

University of Redlands:

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Emily Baker

Director of Student Financial Services, University of Redlands

University of Redlands in Redlands, California

Institution Type: Private Liberal Arts

Enrollment: 4,600

Solution: Actively Managed Payment Plans, eBill, and ePay

Challenge: University of Redlands needed a payment solution that integrated with their ERP — and they needed it now.

Result: Nelnet Campus Commerce delivered on a promise to smoothly transition the University of Redlands to a new solution in less than three months, with multiple products launched and ready for use within four months.

University of Redlands, Meet Nelnet Campus Commerce

The University of Redlands had just begun a newly formed partnership with Tuition Management Systems (TMS) when Nelnet Campus Commerce acquired TMS in 2018. A private liberal arts institution in Redlands, California, the University of Redlands faced a decision — transition to Nelnet Campus Commerce, or explore other options.

Redlands had to make some quick decisions to prepare for Fall 2019 enrollment and decided in March 2019 to officially transition to Nelnet Campus Commerce. Less than one month later, they started the process of implementing Actively Managed Payment Plans, eBill, and ePay on their campus — and everything needed to be ready to go live by July.

One of the key decision makers, the University of Redlands, Director of Student Financial Services Emily Baker, knew how much of an undertaking that would be. While her experience taught her that vendor transitions offer numerous challenges, Nelnet Campus Commerce assured Emily that the process would be smooth, and she trusted them.

Delivering Fast, Effective Implementation

In higher education, implementation can be an intimidating, messy process. When it comes to introducing a new product or vendor (and fully integrating that product into an existing ERP) the process can be extremely complex.

“Any time you take on a new implementation, there’s change management for students, employees, and the IT team,” said Emily. “Typically, for my team at least, that adds an additional workload to an already busy department.”

What the university found with Nelnet Campus Commerce, however, is an experience that was entirely the opposite.

“Everything Nelnet Campus Commerce told us they had, they delivered on,” said Emily. “We stuck to the timeline, our project manager was incredible, and we were in close communication the entire time.”

After kicking off implementation on April 1, the entire process took less than four months. By the middle of June, implementation and product testing was complete. By July, their products were fully launched and ready to be used, and the team was trained.



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Seamless Integration

University of Redlands uses Ellucian Colleague to manage student information — and it was critical that Nelnet Campus Commerce integrated with that ERP. As a relatively smaller institution, the University of Redlands needed a solution that allowed them to be flexible — with Nelnet Campus Commerce, they found that. They were able to offer auto withdraw/deposits and easily transfer payments between authorized accounts. Plus, their new solution allowed them to adjust payment dates to meet their term schedules.

“I cannot imagine trying to manage reconciliation or customer service without having a fully integrated system,” said Emily. “Being able to have a student make a payment through Nelnet Campus Commerce and see their payment in real time is useful to make sure their payment went through — because they can see that it did.”

With Actively Managed Payment Plans, the University of Redlands is able to allow students to transfer payment plans from one user to another within Colleague. This feature was especially useful at University of Redlands for students and users who already had accounts under TMS, since they were able to log in using the same credentials they had in the past. The solution also allowed them to adjust payment due dates as needed, and streamline their collections process — a positive for families and students.

Facilitating Financial Counseling

One of the most important benefits for Emily and her team is the reduced number of calls by students to the financial office about issues with their payment plans. Since payments made through Nelnet Campus Commerce sync with their ERP in real time, students aren't calling in to verify that their payments have been made.

And now, when students call in for actual support, the platform's student view functionality allows Emily's team to see the same pages that students are seeing while they're on the phone, so calls are quicker and more efficient.

Since their partnership with Nelnet Campus Commerce, University of Redlands staff don't have to manually audit balances between their ERP and payment platform or follow up with students to make sure they've made their payments. Now, they're able to focus on providing actual financial counseling with their students.

“It's relieving, because what Nelnet has done is taken over the responsibility of managing our online payments and payment plans in a way that takes a burden off of people on my team,” said Emily. “That allows us to spend more time counseling students. We hadn't had that experience before our integration with Nelnet.”

For Emily and her team, working with Nelnet Campus Commerce was an experience unlike anything they'd had before. This was their third implementation in seven years — and it was also the best. The combination of motivated, talented people and powerful payment technology confirmed to Emily that they made a smart choice.

“I've never worked with an outside vendor that has provided such a seamless, polished implementation and product experience,” said Emily. “I've been at this institution for quite a while, and Nelnet Campus Commerce really has been a premier experience.”

- Emily Baker, Director of Student Financial Services, University of Redlands

