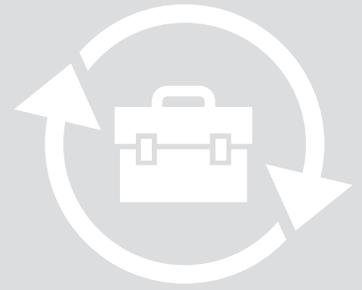


# ellucian

WHITE PAPER SERIES



## Meeting the growing demand for non-traditional education

How the right technology can help you keep pace with the market for continuing education and workforce development





# Meeting the growing demand for non-traditional education

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In 2014, President Obama allocated \$450 million to promote continuing education and workforce development. This investment reflects a broader need to serve the rapidly growing U.S. market for non-traditional education.

The traditional 18- to 22-year-old student is now the minority in higher education. A 2011 Department of Education report counted 17.6 million undergraduates nationwide—38 percent over the age of 25 and one quarter over the age of 30. The number of adult students is projected to increase another 23 percent by 2019. As a result, funding for non-traditional education from both the public and private sectors is on the rise.

Institutions of higher education have an opportunity before them. Those that put the right systems in place to capture and serve this market

stand to increase revenue and further their mission to provide lifelong learning.

## Challenges

Many institutions are managing their non-traditional education programs using manual and paper-centric processes, which can impede accuracy, responsiveness, and accountability. Others are struggling to fulfill the data and reporting requirements unique to these programs

using a central student information system (SIS) that is too inflexible to support their needs. Even software designed specifically to manage continuing education programs falls short if its data and reports are not integrated with the institution's enterprise resource planning system (ERP).

Without fully integrated, technology-driven solutions, non-traditional program staff and institutional leaders find themselves challenged to:

- Overcome operational inefficiencies
- Create and market programs that are relevant to student needs, while improving the overall student experience

## Improving operational efficiency

First and foremost, institutions need to find a solution that works within their current technology environment, causing minimal disruptions or demands on IT resources.

Often, program staff are trying, and failing, to manipulate an existing ERP to meet the business needs of non-traditional education. The ideal solution will provide functionality designed specifically for managing non-traditional programs, while ensuring its data and interface can be easily integrated into the institution's existing SIS. Integration reduces duplicate records, as well as excessive time spent entering data and searching for information. It also eliminates the need to aggregate data from multiple sources to generate reports.

An integrated solution should also automate key functions—including student registration, course creation and launch, and communications. Automating registration in particular will allow staff to spend more time on marketing and managing courses, as well as responding to student needs.

- Make informed decisions based on reliable data
- Remain competitive as the market expands and students have more choices than ever before

This paper addresses the solutions needed to make marketing and management of non-traditional offerings easier and more successful.

Another tactic for reducing resources spent on routine tasks is switching to a software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution. With SaaS, software is centrally located, maintained by outside experts, and accessed by users through the web. All fixes and updates take place online and on demand, meaning less work for your IT team and less time waiting on visits from the service provider.

Improving back-office efficiency through technology is a key strategy for increasing enrollment and revenue, as well as improving the student experience.



## Improving the student experience

Today's adult student expects a consumer-friendly experience when shopping for education. This includes an easy search platform, a quick, retail-like registration and payment process, and timely responses to inquiries—all accessible anytime, anywhere through mobile devices.

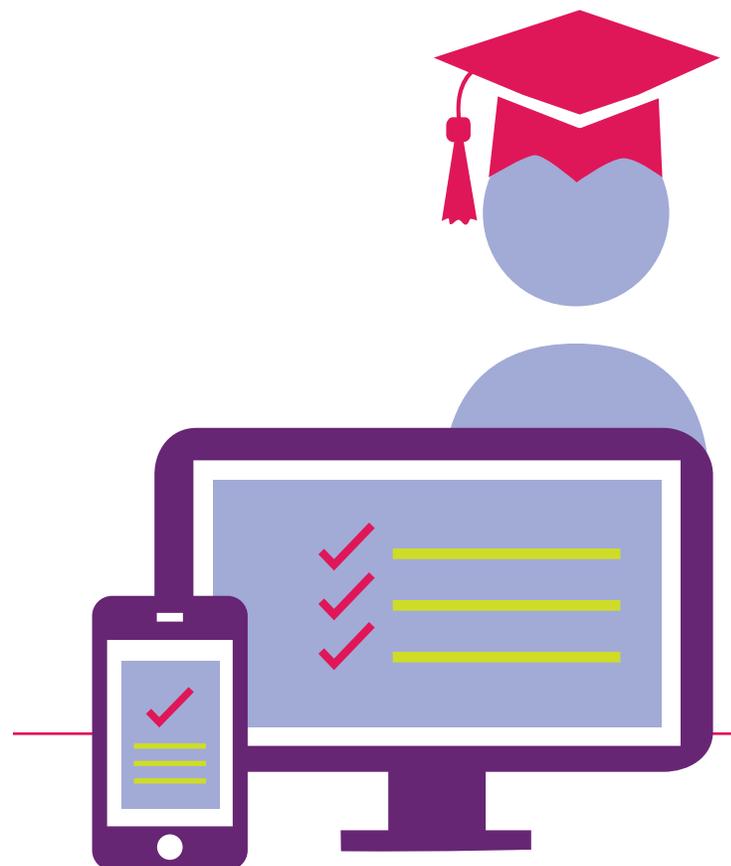
If any of these steps toward enrollment are cumbersome and slow, a significant number of students will begin the registration process, but will lose interest in the middle of the process—often before completion.

To remain competitive, institutions require a user-friendly interface, automated processes, and the ability to present course offerings in a way that attracts students looking for both quality and value. On the back end, staff should have the right tracking tools to identify and communicate with students at any point in the sales cycle—including those who fall off during registration.

Another important function to look for in a software solution is customer relationship management (CRM). CRM technology will dramatically increase your ability to attract and retain students, corporate partners, and funders. For example, if you can track interactions with prospective students, you can proactively highlight opportunities that are relevant to their needs and interests. If you collect the right data on the interests and goals of those students already enrolled, you can tailor communications to improve their learning experience and likelihood of registering for additional courses.

Remaining attuned to the workforce development needs of corporate partners is also critical to ensure recurring business. CRM functionality lets you track and manage strategic efforts to move these relationships forward. The level of service you provide is also going to determine your reputation in the business community, as well as your ability to attract new clients.

If you continually document and analyze consumer trends and patterns, you can better tailor your course offerings to meet market demand. The right technology should make this relatively easy. Technology should also enable you to more quickly develop, launch, and promote non-traditional offerings in order to stay ahead of the competition.



## Strengthening management and decision making

Technology can help non-traditional program administrators increase accountability by providing better tools for tracking funds, course performance, and return on investment. A simple but sophisticated dashboard, as well as the right analytics, will make reporting on these critical metrics easier and more accurate.

Often, institutions find it hard to factor dollars spent on non-traditional education into overall spending when reporting to state, federal, or private funders. A software solution that easily integrates data with the central ERP will make this reporting much easier. Tracking financial data electronically also will go a long way toward curbing mismanagement of funds.

Integration allows institutions to pull comprehensive demographic information, unified transcripts, and cost/benefit analyses—ensuring that non-traditional programs are included in broader strategic decisions and plans. In addition, using common performance indicators makes it easier for non-traditional programs to demonstrate impact and contribution to institutional priorities.

Access to real-time analytics on performance and profitability can help you make more informed decisions on whether to keep, remove, or improve course offerings. Visibility into faculty load and costs also empowers you to reallocate resources as needed.

Whether you want non-traditional program revenue to simply cover costs or to grow into a major profit source, having flexible technology and practical management tools will increase your chances of success.



## Remaining competitive

Both the public and private sectors are acutely aware of the need to invest in non-traditional education in order to keep employees and communities well equipped in an information-driven economy.

As demand and funding grow for continuing education and workforce development, institutions that move quickly to install technology-driven solutions for managing these programs will remain competitive.

### Investing in technology can help:

- Increase enrollment, as students respond to better online service and more relevant opportunities

- Improve efficiency, as staff are freed from routine tasks to focus on higher-value activities
- Optimize performance and profitability, as staff and leaders gain access to more timely, comprehensive, accurate data
- Increase conversion to the “next-step” program, as staff can communicate the right opportunities at every stage of the relationship cycle

The relationship between institution and student is paramount—never more so for the fast-growing non-traditional education market. And using technology to manage relationships has become optimal rather than optional for institutions looking to be market leaders.

## About Ellucian

Ellucian helps education institutions thrive in an open and dynamic world. We deliver a broad portfolio of technology solutions, developed in collaboration with a global education community, and provide strategic guidance to help education institutions of all kinds navigate change, achieve greater transparency, and drive efficiencies. More than 2,400 institutions in 40 countries around the world look to Ellucian for the ideas and insights that will move education forward, helping people everywhere discover their futures through learning.

To learn more, please visit [www.ellucian.com](http://www.ellucian.com).





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