

CASE STUDY: BALL STATE UNIVERSITY



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Brad Hostetler

*Associate Director of Admissions
Ball State University*

How Ball State University Stopped Printing and Started Processing Incoming Transcripts Automatically with Banner Data Management System

“When I started at Ball State University, one thing that floored me was how paper intensive we were,” says Brad Hostetler, associate director of admissions. “We were constantly pushing papers around and trying to find files. It was a beast we battled for a long time.” That is, until BSU implemented Premium Parchment Receive.

Since September 2013, BSU has loaded over 25,500 image-quality documents into its Banner Document Management System (BDMS), totally eliminating manual scans. “Normally, this would have created a two-month backlog through December,” Hostetler explains. “But during this admissions cycle, we were processing day to day by the end of October.

And what about the amount of time saved? “I would say three to four minutes per document,” estimates Hostetler. “And it’s not just about the time, it’s also about the quality of the document in the system. Scanners are going to do only so well.”

Getting Started: Manual Transcript Processing

In the fall of 2005, BSU began accepting electronic transcript documents from Parchment, having received a total of

116,000 documents to date. “We started with Parchment’s free ‘poor boy’ solution,” jokes Hostetler.

This basic platform allowed BSU to request and download transcripts in PDF format, which were printed and distributed to individual admissions processors. The processors scanned the documents back into electronic format, loaded them into the existing document management system, and indexed them.

“The process was very labor intensive, and we still received many transcripts via postal mail, creating an even larger backlog of documents,” explains Hostetler. “We also had to send letters to students if documents were missing and wait passively for a response, adding time and expense.”

Automating for Efficiency

Today, BSU uses automation to build more efficient processes. The university relies on the Premium Parchment Receive, with eApp Integration through Transcript Direct and touch-free uploading into BDMS.

With Premium Receive, BSU can be proactive. Manual processes are now fully automated: downloading the transcript documents from Parchment’s

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secure FTP site, uploading them to BDMS, and even emailing students for missing information. Document printing and scanning has been all but eliminated. In addition, a unique Application ID number is generated when BSU receives applications, which is captured by Parchment and linked to requested transcripts and other documents, streamlining even further through document-application matching.

Now, students can request transcripts as part of the application process using the co-branded Parchment-BSU landing page. And with Banner self-service, students can see the application-related information to ensure all their documents have been received. This information access eliminates a lot of incoming and outgoing phone calls for the admissions processors.

How long did the implementation take? "The set up and scripts were not very complicated, so implementation was not long at all with the help of two IT staff members full time for two to three weeks," explains Hostetler. "The pluses far outweigh any efforts we had to put into it. Initially, there is always discomfort around implementing something new. But today, our staff can't believe where we are. And we've eliminated overtime."

Features for the Future

Although, Hostetler originally opted to assign a generic document type, which made testing easier, his current comfort level is such that BSU will probably modify the existing script to

use the document type coming from Parchment. This will enable the pre-population of document types, eliminating the need to enter the BSUID.

In addition, the university is interested XML data via Parchment Receive. "At BSU, we calculate an academic index based on core courses to calculate a GPA based on those courses," says Hostetler. "If we had way to pull in transcript information and save it to a database, we could identify core courses for each institution worked with to build and calculate the academic index automatically to help us in the review process."

No More File Cabinets

Parchment Receive allows BSU to act on documents in way appropriate with admissions workflows and best practices, saving time, money, and even office space. "The big thing in our office is the elimination of file cabinets," Hostetler boasts. "We no longer have applicant folders. Everything is now online."

"Now information is at our fingertips, even when staff members are on road, and they have questions," concludes Hostetler. "Parchment Receive is a great tool with great benefits. I wish we'd have done it a long time ago."

BY THE NUMBERS

25,000+
image quality
transcripts

4 Minutes
saved per
document

1 Day
same day
processing during
admission season



ABOUT BALL STATE UNIVERSITY (AS OF MAY 2014)

- 4 Year Public Research University in Muncie, IN
- 21,000 students enrolled
- 6 Admissions officers

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How it Works



“Issues are few and far between. Everything usually runs pretty clean.”

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The Unique Application ID

Ball State receives applications from two sources: CollegenET for main application and Royal & Company, a more directed application. Upon receipt, applications are uploaded into BDMS and a unique Application ID is generated.

- Email receipt acknowledgment to student
- Email a link to request transcripts via Parchment with Application ID embedded in link
- Parchment delivers requested transcripts, with associated Application ID, to SFTP server at BSU

Create a Skeleton Record

Sometimes, Ball State receives transcript documents before the student's application is loaded into BDMS. If a record doesn't exist, the processor builds a basic skeleton record to generate an ID, which allows the processor to collect and load documents before application is received. This enables BSU to continue realtime transcript processing without having to keep checking if other admissions documents have arrived.



DAILY SCRIPT: 1 AM PREPARE AVAILABLE PARCHMENT TRANSCRIPTS

- Merge CSV index files to create one index file
- Upload Single index file to BDMS
- Upload all PDF files to BDMS
- Send notification of success or errors to administrator

DAILY SCRIPT: 4 AM READ & UPLOAD FILES INTO BDMS

- Feed merged CSV file with all indexed information into BDMS
- Read each record to find associated PDF
- Load document into BDMS, associating PDF with Application record

DAILY PROCESSING: 8 AM WORK WITH LOADED DOCUMENTS

- Run individual query to get list of assigned documents
- Spot check data and update additional fields (eg GPA or class rank)
- Add appropriate document type

**3 WEEKS
DEVELOPMENT
TIME**

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