

CUSTOMER PROFILE



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CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES ACCELERATE GRANT FUNDING AND DISTRIBUTION BY SELECTING PROCESS DIRECTOR

The California Community Colleges (CCC) is the largest higher education system in the nation, enrolling more than 70% of the public undergraduate student population in California and 25% of all students enrolled in community colleges nationwide. The system is comprised of 72 districts, 112 colleges and enrolls more than 2.9 million students.

Community Colleges provide basic skills education, workforce training and courses to prepare students to transfer to four-year universities. The Colleges also provide opportunities for personal enrichment and lifelong learning.

Located in Sacramento, the Chancellor's Office within CCC is charged with providing leadership, advocacy and support of the California Community Colleges and is responsible of allocating state funding to the colleges and districts. The Chancellor's Office includes the offices of the chancellor and vice chancellors who oversee the work of ten major divisions.

Funded by a grant from the Chancellor's Office, the CCC Technology Center facilitates and coordinates the work of system-wide technology projects. The Technology Center provides project leadership, disburses funds, manages contracts, develops external funding resources, provides hosting services and publicizes the progress of the projects. Currently the CCC Technology Center is focused on developing a system-wide Technology Platform.



KATHY PULSE
Specialist in the Nursing and Allied Health department



TIM CALHOON
Director of the CCC Technology Center

PROCESSING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN AWARDS

Kathy Pulse is a Specialist in the Nursing and Allied Health department within the Chancellor's Office. She and her team support the 70+ two year, public community colleges in California that offer nursing programs. Since 2005, the Nursing and Allied Health



Unit has distributed tens of millions of dollars in grant money. Awarded through both state and federal

grants, the goal of these grants is to expand the number of students accepted into nursing and allied health programs across the state of California.

About twenty million dollars in grant monies for nursing will be awarded to California Community Colleges in 2011. There are also additional grants that will be awarded to support programs related to allied health (respiratory technology, radiation technology, dental hygiene, etc.)

As rewarding as distributing the funding is for both the Chancellor's Office and the colleges receiving the money, the process for awarding grants had been a challenging and sometimes onerous one for the Chancellor's Office. It was clear that the process needed to be automated, streamlined and made easier for participating staff at community colleges across the state.

THE GRANT PROCESS

The grant award process begins with a Request for Application (RFA) that determines the requirements

and scope of all projects. Once the RFA is complete, the grant information is disseminated to the colleges. Respondents from the colleges then read and complete the grant applications, which include narratives, work plans, and budget documents. The documents are then printed, copied, and submitted in bulk to the Chancellor's Office, where staff open, sort, and route the applications to the appropriate personnel for their examination and assessment.

In the process of reviewing the submissions, readers are requested to review every application. Every grant has to be read by three different people who score the applications they review. Each reader reads, reviews and scores between 10 and 12 applications over the course of two to three days. The scores are then averaged by the Chancellor's Office staff.

From the inception of the process, to getting the money, developing the RFA and submitting it to the colleges,

the process can take about six months. An 'average' RFA will elicit responses from about



40-50 colleges with 10-15 readers reviewing multiple applications. At any point in time there are also multiple RFAs being read and reviewed concurrently.

A MORE EFFICIENT AND AUTOMATED SYSTEM

Finding a way to implement a paperless system and construct a program that could be used by other groups within the Chancellor's Office was originally initiated by Barbara Whitney, Acting Dean of the Nursing Unit, in 2008. Although there had been an

influx of grants, there had not been a commensurate increase in staff to process the applications. Whitney believed that an automated system with workflows, reviews, approvals, electronic notification and the ability to track and report on the progress would significantly improve the grant application process. The

Nursing team believed that other groups within the Chancellor's Office could also use and benefit from any system they created.

"The paper flows and handling of the

RFAs was a difficult process; finding places to store thousands of pages of documents was also quite a challenge," stated Pulse. "It was clear that the entire workflow process needed to be automated," she recalled.

Having recognized the need to develop an electronic RFA, grant submission and reporting process, Whitney and her team reached out to the CCC Technology Center, located at Butte College, to identify and evaluate products, make vendor recommendations, then design and develop an automated grant application process. Pulse assumed responsibility for completing the project when Whitney retired in 2009.

STREAMLINING AND AUTOMATING THE PROCESS

Streamlining the grant submission and reporting process by providing an electronic, standardized, method was the first consideration. The benefit of that process would be to free staff time, ensure greater

availability of technical assistance to the field and achieve efficiencies in both grant RFA development and grant oversight.

Tim Calhoun is director of the CCC Technology Center, responsible for developing and managing

applications that serve California's community colleges. Calhoun was given the mandate to identify research, evaluate and make recommendations for an automated workflow solution. His team quickly concluded

that they needed to start with a workflow-oriented solution. Based on the criteria that Pulse and her team established, a business process management solution that embraced workflow, yet looked at the underlying process, was the direction the IT team ultimately recommended pursuing.

From the perspective of the Nursing and Allied Health team, eliminating paper and improving the accuracy of the information collected for each grant submission was critical. According to Pulse, "The previous process involved submitting paper applications and using email to communicate the status of applications. We knew that a new system had to handle all information electronically, eliminate paper, improve process flow and favorably impact our accuracy. We liked the idea of that solution looking at the entire process and how to improve it."



Calhoun's team agreed that implementing a smoothly operating electronic RFA development, grant submission, and reporting process at the Chancellor's Office would alleviate much of the paper-handling which took time away from the oversight of the existing grants. They were excited about the opportunity to develop an automated system that would provide immediate benefits to the Nursing and Allied Health department.

A STANDARDIZED PROCESS FOR ALL COLLEGES

As a result of its analysis and evaluation of BPM and workflow products, the IT team recommended BP Logix Process Director, a web-based workflow and BPM software product that provides business users with process automation and advanced predictive capabilities.



Process Director's patent-pending Process Timeline technology enables organizations to gain additional control over their processes. Business users can take advantage of Process Timeline's unique capacity to predict how later stages in a process are affected by changes introduced in earlier stages. This predictive capability, referred to as Predictive BPM, offers process owners more insight into their processes, providing the earliest possible notification of potential delays.

Making the application and reporting process uniform and streamlined was important. Both the Chancellor's Office and the Nursing and Allied Health staff believed that an online system would also enhance the completeness of grant applications. That, in turn, would assist those colleges that had been previously less successful in competing for grants. "An automated online system would put all colleges on a more equal footing when responding to RFAs," Pulse reported. "This would ensure a more equitable distribution of grant funding, particularly to previously under-served colleges," she observed.

With Process Director in place, colleges can now submit their applications up to the last hour and not be penalized. Readers can now read and score submissions online. And the Nursing and Allied Health staff can do the averaging required.

"We always received a flood of applications at the last hour with our old system. If something was missing (a document, for example) a grant application might be deemed invalid – and declined," Pulse commented. The process was not error-proof.

IMPROVING STAFF EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

With Process Director reviewers can determine the completeness of all applications, confirm that all necessary documents have been included and notify submitters if something has been overlooked. Larger colleges with more staff can no longer dominate the grant funding process. Having the process online gives everyone the same deadline. The playing field has truly been leveled.

At CCC, processing new grant applications has been the responsibility of the same staff who supervise the progress of grants previously awarded. This situation

led inevitably to staff becoming unable to service both the RFA application process and the grant supervision process simultaneously.



These programs report quarterly and annually on project activities and expenditures, as well as reporting

information required by legislation on the status and demographics of students taking assessment tests in community college nursing programs. The new online process for reporting will enable the staff to more effectively address the grant submission process – and monitor ongoing grant programs as well.

“In the system we designed and built, we have many applications and many readers reading many applications. Some of those relationships were challenging for us as first time users of Process Director,” stated Terry McCune, the developer on the project.. “We found how to make the system work the way we needed it to work. Working with Process Director was very exciting – and fun,” recalled McCune.

Pulse reports that the Academic Affairs Division of the Chancellor’s Office is already interested in Process Director. “People in the field who participated in the testing of the product and who have seen demonstrations of the process have sent emails to heads of other units of the Chancellor’s Office who issue grants encouraging them to use our system. We hope all appropriate units will take advantage of it. I’m impressed with what we ended up with,” she concluded.



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