

Submission for the 2020 Larry L. Sautter Award

Title: UC Davis Health Financial Aid Office Project_OnBase

Submitter:

- Gurmeet Roy Rai Assistant Dean for Medical Education, Office of Medical Education, royrai@ucdavis.edu (916-734-4102)

Team:

- Cesar Romero, IT Enterprise Imaging, Manager UC Davis Health,
- Margie Benard, IT Enterprise Imaging, Project Manager UC Davis Health,
- Gurmeet Roy Rai, Assistant Dean for Medical Education, Office of Medical Education,
- Amy Joan, Director, Student and Administrative Services, Office of Medical Education,
- Lauren Snow, Director of Financial Aid, UC Davis School of Medicine and Nursing,
- Adam Peterson, Assistant Director of Financial Aid, UC Davis School of Medicine and Nursing,
- Lindsey Utter, IT Enterprise Imaging.

A simple short statement summarizing what the project does

Eliminate paper student files and develop a document management system that allows the UCDH financial aid office to store, retrieve and process student files electronically. The system also alleviated paper financial aid application forms and replaced manual process with online web forms. Provided a secure method for receiving, sending student and parent documents containing confidential information.

Project Narrative

Problem:

Prior to the implementation of OnBase document management, the Financial aid Schools of Medicine and Nursing student files were paper and stored in locked file cabinets. Having paper documents of financial aid student records posed several problems: file consistency was not always the same even with an established internal process for each student file; documents could be misplaced or difficult to find; security concerns with having only one copy of the documentations with no contingency plan in place. If the building had a fire or flooding incident that could destroy the files or if some came up missing because they were accidentally not locked

up each evening etc. For audit purposes, it is extremely important that all documents are in order in each students' financial aid record. This project created an online document management system allowing the UCDH financial aid office to store student information in an electronic, secure, and organized manner.

Solution

The OnBase project took the Schools of Medicine and Nursing student financial aid records from a paper system to an online document management system. Two varying groups were impacted by the rollout of this project.

The first impact was on the student applicants and their parents. Each year students applying for financial aid are required to submit financial aid documents. Prior to the 2020-2021 aid application year, they were required to submit paper documents. They had to download our PDF forms and either type in or manually fill out the documents and then either personally drop off, scan and email, or fax back to our office. For our busy Health Profession program students, this could be quite inconvenient, especially when many are assigned to away rotations and not in the Sacramento area. As well, to be considered "on time" in applying for aid, they were typically only given about 2.5 months to submit their forms. With the implementation of online forms that both the student and parent can complete, this eliminated wasted time and steps that caused delays in earlier application years. Now students and parents can complete the online webforms and not have to worry about printing them and making sure to turn them in. The online webforms also prompts them to missing sections to ensure completion of all required information. It does not allow them to submit their form until all sections of the form have been completed. This also eliminates the time going back and forth with the applicant on missing, invalid or required information.

This also had a major impact on the financial aid staff as they now have an electronic workflow. This allows the staff to review the documents as they are submitted and manage them in the workflow queues that were created. Prior to this, paper documents were date-stamped, and held in a "temporary folder queue." It was difficult for staff to know the students that had turned in all the required documents, when received and if any documents were still missing. This was exasperated by the manual process of having to update fields in the main campus Financial aid applications due to their annual software updates and processes. It created delays in the staff's ability to begin keying off received documents as either "incomplete" or "satisfied." OnBase was integrated with the Campus financial application of Ellucian/SCT Banner allowing automatic

updates to the student application status in Banner. This eliminated the need for staff to log into Banner to perform this function and other updates required in Banner throughout the application process.

Each financial aid staff member is assigned to an alpha group of students; all the documentation for those students was provided to that staff member by mail, email or faxed. Each staff is responsible for the management of their student's application process. This again would make it difficult for another staff member to verify whether a student had turned in their required financial aid forms if they were trying to assist a student on the phone or via email or in-person. With the implementation of OnBase as our document management system, all staff can easily retrieve, view the documents for all students regardless of the staff member who is assigned to the student group. In addition, this electronic process enable staff to reassign student applications to different staff members as needed.

Explains how project success was measured

OnBase was implemented for the 2020/2021 academic year for documentation intake. As well, all 2019/2020 actively enrollment students. All financial aid files for the 2019/2020 students were scanned into OnBase to create their electronic financial aid record. Project success was measured with a couple of key factors.

1. Students and parents were able to successfully complete and submit their yearly required financial aid documents. This eliminated the submission of incomplete paper documents which was an issue and prone to occur in past application years.
2. After submission of online financial aid documents, workload queues for staff worked as intended – staff members were easily able to review and move the documents to the student electronic file and index them as, common documents.
3. Our launch of OnBase went live about 5 weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic. Timing couldn't have been more ideal since staff were working from home in a paperless environment. This allowed for the submission and processing of student financial aid applications without causing a delay in the application cycle. The initial 5 weeks when we went "live" allowed the staff to become familiar with OnBase before mid-March and staff were assigned to work remotely.

Collaboration

For the full project to have gone as planned, it required a great deal of initial planning between the SOM Administration, UCDH Financial Aid, Davis Campus and the UCDH IT Enterprise Imaging group. Now that the project is “live”, this solution is one that impacts several cohorts and programs of students from the Schools of Medicine and Nursing. The “go live” timing was critical as we had been formally encouraging parents and students to submit their paper documentation between mid-December to early March. If we’d not “gone live” by the first of February 2020, the students and parents would not have been able to submit their required documentation on time and a major part of the project would have to have been delayed until 2021 – for the 2021/2022 aid application cycle. With judicious collaboration and priority given to this time-sensitive project between the UCDH financial aid office, Office of Medical Education leadership and the UCDH IT Enterprise Team, we met the needed timelines and the project was a success.

Project Timeline

Development of the UCDH Financial Aid OnBase project began in February 2019 with a meeting of the project team. Over the next year the team met on many occasions collecting the data needed to create the online webforms, develop the workflow, and to discuss the scanning of the current student financial aid paper files. In February 2020, the online webforms went live for the students and parents allowing them to submit their financial documents electronically. As these forms went live, IT Enterprise Team staff began scanning the paper financial aid files while the UCDH financial aid staff began using the workflows to manage, assign, and index the submitted online forms to the appropriate student electronic files. By the end of February 2020, all the paper files were successfully scanned, and indexed into the document management system

Technology

Document types and keywords were configured to organize and relate the student files, allowing for easy indexing and retrieval of images. Through the same integration between Banner and OnBase to automate the updates to status field, a metadata pull was developed to ensure the exact student record information from Banner is applied to the documents when storing and indexing in OnBase. This cuts down the time spent on manually applying the student record data, as well as ensures no “bad” information is indexed. This metadata pull is also configured on each web form for students and parents to utilize the functionality when filling out their forms for the financial aid submission, resulting in a uniform and “clean” document repository.

Ten paper forms were converted to web forms, three of which were combined into one. Each form has their own required fields including signatures, automatic calculations, and custom actions developed based on the student's input – for example, hide sections, make fields visible, message prompts, etc. Once the initial application form is submitted by the student, it routes through a Workflow within OnBase. Based on criteria on the form, other forms are automatically generated, with a link to the form inserted into a templated email. The email containing the link is sent to the student or parent, as well as a separate email with a custom generated passphrase allowing for a more secure method of file transfer. All fields of the form are hidden until the correct passphrase is entered.

The most significant area of secure file transfer is when members of the Financial Aid Office request confidential documents from the student, parent, or spouse. A Document Request Form was developed to allow for a staff member to simply select what documents are required and include any necessary description if needed. Once submitted, the same secure email process explained above generates the email to the student/parent/spouse with upload fields for those specific documents. Once uploaded and submitted, provided files inherit common data values from the form, resulting in the automatic index and storage of the documents to the student's file.

Once in Workflow, the documents are distributed to the appropriate staff member for review by a configured load balanced queue. Members can view others' work with a click of a button and can even reassign work in the even of absence. If any edits to the forms are required, the staff member fills out the edit description field describing the modification to the form, and once submitted, the form is emailed back out to the student, parent, or spouse for updates. A timer configure in Workflow looks for an "edit" status that is applied once the modifications have been completed and subsequently changes the status on the form, allowing the staff member to easily identify those forms that have been modified. Additional keyword fields are applied to the documents throughout the workflow process to show the status of the application, School of Medicine/School of Nursing, and degree/program. These data fields assist the Financial Aid Office when issuing awards, as well as provide reporting information and an option for data extraction – both of which were not available prior to implementation.