



THE CHALLENGE

The University of Waikato underwent an internal review in the 1990s and identified a number of changes that needed to be made in order to keep up with the electronic world and to improve the way they interacted with their students.

THE SOLUTION

They decided that one part of improving their communication with students would be to implement a student administration solution that would look after the needs of their students and staff no matter where they were located. After an extensive review process, the university decided to implement the JADE Student Management System.

THE BENEFITS

The JADE Student Management System has been live at the university since late 2002 and has provided staff with a fast, easy to use system that will also give students greater access to their data, via the Web.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

The University of Waikato is located in the city of Hamilton, New Zealand just 90 minutes drive south of Auckland. Established in 1964, the university is spread over 67 hectares (170 acres) of landscaped grounds that include extensive sporting and recreational areas situated around three ornamental lakes.

In 2002, the University of Waikato had more than 14,000 students enrolled in their seven schools of study (faculties). Their seven schools are the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the Waikato Management School, the School of Education, the School of Science and Technology, the School of Computing and Mathematical Science, the School of Law and the School of Maori and Pacific Development. Each of the schools has different requirements for entry and the minimum number of courses and compulsory courses that must be taken.

The main academic year runs from March to November, and is divided into two semesters by a mid-year study break in June/July. Students can enroll at the beginning of the year or after the mid-year break in most of the university's schools of study. Waikato also offers a summer school for many of their courses, which enables students to accelerate the completion of their degrees.

The degrees at Waikato are flexible and allow an interdisciplinary approach to build on each student's strengths and abilities. The University of Waikato offers a number of unique courses and subjects that are not available elsewhere and is involved in a wide variety of research projects, particularly in the areas of Education, Computing, Mathematics, Management, Sciences and Social Sciences. These research interests are enhanced by involvement from international organizations and companies as well as affiliations with local businesses and industries.



THE UNIVERSITY'S BUSINESS NEEDS

In 1998, the University of Waikato underwent an extensive internal review, which revealed that their business was radically changing and that they would also need to change to keep pace with their customers' needs. The review highlighted the fact that the Internet was already and would continue to play a considerable role in shaping the future for the university and their students. One way for the university to keep pace with these changes and provide a positive and professional service was to improve their student administration system.

The university's IT Services Director, Derek Postlewaight says "Our administration system at the time, Sears, was developed for the 1980s and although it was meeting the university's needs at the time, we were not confident that it could continue to do so. Among other things, the underlying data structures in Sears were inhibiting the way the university was able to operate and the Ministry of Education's reporting requirements were becoming more and more complex and Sears was just not able to keep up with those changes. We also recognized that Sears was not well technically provisioned to support all the changes that were required for Internet-based transactions."

Following the review, the university put together a cross functional team to evaluate the student administration systems on the market at the time.

DECIDING ON THE RIGHT SYSTEM

In 1999, the university underwent a tendering process, followed by a detailed evaluation of the software companies and their student administration systems. The first stage of the evaluation was for the companies to produce a scripted demonstration of their product. They were asked to create a database and configure their products to perform a number of tasks, including enrolling students, checking the rules of an award, calculating the fees for a course of study and recording personal details. From these demonstrations, the evaluation team short-listed the JADE Student Management System and another product to continue with the process.

Early in 2001, the evaluation team visited the vendors and their reference sites. They visited four Jade sites in both Australia and New Zealand, including the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology who were already using JADE Student Management System. These visits gave the university not only a better understanding of the product but also a feel for the culture of the organization that they would be working with. From these demonstrations and visits the evaluation team unanimously decided that JADE Student Management System was the best fit to meet the university's needs.

A key factor in the university's decision making process, after determining that the systems would meet their functional needs, was to ensure that there was a high cultural fit between themselves and the organization that they would be working with. They were aware that the project was a high risk one and that they would be spending a considerable amount of time with the people who were building the system, so they needed to be sure that their relationship was a good one, right from the start. According to Mr Postlewaight, "The key determining factors in making the decision to go with Jade and the JADE Student Management System had less to do with the product and much more to do with the company and the people. We chose the JADE Student Management System because of the people at Jade, because they had the technical vision we were looking for, the ability to listen to our needs and put those needs into practice and because of the high calibre of the people we would be working with."



"Our evaluation process left no doubt that JADE Student Management System was the best featured and most cost effective application for our institution. Furthermore Jade had the best track record of the contenders of delivering what was required, to spec, on time and to budget. Our experience to date has left us very pleased that this assessment is correct."

*Derek Postlewaight,
IT Services Director,
University of Waikato*



THE TIMEFRAME

After a detailed fit gap analysis of the system, involving up to 190 people at some stages, the development and phased implementation of JADE Student Management System began in August 2001 and continued through to September 2002. In just one weekend more than one million records were transferred to the new system, with less than 200 errors detected. The phased implementation of the system enabled it to be continuously tested as it was developed.

In September 2002 the university started a parallel run, enabling them to compare the results of both the old Sears system and the new JADE Student Management System by using a third party reporting tool, called Brio. Brio ran the same reports from both products and showed up any inconsistencies between the information in both systems. The new system was also stress tested to ensure that it could deal with the pressures of enrolment week.



JADE STUDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AT WAIKATO

The University of Waikato's JADE Student Management System is a considerable size with more than 5,900 classes, 1,550 forms, 67,500 methods and around 1.9 million lines of code. However, the system is able to run on commodity hardware enabling the university to make significant savings in both hardware and software costs. Their system runs on 2 x quad 1400Mhz servers with 2Gb RAM each running as a redundant cluster, plus a dual 1400Mhz server.

The JADE Student Management System holds all the rules around eligibility to enroll and graduate and makes decisions about whether students are able to enroll or graduate. The academic rules as well as the rules for courses and papers can be extracted and used for marketing purposes eliminating the possibility of mistakes being made. Mr Postlewaight says, "The rules engine in the JADE Student Management System is a key benefit of the system, and because it is so sophisticated, it gives us the flexibility to change our business processes ourselves, without having to make dramatic changes to the JADE Student Management System."

At Waikato, JADE Student Management System interfaces to a number of other internal systems, such as their financial and human resources systems, a timetabling and scheduling system, an identification card system, the library system and a residential management system. The system also interfaces with external systems, such as Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) and the Ministry of Education, and has Web access, enabling staff and students to access information over the Internet.

The system has been designed for use by staff throughout the institution, from enrolment and administration staff to tutors, professors and deans. Currently around 200 people are using it to enrol students, but as the year progresses others will be trained to use the system so that they can enter their own results and notes. Mr Postlewaight says, "Ultimately all academic and some administration staff, a total of around 2,000 staff, will use the system in some manner, and all students will access the system to plan their courses, enrol, check their grades and so on."

JADE Student Management System more completely manages the processes involved in looking after students from enquiry to graduation and beyond. This does away with the manual and double or triple handling of information between staff, eliminating costly overheads and the risk of errors being made. Mr Postlewaight says, "The JADE Student Management System replaces a number of fragmented systems at the university and brings together other disparate systems, which makes it easier for students and staff to connect to the different parts of the organization."



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