



Thriving on the Cloud

Why moving to cloud-based software was a boon for Northeast Community College

The annual Ellucian Impact Award recognizes higher education institutions that use technology to solve challenges, operate more efficiently, and create better student experiences. In Norfolk, Nebraska, Northeast Community College — abbreviated as Northeast — won an Impact Award for an exceptional move to the cloud and deft handling of multiple tech solutions to realize their institution’s mission.

The Challenge: Adapting Traditional Models to Fit Non-Traditional Students

For some time, Northeast had utilized a traditional approach to student success. While there’s something to be said for tradition, and the established approach can sometimes be the best approach, it didn’t quite match up with the culture at Northeast. Two-thirds of the college’s diverse student population was made up of students outside “major-based pathways.” They included early college students and dual credit students, adult learners, and students who weren’t seeking a degree at all.

Additionally, the school hadn’t yet optimized its existing solutions, leading to considerable administrative burden due to operational inefficiency. A dependence on on-premises software also increased security risks for their data while being costly to upgrade and maintain and wasting labor costs. Because of all this, its resources were spread thin — and in places they shouldn’t have been needed. On-premises cybersecurity infrastructure was costly as well.



Case Study

Solutions

Ellucian Banner
Ellucian Experience
Ellucian Intelligent Learning Platform

Results

- \$1.18m saved in five-year period by switching to cloud services
- 50% enhanced data accessibility since cloud migration
- \$250,000 annual labor costs saved by automating and integrating Ellucian tech services

Northeast students didn't always experience optimal access to information, nor could they always collaborate with their instructors as they wished or track their progress with the accuracy that today's students expect from higher education institutions. This directly attributed to a less-than-ideal user experience with the college's software.

Northeast has said that it's dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience that empowers students to achieve their goals and succeed in life, and while it's always done so, that mission was hindered by its old tech solutions and software capabilities. In order to continue to give students the experience it always had, the institution needed a change.

The Solution: Thriving on the Cloud

Northeast selected several tech solutions to transform its student experience and made impressive use of them. Ellucian solutions such as Banner, Experience, Intelligent Learning Platform, Action Item Processing, and Banner Communication Manager all came into play during the school's migration from on-premises software to the cloud. Experience provided the college a unified portal, which would ensure seamless access to anyone who needed it. Banner helped them streamline their administrative tasks while enhancing their self-service capabilities. Intelligent Learning Platform assisted the school with real-time data exchange while Action Item Processing streamlined Northeast's data gathering and federal compliance obligations. Finally, Banner Communication Manager was a boon to their interdepartmental communication and collaboration.

"That alone was a major shift," said David Cone, Senior Director of Web and Enterprise Systems at Northeast. "It allowed us to be much more strategic in the way that we operate here."

"We no longer have to focus on our ability to deliver infrastructure and keep all these applications running — we do that in partnership now with our Ellucian Cloud Service delivery team."

To be more specific, Northeast implemented Banner 9 Self-Service Applications, but it also procured Experience to provide a centralized self-service portal for prospective students, admitted students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and donors at once. By utilizing Banner Communication Manager and Action Item Processing concurrently, the college enabled automated communications to its constituents and streamlined its administrative tasks.



Speaking more to the big picture, Northeast transitioned its systems to Ellucian's managed cloud, thereby gaining access to a truly state-of-the-art data center. By doing so, they reduced administrative burden and allowed teams to focus on more strategic work and innovation. The cloud migration also afforded an opportunity to clean up the college's Banner implementation by reducing the number of customizations and standardizing integration patterns.

Furthermore, Northeast was able to proactively address challenges by developing an "Issues Log" for support. In its grander purpose, the log identified and resolved issues that came up during the cloud migration process, which further ensured that any disruption to services were minimal. Meanwhile, in order to make sure that they continually demonstrated their commitment to the project, Northeast consistently enlisted its president's participation in several kickoff events, whether virtual or in-person, thereby instilling encouragement among its teams.

"It was truly an institutional effort," Cone said. "Our functional users have been amazing, our technical teams have done a ton of work."

Cloud migration certainly isn't exclusive to Northeast, but they've set themselves apart from others by embracing a truly comprehensive and innovative strategy that prioritized institution-wide collaboration, communication, and stakeholder engagement.

Northeast planned their cloud migration with a phased approach, beginning with Banner's self-service modules and continuing with the movement to the Ellucian cloud, so the school could focus on specific areas and give them each the attention they deserved.

The Results: More Free Time, More Savings, More Student Success

Today, Northeast Community College experiences a modernized solution of enhanced operational efficiency and data-driven decision making. Its cloud migration and real-time integration initiative have transformed operations, much to the benefit of students, faculty, staff, and all other stakeholders.

Due to cloud migration and real-time integration of its software solutions, Northeast expects to save \$1.18m in the next five years, thanks to moving away from on-premises hardware and software upgrades and reaping other related savings.

Northeast's central data depository and real-time data access have increased data accessibility by 50%, facilitating the college's data-driven decisions regarding operations, services, and course content.



Ellucian's solutions have streamlined administrative processes by 30% at Northeast, freeing up staff time to focus on initiatives like course development and student support.

Meanwhile, moving to the cloud has eliminated the need for on-premises cybersecurity infrastructures the college used to employ. They estimate this will reduce related costs by 20%.

“We couldn't be more excited to be in a position to be able to innovate with the products that Ellucian delivers, and to see the investment of time and resources pay off and be recognized,” Cone said. “This award is a capstone to recognize that what we did worked.”

Moving from on-premises software to cloud- or SaaS-based is no small feat, but one that Northeast deemed as significant in continuing to improve the overall student experience. It's this commitment to students that helped earn Northeast's place in the nation's top 150 community colleges for the past six evaluation periods.



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