Chapter IV

ERP and New Organizational Capabilities: The Example of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System

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Abstract

This study qualitatively assesses the organizational impact of a newly implemented ERP system in the daily and strategic functioning of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). It serves as a powerful example to academic administrators, management consultants, and ERP practitioners seeking ways to cost-justify the implementation and recurring maintenance overhead of modern ERP systems in educational
institutions, especially in settings troubled by the conflicting forces of growing enrollments and state-imposed budget cuts. With the new KCTCS ERP system in place, administrative oversight has been strengthened, and it is now easier to provide factual support for institutional funding requests. The new KCTCS ERP system has additionally enabled important new organizational capabilities in the areas of student recruitment, student retention, credit hour transferability, and credential transparency. It has also made it easier for KCTCS to adapt flexibly and responsively to change, create new knowledge and performance measures, and serve the needs of a new strategic horizon.

Introduction

The ERP system at the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (see http://www.kctcs.edu) has enabled new organizational capabilities in the areas of recruitment, retention, and credential transparency, and has also become the official basis for institutional funding. In addition, in the face of a surge in enrollments and a related shift in the number and type of academic credentials awarded by the college, the new ERP system has also helped the institution enhance its ability to adapt to change, create new knowledge and performance measures, and even identify a new strategic horizon.

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System (referred to as “college” in this chapter) came to life on July 1, 1998, under the authority of the Kentucky Postsecondary Improvement Education Act of 1997 (HB1, 1997). All of the state’s 25 technical institutions and all but one of the state’s 14 community colleges, a total of 62 statewide campuses, were consolidated into one centrally coordinated unit. The new consolidated college was chartered to help reach three key goals of the Act. First, the aim was to provide “a seamless, integrated system of postsecondary education strategically planned and adequately funded to enhance economic development and quality of life.” Second, the college was to be “a comprehensive community and technical college system with a mission that assures, in conjunction with other postsecondary institutions, access throughout the Commonwealth to a two (2) year course of general studies designed for transfer to a baccalaureate program, the training necessary to develop a workforce with the skills to meet the needs of new and existing programs, and remedial and continuing education to improve the employability of its citizens.” Third, the consolidated college was meant to be “an efficient, responsive, and coordinated system of autonomous institutions that delivers educational services to citizens in quantities and of a quality that is comparable to the national average.”

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