

Middlesex Community College

Bedford and Lowell, MA

A Decision to Partner with CampusWorks...

A Solution with Extraordinary Results

October, 2005



*Middlesex Community College, MA
President, Dr. Carole Cowan,
presenting the College's "President's
Award" to Dr. Darrow Neves, MCC's
Chief Technology Officer and
CampusWorks consultant.*

Middlesex Community College
Bedford and Lowell, MA

A Decision to Partner with CampusWorks Inc.

A Solution with Extraordinary Results

October, 2005

Introduction

The decision to invest in information technology services is one of the most important decisions a college can make. The right decision can result in efficient systems, enhanced academic instruction, and increased options for student interaction and learning. The wrong decision can leave a college far behind the wave of technology growth, and can drain funds without any measurable results. And no decision, that is, keeping the status quo, may perpetuate inefficient systems and lead to continued frustration across the college community.

In these restrained budget times, technology is an expensive investment, and it is essential that any decision about technology services be carefully considered. No college can afford to waste precious resources. Among the questions to consider: *Are the current systems working well? Is there a long-term vision for technology growth? Is there adequate technology support for the academic community? Can the current technology center keep up with the demands? Is there confidence that the investment in technology is yielding optimum results? Does the college community have complete confidence in the IT leadership and service?* If the answer to any of these questions is no, then it is time to consider a change.

A Time for Change: Middlesex Community College

Middlesex Community College (MA) is one example of a college that reached a stage in its development where change was needed. Middlesex, with a current student enrollment of over 8,000 per semester on two campuses, had invested increasing resources in technology over the years. Nevertheless, there were continuing problems. The academic community needed enhanced support, but the IT services could not keep up with the demands. In addition, administrative users were feeling frustrated as problems occurred and were not quickly resolved. As President Carole Cowan noted, "The management of IT resources was the biggest challenge for Middlesex Community College. Faculty and staff were moving quickly and becoming serious users of technology for instruction and student services, and our technology departments were struggling to meet the demands." Confidence in IT services had eroded and needed to be restored.

The Selection Process

It was time for Middlesex Community College to take a serious look at its technology needs and decide about its future investment in technology services. There were a number of meetings and discussions on this issue, and finally a request for proposals (RFP) for an information technology partnership was developed and a full-scale competitive bid process began. The Selection Committee included members of the Board of Trustees, the President, Vice-Presidents and representatives from the College community. There were nine responses to the RFP. After a substantive and serious review process, CampusWorks, Inc. was selected to provide IT services in partnership with Middlesex. The Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees Chairperson, Tom O'Mahony, commented that, "Of the nine finalists involved in our Request for Proposals, CWI was the clear winner in this competition, based on the excellent proposal, CWI's track record and prior excellence, and our belief that CWI would provide the best value for our scarce budget allocation."

CampusWorks: The Technology Transformation Begins

The First Few Months

CampusWorks Inc. (CWI) began its technology partnership with Middlesex Community College in June 2002, and Dr. Darrow Neves, Director of Corporate Technical Services at CWI, joined Middlesex as Chief Technology Officer. Dr. Neves' approach to solving problems is typical of the CampusWorks culture: extraordinary competence, a strong knowledge base about the technical needs and solutions in a community college environment; an ability to listen and a willingness to collaborate across the whole college community; an awareness and sensitivity to the limits of community college budgets; and the highest standards for rapid implementation with positive results. During those beginning weeks, a team of experts from CampusWorks visited the campus, conducted interviews and assisted Dr. Neves in identifying critical issues and setting priorities. The CampusWorks culture was one of efficiency, collaboration, and high quality, and the change was felt on campus almost immediately. Jay Linnehan, Chief Financial Officer, remembers, "Once CampusWorks was on site, they reviewed our whole inventory and presented a practical, cost effective proposal on how to replace existing equipment. They were extremely knowledgeable and their speed and efficiency were amazing."

The First Three Years

In the next three years of the contract, CampusWorks literally transformed technology at Middlesex Community College. There were eleven major areas of accomplishment: 1) tactical plan, 2) teaching and learning facilities, 3) IT organization and governance, 4) technology support model, 5) network, 6) telephone system, 7) life cycle management of equipment, 8) desktop computer management, 9) administrative systems, 10) portal, and 11) identity management. Again, the culture of efficiency, collaboration and quality was implicit in every initiative that CampusWorks undertook. Here is a brief summary of those changes.

Tactical Plan: Collaboration was the cornerstone of the tactical plan, and the planning effort drew the entire College community into a review of technology across the institutional landscape. The plan was reviewed and approved by the College administration and has served as a strategy roadmap for goals, objectives and measurable accomplishments. The Plan was so comprehensive that it served as a fundamental building block of the College's 2004 accreditation effort.

Teaching and Learning Facilities: An action plan for academic systems was developed that included, among many items, priorities for smart classroom technology, classroom and lab standards for hardware and software, a lifecycle management strategy for inventory and replacement, improved access for laptop computers, improved student access to computers, and a re-organization of technology services to clarify and improve services that support teaching and learning.

IT Organization and Governance: An urgent requirement from all areas of the College was a more effective management structure in the Technology Center. This need was expressed in several forms;

- Elimination of duplicate and overlapping service responsibilities
- More effective management within the Technology Center
- More effective communication between the Technology Center and the rest of the College
- Better prepared staff within the Technology Center.

In response to these needs, several initiatives were implemented. First, the Technology Center was re-organized into a tiered support model, with three tiers of staff expertise available, and then re-designed to implement proven best practices for technology services. The tiered model includes a Tier 1 Help Desk Staff, Tier 2 Knowledgebase, and Tier 3 subject area and technical experts. The Knowledgebase is an innovative solution to capture best practices and provide repetitive high quality service. The Technology Center uses the Remedy product for call management. Daily and monthly reports have been developed and are reviewed by management to identify technical problem areas, Knowledgebase case requirements, training requirements, effectiveness at meeting call response objectives, and staff performance. All Help Desk services are available through both telephone and WEB access. As technology services were requested across the College, appropriate staff could respond quickly with solutions that worked.

Second, the Technology Center partnered with the Academic Resources department to re-organize resources so the operational support moved to the Technology Center and the academic support focused in Academic Resources. The outcome of this effort focused operational support in the Technology Center and academic support in Academic Resources. *Service duplication was eliminated and support costs were lowered.* Third, a plan for professional development was implemented for the technology staff. At this time, most have achieved additional professional certifications or degrees, resulting in improved performance.

Technology Support Model: The Technology Center operates as a sophisticated three tier organization with high quality tools implemented to manage and route calls and assignments to staff within the Technology Center. Technology support needed to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. During non-business hours, an outsourced Help Desk was proposed and implemented to provide premium support for critical College services. This proposal guaranteed that there would be continual support for technology services at all hours.

Network: When CampusWorks first began its partnership with Middlesex Community College, the College network was in a poor state of reliability and performance with daily outages. Now, the College network is at a state of production level quality and network access is ubiquitous throughout the College. All leased lines were replaced with dedicated fiber and high speed wireless connection and *have resulted in improved performance while reducing costs. Internet service has been improved by a factor of 7 with no increase in costs.* We have deployed a secure wireless network infrastructure to selected areas of the College.

Telephone systems: The long distance service provider and local service provider were both replaced, *with a yield in annual savings in excess of \$100,000.* Service levels have improved and the College has enjoyed simplified billing. Voice over IP technology has been deployed in several new service areas including the Federal Building and the Middlesex Academy and this has extended service while minimizing capital expenditures. There is now a professional Call Center capability which has substantially improved service levels and *will yield important cost savings and productivity improvements.*

Life Cycle Management of Equipment: A cost effective plan has been implemented for inventory management of desktop computers, printers, and projectors. *This effort has substantially improved service and reduced operational costs.* The College now has a planning and budget process for maintaining this equipment through a life cycle management strategy and enjoys a very accurate inventory of technology equipment.

Desktop Computer Management: The College desktop software has been standardized by implementing a The Microsoft Campus Agreement software contract that provides up-to-date software across all College desktop platforms. This has had a major impact on the quality of teaching and learning at the College. The agreement also covers faculty and staff at home computing equipment. This upgrade contract has facilitated a stabilization of the Banner reporting environment and *has resulted in dramatic improvements in service while reducing operational costs.*

Administrative Systems: When CampusWorks began at the College, the SCT Banner system and all related software and hardware were out-of-date and behind on maintenance levels. Since that time, Banner has been upgraded twice; the maintenance level is current; the Oracle database has been upgraded on release level twice; all hardware has been replaced; the internet Native Banner has been implemented; the Banner HR/Payroll has been implemented; an online degree audit has been implemented, and there is custom development that reduced operational costs and substantially improved customer service. The reliability and availability of the system have been improved, and *service to faculty and students has been significantly improved while operational and vendor costs have decreased.*

Portal: Three years ago, the College had a WEB environment of hundreds of thousands of web pages, largely unmanaged, containing multiple copies of institutional data, and a large security risk to the institution. Now there is a state of the art institutional portal to aggregate College services, simplify access to common applications and deploy new services to students, faculty and staff. *The portal included a very cost effective content management system* that provides templates to dramatically ease implementation of new content and to keep content on the web site up to date. The portal, content management system, and institutional governance generated as a component of the portal project have eliminated redundant and out of date information on the College web environment. The portal contains role based access to the College environment.

As a result, the recruiting process for new students has improved, and there is now universal e-mail for all students. We use the role based access to provide a custom presentation to our students, faculty, and staff that reflects their relationship to the College. We use the portal as an application delivery platform to deploy new applications to our user community including universal email to our students beginning this fall. Student email provides improved service to students and faculty and has dramatically reduced administrative costs. This e-mail will be an official communication path for students.

Identity Management: At the start of the CampusWorks partnership, the College did not have an institutional password management system, and as a result, there was a large security risk. New services were costly because a new application would include new userids and password sets, and universal student email was not possible, largely due to the administrative cost of password management. The College lacked institutional controls on access to services and information as there was no authoritative source of information about people.

Today, there is a comprehensive, Identity Management Architecture at the College. The identity management system uses Banner as the authoritative source of information about people and their relationship to the College. Our application portfolio is entirely integrated with our identity management system. This includes the portal, the College network including wireless, student email, the Blackboard Learning Management System, and Middlenet self service. In short, we have comprehensively implemented one user, one identity, one userid and password. Identity management will serve the College well for many years to come. *This is a breakthrough technology that dramatically reduces costs, improves service delivery and improves security.*

The Outcome

Middlesex Community College's decision to partner with CampusWorks resulted in impressive and dramatic changes in its technology applications and its delivery of technology services. In just three short years, the College systems and services were transformed from outmoded and, at times, inefficient operations to the highest level of technology standards, with substantial cost savings in many areas.

The facts speak for themselves, but they do not tell the whole story. The impact that the CampusWorks partnership had on Middlesex Community College reaches far beyond the technology itself to the very heart of the College: the students, faculty and staff. CampusWorks, with its dramatic results, lifted morale across the whole college community, and, in times of drastic budget cuts and limited resources, that was extraordinary. The attitude on campus changed from an old assumption that technology and frustration go hand in hand to a new assumption that technology meant efficient, rapid results that work. The cloud of inefficiency and frustration was gone. For faculty, CampusWorks opened doors to new levels of innovation in the classroom. Faculty were energized to try new methods of teaching using technology, and innovation spread throughout all the academic divisions. Several faculty designed new technology teaching tools and presented them to the MCC Board of Trustees, and Board members, in turn, were impressed with extraordinary examples of innovation and creativity. The quality of technology services from CampusWorks was truly a gift to every faculty member.

Administrators, too, felt the difference with CampusWorks. Systems operated efficiently; technology was upgraded to a new level, and problems were resolved quickly. Most of all, decisions about technology were made collaboratively and inclusively; CampusWorks was a true partner across all areas of the College. And the cost savings, both in efficiency and purchases, were an added bonus. Jay Linnehan, CFO at Middlesex, commented that, "CampusWorks fully understands the role that budget must play. Every project includes a business plan and ROI. In fact, over the last year we've identified and implemented several priority projects that have enhanced capacity and reduced costs. I like those projects."

Finally, CampusWorks has had an enormous impact on students. Students felt the impact of improved technology from the moment they first contacted Middlesex and were able to apply for admission and financial aid, register for classes and check their progress toward graduation on the web. They could participate in high-tech, high-touch student orientation, academic advising and registration processes. Once on campus, their academic support labs utilized state-of-the-art technology. Students understood that this was a college with the highest standards in technology, and those very standards made them proud to be enrolled.

Conclusion

In three years, the partnership with CampusWorks, Inc. transformed Middlesex Community College. Technology systems and services dramatically improved but, most importantly, the experience of students, faculty and staff moved to a whole new level. President Carole Cowan acknowledged the tremendous impact that the partnership with CWI had when she awarded the President's award to Dr. Darrow Neves in September 2004. The President's award is given annually to a person or department for outstanding service to the college community. Dr. Cowan acknowledged the remarkable work of Neves and MCC's technology staff in improving the state of technology at the College, and clearly, those in the audience enthusiastically agreed.

Three years ago, Middlesex had a choice to make about technology. The College chose to partner with CampusWorks, Inc., and the results have truly been extraordinary. President Cowan confirmed those results when she said, "If I have one regret, it's that we didn't partner with CampusWorks earlier. The partnership with CWI is one of the best decisions the College has ever made."