

About the University

LUMS, Lahore university of Management Sciences (www.lums.edu.pk) is one the leading universities in Pakistan. It has grown very rapidly since its inception in 1985. The goal of the founders was to develop an educational institution of international standards in Pakistan. In 1986 LUMS started with an MBA programme. Along with the construction of a new campus in 1994, a Bachelors program in Economics and Computer Science was started, which later on included other disciplines. LUMS, with a student body of 3000, now has three schools: Suleman Dawood School of Business, School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law and the recently formed School of Science and Engineering. Doctoral, graduate, and executive programs are also offered by LUMS in a variety of disciplines.

The Issues

LUMS has had an impressive history of firsts in the IT arena including the fact that it was the first academic institution in Pakistan to get Internet connectivity in 1995.

Insofar as information systems are concerned, a number of home grown systems were put in place for course registration, grading and printing transcripts. These systems were developed on different platforms using different approaches (home-grown, out-sourced, commercial-off-the-shelf products) and were meant to address the core businesses: admissions, enrollment, course instrument creation, grading, generation of grade slips and transcripts. These systems were either not integrated, or linked loosely. The course registration system, CRS, addressed enrollment, course instrument creation and host of other applications and reports. It was started as a student project and evolved based on a non-scalable architecture. It crashed regularly and security breaches occurred. Users did not have the benefit of a consistent data view: information was transferred from the enrollment application to the grades / transcripts generating engine but the lack of consistency of data between the two meant that one application always had more current information than the other. Building reports using data from different applications was not possible.

The Realization sets in and a Solution is sought

Given that the information systems in place at LUMS were not integrated, robust and secure, there was recognition of the fact that they needed to be replaced. In this context, the decision to buy or build was debated at length and the limitations of the homegrown solutions were highlighted. There was some resistance from individuals who felt that LUMS had the capability to develop the ERP in-house and that the cost of acquiring one was too high.

Once it was understood, however, that software development was not the core competence of LUMS and it does not have the domain expertise in the area of student administration, the idea of 'build' was given up. It was agreed that LUMS had to

purchase and implement an industry-strength solution (the 'buy' option). This decision was supported by the board members as some of them had had the experience of implementing Enterprise class applications in their own businesses.

Selection Process

After a very rigorous evaluation process, LUMS chose PeopleSoft Campus Solutions. Some of the reasons why Campus Solution was chosen were:

- Oracle's strong local presence in Pakistan;
- Implementation partner: LUMS had worked with Techlogix in the past and had confidence in their ability to successfully implement the solution;
- Excellent product: PeopleSoft Campus Solution is one of the industry leaders and boasts of some of the biggest names in the academic world, viz., Stanford, Cornell, Cambridge, etc.

Challenges

- The user community at LUMS had to grapple with the unlearning/relearning cycle which is always painful. The existing enrollment process was batch based and it took some doing to get used to real time enrollment.
- The management wanted the ERP implementation to bring in best practices. There were, as such, some changes made in the way things were done. Those changes also caused some turbulence.
- The biggest challenge the institution faced was the transition from quarter to semester system. This change was made in the Campus Solutions a year after it had been rolled out and was barely entering the stabilization phase.

The general consensus, however, is that the benefits far outweighed the challenges even in the short term. The long term outlook is very positive.

Present Status

LUMS currently has a stable and fully functional deployment of PeopleSoft Campus Solutions that has full integration with the following applications:

- The Corporate Finance and Accounts System (non-PeopleSoft)
- A customized online application system
- The Grader: a home grown application that helps instructors in determining grade cut-offs
- PeopleSoft HRMS
- Sakai Learning Management System

Techlogix has a thriving relationship with LUMS in that the institution has been provided with a number of add-ons (e.g. residence management, faculty evaluation, etc.) for Campus Solutions. Techlogix is also working closely with LUMS in revamping their existing on-line admissions application as well as modifying the engine that helps the institution in filtering student groups, according to different criteria, prior to considering them for admission.

Key Issues:

- The existing systems were disparate, unstable, non-extensible and insecure
- Inter and Intra-departmental business processes disconnected
- Poor Information Access and Reporting
- Delivery of service to the students, faculty and staff was not of the highest standards
- Some of the key business processes, such as advisement, had not been automated; student financials were not linked with the legacy student records and enrollment system

Solutions:

- Oracle's PeopleSoft Campus Solution
- Sakai Learning Management System
- Unitime

Benefits:

- Standardized, centrally maintained, accessible, real time, accurate information
- Improvement in inter-departmental coordination because of the seamless integration that comes with the system
- Integrated modules to facilitate admissions, financials, academic progress and plans information
- Flexibility to evolve programs and courses without affecting existing definitions
- Access of relevant information to students and faculty members through Self Service
- Improved and more meaningful reporting to the management
- The system brought more rigor into the forecasting and planning exercises at LUMS