



CASE STUDY:

Empowering students, faculty and staff

ADA University implements Banner™ by Ellucian to streamline operations and improve the student experience

Managing growth

ADA University (originally founded in 2006 as the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy) is a public institution located in Azerbaijan's capital city Baku.

ADA University's curriculum is built around rigorous academic study, electives and general education, combined with experiential learning and exchange opportunities to train its graduates. The institution emphasises collaboration, global leadership and social responsibility to educate their 2,500 students in the fields of diplomacy, public affairs, business, humanities and the sciences, among others. The university's emphasis upon "student-centered education" has helped cement its reputation as one of the premier institutions in the region.

To accommodate rapid growth, the institution established a new, dedicated campus in 2012 and began to expand many of its academic programmes. ADA University had implemented PowerCampus™ by Ellucian in 2009, when the institution was offering a single graduate programme with an enrolment of around 50 students.

With an influx of students and expanded educational offerings, ADA University determined that it would be necessary to evolve its student information system to better serve the changing needs of the institution. In addition, the university



Enrolment
2,500 students

Objective
Implement a student information system that will tie together business processes across campus and grow as the institution expands

Solution
Banner™ by Ellucian

Business benefits
Increased efficiency, increased student satisfaction

IT improvements
Cloud-based solution means less maintenance and easier upgrades

wanted a system that would include mobile applications, integration between departments, efficient and automated workflows and an automated degree completion process. After a short period of research and review, the university determined that a cloud-based solution would best serve its needs, and elected to begin implementation of the most recent version of Banner™ by Ellucian to provide enhanced student, faculty and administrative services across these new programmes and degree paths.

Moving forward

To begin implementation of Banner, the university assembled a project team of around 30 people representing the main functional areas of the institution—admissions, registration, bursar, academic planning and IT—to determine how the new system could address issues in each department. Months before the implementation began, the university senior management gathered the team to discuss the implementation strategy. “One of the best decisions made by the management that led to the successful implementation was to involve all functional areas in the process so they could learn about the whole student life cycle,” says Rovshana Samadova, Project Manager for Banner™ Student, Banner™ Finance and Banner™ Human Resources at ADA University. “We involved the whole staff of these departments as they were going to be the key users of the system moving forward. We also conducted information sessions for faculty so that they knew about the upcoming change. Once the system was ready, we did hands-on training sessions for faculty, sent

them detailed instructions and developed a help page on the portal to make sure they got all their questions answered.”

Samadova emphasises the importance of open communication when implementing a new student information system. “With implementing a new SIS, we are basically asking out students, faculty and administration to rethink the way they communicate, share information and manage business,” she says. “The biggest challenge for us was to help the community buy-in at the earliest stages of the project.”

One of the key challenges during the implementation was the migration of data from the legacy system to Banner. The ADA University technical team worked with an Ellucian data migration consultant to ensure a smooth and efficient data migration process.

Next, it was time to bring the students up to speed. “We were informing the students about the change throughout the implementation process,” says Samadova. “The first introduction of the new system to the students was done through the student newspaper in which we announced that we would change our SIS in the new semester. Then we prepared detailed instructions and sent them to the students and updated these instructions in the student portal as well.”

The entire implementation process was completed in less than 12 months.

Increasing efficiency and student outcomes

ADA University launched Banner by Ellucian for the Autumn 2017 semester and immediately started receiving positive feedback from students, faculty and university administration.

“We looked at the implementation process as an opportunity to re-engineer and enhance our institutional processes. Some departments have been restructured during the implementation, with business processes revised to help us to draw more value from the new system.”

ROVSHANA SAMADOVA, Project Manager for Banner™ Student, Banner™ Finance and Banner™ Human Resources at ADA University

Students found that the new system provided a much smoother registration process without any system downtime or glitches. They also liked the improved interface, the ability to view their full schedule on one page, check student balances and make payments online. Faculty and administration also noticed the improvements with the registration process, with fewer students contacting the registrar's office or academic advisors with problems.

Since the launch of Banner, the university has experienced a much more efficient registration process, with more than 1,000 students successfully registering within the first two hours after registration opened. In addition, university business processes among recruitment, admissions, registration and bursar are completely integrated and automated. "Before Banner, the end of every admission season was about exporting admitted student information from our separate systems, double-checking it and passing it to the Registrar's Office," says Gunay Ziyadova, ADA University Director of Admissions. "I know that it was very time consuming for our colleagues from the Registrar's Office to manually enter the records to their system. Now all we need to do is to change the admission decision in Banner. An integrated system across all university functions greatly improves efficiency."

The university's students now have flexible access to information through the mobile application, along with self-service options that allow them to take more control over their academic progress. "The most exciting feature of Banner is compliance/degree evaluation," says Samaya Orujova, Specialist, Office of Registrar at ADA University. "Now we don't have to spread Excel sheets around and have long lines of students looking for an answer about their programmes of

study. Every student can now go into the system to see and analyse his or her degree evaluation and get a clear view where they stand and which courses they need to take."

With Banner, all information about an individual student account is available in various levels of detail, including previous balance, current term charges and payments and balance due. "Before we adopted Banner, we would collect reports from admissions, registrar and all schools and update student accounts manually," says Nigar Mustafayeva, Bursar, Office of Bursar and Financial Aid. "Twice a semester we would do a mass mailing informing students about their payments and balances. There was a lot of back-and-forth emailing in between departments. Imagine how much manual work that required. With Banner, it is done automatically and all information—including all charges and payments—is being updated in Banner. As a result, students can pay online or make the bank transfer and can see their updated account balances any time through Banner self-service."

Implementing the new system also granted ADA University the opportunity to examine how it conducts business and allowed it to revamp procedures that had long been troublesome or inefficient. "We looked at the implementation process as an opportunity to re-engineer and enhance our institutional processes," says Samadova. "Some departments have been restructured during the implementation, with business processes revised to help us to draw more value from the new system."



One of the most significant advantages of the new system was for the university administration. Banner by Ellucian made it easier for the administrators and key departments to share information and quickly access more accurate data, thus improving real-time decision making.

Transforming the institution

ADA University is one of the first institutions of higher education in the region to adopt the latest version of Banner by Ellucian, which makes the most of cloud technology.

“Implementation of Banner and its cloud-based technology simplified and streamlined the technical maintenance, support and operations process,” says Rahid Alekberli, Chief Informational Officer at ADA University. “Expandability and scalability have become very easy for the university. Banner brought globally proven best-case technology practices for the use of our team, and now we have a digital conveyor which takes student data within the student lifecycle using the latest web technologies. The interoperability of Banner gave us a chance to develop own payment gateway, integrate necessary information systems and enable mobility to serve all communities successfully on campus to faculty and students.”

“It has been an incredible journey over the past year,” says Rovshana Samadova. “We have built something exceptionally transformational for this university and for this country. We rallied round Banner and used that as a means to make this university a better place. Throughout, we have changed policies, programmes and business processes—but our most important change has been about our people. We have cultivated the kind of people who would be an envy of any institution.”

Samadova notes that the close partnership between Ellucian and ADA University was instrumental in laying the groundwork for a smooth transition. “We highly benefited from the Ellucian consultants who not only taught us the system, but also helped us to configure it according to the best university



practices around the world,” she says. “The roll out of Banner in our community was successful thanks to people on both sides. While Banner is a great tool, it was the dedicated people both from ADA University and Ellucian that made this project a success.”

One month after the launch of Banner by Ellucian, ADA University began implementing Banner Finance and Banner Human Resources. “Our goal is to have one centralised system for more effective implementation of our business processes,” says Samadova. “We believe this will ensure an efficient data flow across every task and department and it will improve decision making to support the University’s long-term mission, vision and success.”

Samadova credits Ellucian’s commitment to higher education as a cornerstone to the success of the implementation of Banner by Ellucian. “Throughout this implementation we discovered that both Ellucian and ADA University were driven by similar values of contributing to student outcomes—and that made it easy to work together,” she says.



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