview with a graduate school. She had boarded a plane only to realize she forgot a copy of her academic record. Thanks to Parchment, the student requested and downloaded a digital copy before her interview started. "No doubt this sort of thing happens to hundreds of students," Kane theorized.

Send Transcripts Nationwide or Around the Globe

Thanks to Parchment's expansive network, students can send their credentials to a wide range of receivers. Those at Columbia certainly take advantage of this convenient capability. "Our students mostly send credentials to graduate programs – primarily medical, law and business schools – as well as large financial and consulting firms," Kane explained.

According to Kane, the nature of these recipients, particularly the high-level employers, demonstrates the shift in the way credentials are used. They're not simply a tool used for entering a master's program. Credentials are the keys to unlocking students' futures. "Parchment does a good job [epitomizing a single] vision for digital credentials," he said. "All its members subscribe to its mission, and staff is always ready to tackle any concern."

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