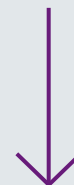# Build the Campus of Tomorrow on Interoperability

The ability to share and access data has never been more important.

For institutions across the globe, the ability to share and access data among various campus systems has long played an essential role in achieving key goals. In our current environment, interoperability has become more crucial than ever.

The past few years have demonstrated how systems that can automatically communicate with each other provide the agility needed for continually shifting circumstances.

In a world where change is constant, technology solutions must be integrated to share and deliver data between systems seamlessly. That integration helps facilitate responsive, synchronised solutions that make staff across the institution more efficient and effective. And while technology leaders need the freedom to choose the right fit-for-purpose solutions, they must also be able to easily connect technologies from various vendors so that adding fresh solutions doesn't create new problems or frustrations.

The ability to easily integrate disparate systems provides six essential benefits that are especially important in a rapidly changing environment.

1 Easier Scalability

Scaling up quickly and efficiently is only possible when your solutions are open and flexible, and you have the ability to adapt and connect them in new ways. By adopting a unified digital platform that can connect your disparate systems to create a single reliable source of data, institutions can help their staff work more efficiently, find more ways to automate manual work and more easily bring in new tools to address future needs.

INTEROPERABILITY IN ACTION

By deploying a unified digital platform that initially connected its LMS and ERP systems, Barstow Community College was able to streamline its existing processes and create a foundation for fast, smooth deployment and integration with additional solutions. Since completing its initial integration, the institution has added other new solutions to its portfolio, including mobile student account management and an analytics tool for better, more informed decision-making. Starting with this solid foundation, the school can continue to add new tools in the future that fit its overall strategy.

2 Cost Reduction

Experienced technology leaders know that, traditionally, it's been much cheaper to purchase a new software solution and run it in isolation rather than integrate it with other enterprise systems. However, an SaaS-based integration platform can reduce the costs of implementing and managing new solutions through centralised monitoring, less manual work for both IT and end users, less hardware, and an open ecosystem. Further, with a SaaS system, institutions can leverage the latest technologies immediately instead of waiting for a refresh cycle or complicated upgrade.

③ Unified IT Architecture

Many campus IT departments work to integrate new solutions on a case-by-case basis. But that often results in a smorgasbord of disparate solutions that become a burden for IT staff to maintain, upgrade and keep secure and connected. A cloud-based, **hub-and-spoke approach** provides a common pattern that will work with all systems and should be flexible enough to meet the needs of different departments and institutions.

For instance, one institution can run vendor-hosted systems on premises, while another can fully use SaaS—and they can both use the same cloud-based integration platform. Interoperability meets the needs of today's hybrid IT environments and gives institutions the flexibility to choose the last-mile applications that best meet their needs without sacrificing integration with other systems.

④ Data Security

When sensitive student and financial data is moving freely among systems, keeping that data secure is essential. The right integration platform will make security inherent, including such baseline security requirements as

automatic data encryption. It should also be flexible enough to allow an institution to configure it to meet its own specific security requirements.

INTEROPERABILITY IN ACTION

When **Allan Hancock College** wanted to implement a third-party, online job-seeking service for students and alumni, its IT leaders were concerned about the data needs for the project. A large amount of sensitive personal, academic and log-in data needed to be synced securely. By partnering with an interoperable data platform provider, the college was able to aggregate and organise its enormous data stores, streamline the experience with single sign-on and design an infrastructure that could accommodate future integrations.

⑤ Institution-wide Visibility and Better Decision-making

To get a full view of what's happening today— and to prepare for what might happen tomorrow— institutions must be able to connect data from across campus systems, breaking down the barriers between point solutions. When systems can communicate with each other, not only can data be shared, manual processes can be simplified through automation.

In addition, decision-makers need accurate, timely data to help them make more informed decisions. That requires the ability to view data from across the institution as well as the tools to then draw meaningful insights for more powerful outcomes. Truly integrated data can give administrators detailed views and metrics around student success, recruiting and enrolment, alumni and fundraising, and finance and personnel.

INTEROPERABILITY IN ACTION

With the ability to easily compile data on the courses each student requires for the coming semester, an institution can generate an accurate report of the total number of courses needed. They can then create course schedules based on those reports, knowing their planning is based on precise, up-to-date data.

⑥ Simplified Management

Many institutions have lean IT staffs without dedicated data architects or database administrators. These institutions need easy-to-use, interoperable solutions, with built-in visualisation and drill-down capabilities that don't require complex coding. With SaaS technologies, IT staff can rely on their technology vendor to do the heavy lifting on the back end so they can spend time identifying the most crucial data elements their administrators need to improve business decision-making. IT hiring becomes easier as well, as institutions can recruit more IT generalists and business analysts instead of specific systems or database experts.

Having a robust integration platform also makes it easier to serve remote staff members. Pre-pandemic, few institutions had experience managing staff who worked from home. What they have discovered is that an effectively integrated IT system makes it easy to give remote employees the access they need to get their work done as effectively as when they're working on campus, and also provides IT teams the access they need to monitor systems.

Integrate Systems and Data to Better Manage Change

As institutions continue to evolve, easy and effective systems integration will become increasingly valuable. Ellucian's SaaS-enabled ecosystem can flexibly accommodate an institution's most pressing requirements—to manage costs, quickly react to changing needs, enable data-driven decisions and simplify the work of its IT team. Such a platform can help you accomplish it all while strengthening your data security, no matter where your students, faculty and staff are learning and working.

Learn more about how Ellucian can connect your campus.

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