

UNIT4

In Business for You

IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



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Rising to the challenge

Time for a change

As colleges and universities confront a rapidly changing higher education market, improving institutional effectiveness has become a vital, but complex, undertaking. The aspiration to improve an institution's effectiveness is often hampered by fragmented, inefficient systems that stifle productivity and encourage workflow redundancies.

To address these inefficiencies, it's important for leaders to recognize the challenges they face, the areas they need to focus on, and the tools available to them to help achieve their goal.

Birmingham Metropolitan University (UK) is using Unit4 ERP to work smarter, putting data at the center of management reporting and decision-making in support of over 18,000 students across 10 campuses.

“Thanks to Unit4, we have complete visibility and control over each capital project, the schedule, resources invoiced, and cost versus budget. Armed with this insight, BMet can maximize the return on investment and build a college which is fit for the future.”

Fiona Yarley, Finance Director.



Achieving your aspirations

Key focus areas and obstacles to recognize and overcome

Unit4 has worked with some of the biggest names in education for decades. These close relationships have given us insight into the areas institutions most need to focus on to achieve their aspirations. Our solutions have been developed to address these areas and overcome the obstacles that they present. In order to improve institutional effectiveness, you need to focus on the following areas:

Optimize financial assets and enable your people

Simplifying administrative services and technologies is one of the top “four trends exerting the most influence on higher education’s IT strategy in 2021” according to Inside Higher Ed*. And this drive to simplification is reflected across the board as a fundamental component of cost-reduction initiatives.

In a report examining cost containment strategies from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), higher education institution leaders identified staffing as a focal point for cost reduction policies, with nearly 50 percent specifically looking at administrative departments. Indeed, the US Department of Education reports that administrative hiring rates in higher education have accelerated 50 percent faster than academic hiring over the last decade.

However, you may struggle to implement plans that boost your people’s efficiency when confronted with these common roadblocks caused by outdated systems.

- **Fragmented procedures:** The hallmark of outdated systems is their reliance on disparate, siloed processes and procedures. This is often evident in areas like payroll and human resources, where each department usually has its own playbook for conducting business. This fragmentation magnifies inefficiencies and costly, redundant workflows.
- **Slow bureaucracy:** Without a nimble systems infrastructure, departments will struggle to stay on top of constantly changing requirements, and will always be fighting yesterday’s policy battles instead of planning for future concerns.
- **Staffing analysis:** Without a robust data ecosystem, it’s hard to quantify the value of your people. Additionally, outmoded processes make strategic data difficult to analyze, leaving you with no way to clearly

visualize your staff utilization, or the potential your people could deliver on if they were empowered and freed from tedious administrative work.

- **Recruitment:** Inefficient systems cause ripple effects throughout your organization, and can hinder your ability to find and recruit the most promising talent when your institution has a reputation for inefficient operations and a poor people experience.

Even the best laid plans will fall short without tools that empower your people to implement them successfully. You can’t work proactively to manage budgets and control spending when you’re struggling to find the necessary information to begin with, and institutions often find it impossible to consistently produce thorough and accessible reports.

You may even struggle to complete the most basic tasks, like accurately comparing the profitability of different programs and departments. Worse, you may have to make decisions without the hard data to back them up, putting your institution at risk of irrelevance in a world of rapidly changing educational business models.

Automate business processes

When spreadsheets and tedious manual processes are part of your people’s daily tasks, your people are disempowered to either focus on your institution’s mission or innovate their approach. The impact is widespread, and many institutions report that the largest source of wasted hours is the high error rate tied to outdated infrastructure – a near inevitability when your administration lacks a unified process framework. Ultimately, without a unified view of data and the ability to automate administrative processes, your people will be bogged down and become demotivated, leaving your student services to suffer.

“While 58 percent of presidents rated their institutions’ general financial health as “excellent” or “good” for fall 2020, this dropped to 48 percent when asked about fall 2021, the report said. About 15 percent of presidents described their college as “below average” or “failing” financially for both years.”

Greta Anderson. Next Semester, Same Worries, Inside Higher Ed. December 15, 2020.

* <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/12/15/series-ace-president-surveys-shows-mental-and-financial-health-concerns>

When people are busy chasing down errors and battling with data, you're much less likely to catch indications of potential problems, and you can't plan for future concerns. Manual workarounds creep in and become a further drag on efficiency and accuracy. The negative impact on your ability to predict and manage compliance concerns is dangerous. Especially given higher education's dependence on government accreditation/certification and funding.

"Even before the pandemic, more than 500 public and nonprofit colleges and universities showed signs of financial problems, according to the Financial Fitness Tracker produced by The Hechinger Report using federal data. More than 50 closed or merged in the last five years, including at least eight that have closed or announced they will close since the start of the pandemic."

This story was produced by The Hechinger Report, a nonprofit, independent news organization focused on inequality and innovation in education.

Support data-driven decision making

These problems all have one common cause: a lack of meaningful data. In the modern higher education sector, the stakes are too high — and the margins too narrow — to accommodate administration that functions without a comprehensive and data-driven picture of its own operations.

When you operate within a patchwork quilt of disconnected, outdated systems and siloed information, there's no way to make data-driven decisions to truly improve institutional effectiveness. Indeed, the most basic analytics are often incomplete or missing entirely, so you can't apply key performance metrics, hindering your ability to innovate and demonstrate improvements.

Additionally, an impenetrable data ecosystem discourages collaboration, hindering your people's ability to work toward common goals, and stifling your ability to lead strategically. A dysfunctional administration is felt throughout the institution, and over time can endanger your ability to attract and support the best people, who in turn work to deliver the best experience to your students.



For more information

about how to get the most from your data and how others are already doing it, visit [our website](#).

Game-changing solutions

Unit4 People Experience Suite

Unit4's next-generation enterprise software helps you deliver an exceptional People Experience for everyone your institution serves.

People Experience is a discipline applied to software development that prioritizes human impact — making work more productive, efficient and inspiring.

Our cloud-based enterprise software is easier to use and manage, since real people, not just tech experts, use it. You can manage projects and processes that deliver value across your institution, quickly and flexibly, according to your specific needs.

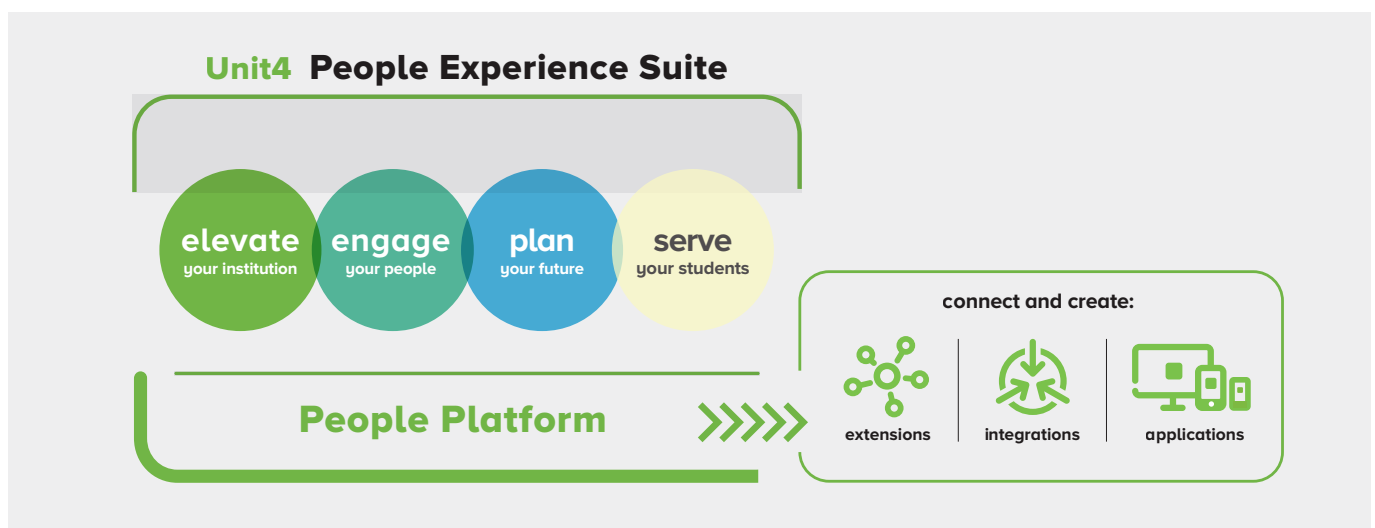
Unit4 People Experience Suite:

- Unit4 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
- Unit4 Human Capital Management (HCM)
- Unit4 Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A)

What This Means for You

You can transform work to be more meaningful through software that's self-driving and adaptive, intelligently automating administrative tasks. To elevate engagement and help you attract and retain the best people.

But People Experience is not only about personal motivation — it's also about leaders and teams working better together to improve results. In all, freeing people to focus on what matters, improve how work feels, and better serve your people and your students.



Designed for your people

The Unit4 People Experience for Higher Education works with your people so they can focus on your institution’s mission and student success instead of administrative tasks. Specific modules have been designed to deal with key tasks and deliver the results you need.

“A work-from-anywhere organization provides a new opportunity for diversity and inclusion in the faculty, staff, and student populations.”

Top IT Issues, 2021: Emerging from the Pandemic, EDUCAUSE Review



What next?

To find out more about our response to all the changes in your world, get our industry brochure, *New Game, New Rules*.

University Staff

Empower your people to transform business processes, engage with financial data, manage performance, and handle employee administration like absences and expenses easily, on the go.

Strategy/Leadership

Reduce costs

Minimize spending on maintaining outdated systems and salaries associated with administrative work

Make better decisions

Capitalize on easily accessible up-to-date data and insights

Optimize performance

Identify opportunities to make existing revenue streams better and to take advantage of new models

Finance Office

Improve financial transparency

View and analyze data from individual departments and across the campus, from granular detail up to intuitive visualizations

Reduce costs

Improve workflow and deploy self-service tools to establish a more ‘commercial’ culture that improves efficiency

Increase revenue

Assess curriculum profitability and other revenue-generating opportunities across the institution

Operations

Improve agility and flexibility

Better forecast cashflows with unified data and easily accessible insights

Improve performance visibility

Take advantage of simpler reporting to demonstrate effectiveness in every domain from finance to program performance

Make everyone's jobs easier

With access to effective technology that makes completing workflows and reporting simple

HR

Deliver an exceptional people experience

Create a working environment that people are excited to come back to every day - boosting engagement and reducing turnover

Improve HR admin productivity

Reduce resources wasted on routine workflows to allow HR staff to focus on higher value work

Lower recruitment costs

Create a system of talent management that accounts for the whole employee lifecycle - making flight risks easier to spot, attracting better talent faster, and keeping it around for longer

For more information go to:

unit4.com/industries/higher-education-erp-software

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