Intelligent Connections and Shibboleth Streamline the Admissions Process

Single Sign-on Eliminates Mass Mailing of Student Account Information, a Boon to Applicants and Staff

Inside

The University of Washington

Seattle, Washington

W UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Products:

Intelligent Connections® Admissions Application Processing

Making the Application Process More Efficient, Secure and Convenient for Everyone

CollegeNET's Intelligent Connections Admissions Processing system's compatibility with Shibboleth single sign-on now enables University of Washington applicants to create their own online account and receive a UW NetID. Using their NetID, applicants can easily logon anytime to access admissions, registration and financial aid information.

Why Intelligent Connections?

According to Paul Ahlstrom, Assistant Director of Program Operations for UW Admissions, "Ninety-eight percent of our applicants create a CollegeNET application account and apply online. With the help of the Shibboleth technology, we can now leverage our applicants' account information to make many of the admission processes much more efficient and user-friendly."

The Savings:

Time, money, paper and confusion. "Thanks to this new system, we avoided sending out over 30,000 pieces of mail to students this year, which meant a significant savings in materials and labor," Ahlstrom said. Transitioning the delivery of applicant ID's from a mailing process to an online system not only saved administrative hours, paper consumption, and printing and mailing costs, it also created an easier and faster process for applicants.

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Business Profile

Founded in 1861 in what is now the heart of downtown Seattle, the University of Washington is one of the oldest public universities on the West Coast. As the state's flagship university,

UW serves more students than any other institution in the Northwest – 92,000 annually. In addition to UW Seattle, the University has thriving campuses in Tacoma and Bothell. The University also boasts a world-class academic medical center, as well a robust professional and continuing education program.

UW confers more than 12,000 bachelor's, master's, doctoral and professional degrees annually. Its student body and alumni include 136 Fulbright Scholars, 35 Rhodes Scholars, 7 Marshall Scholars and 4 Gates Cambridge Scholars. The University is rated one of the 15 greenest colleges in the country by the Princeton Review, and it ranks among the top schools in the country for providing U.S. Peace Corps volunteers.

The Challenge

In order for each applicant to securely access an admissions application and registration and financial aid information online, UW's old admissions system required mailing each applicant a letter with two personal login codes and a URL where they were instructed to go to create their student account. The process was costly and cumbersome, and often too slow for many applicants. The mailings were expensive to print and send, and they were unreliable – any follow-up questions or replacement of lost documents could take weeks or months for international applicants. Significant administrative time was devoted to fielding phone inquiries from students and parents during one of the busiest

times of the year. UW wanted a simpler, faster, more user-friendly approach for students to create their UW NetID.

The Solution

UW Admissions asked CollegeNET if they would be willing to collaborate with UW's IT staff to create a system communication bridge using Shibboleth to streamline the applicant authentication process. Once the group determined the two systems were compatible, they built a web portal where applicants can use their applicant ID to establish their UW account. Instead of mailing each applicant a set of codes and a URL, UW Admissions now simply sends each applicant an email containing a link to the appropriate setup and instructions page. With the first pilot run of 30,000 undergraduate applications, the myriad applicant follow-up calls and inquires that once required many administrative hours to manage were drastically reduced, as was the potential for student panic – unlike mailed communications, the online system accommodates last-minute responses. The improvement was even more significant for international applications, where postal delays and loss can have a much greater impact. "The process was a lot smoother, much more hands off," Ahlstrom said.

"We were able to respond much faster to inquires, and users reported the process was very quick and easy. Finally modernizing our system in a way students would expect was a win-win solution: they saved time and frustration; we saved time and money."

The Benefits

• Cost savings: Switching to an all-online admissions system saved UW costs related to sending 30,000 pieces of mail.

• Improved service/better use of resources: Admissions staff are now able to respond more quickly to student inquires and provide other services.

• Security: Enabling applicants to use their CollegeNET application ID to create their UW online admissions account eliminated the need to divulge internal university codes.

• Student satisfaction: Providing a simpler, faster and less confusing system provided a more positive experience for applicants and created a more favorable impression of the school.

Want to Know More?

To discuss the many ways CollegeNET's products can save you time and money, and improve efficiency, contact sales@collegenet.com.