A Statewide Transition from Campus to Centralized System: Challenges and Accomplishments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case describes a statewide implementation of Liquidus CS in the Grand System of Universities (GSU). The constant struggle (financial and IT personnel) of individual campuses to maintain their old Liquidus systems and upgrade them to newer versions prompted the GSU to seek an effective solution. In 2000, the GSU initiated the “GlobalVIEW” project with the aim of upgrading the old Liquidus LS (local systems) to Liquidus CS (centralized system). Just before the major transition to Liquidus CS kicked off, the GlobalVIEW project was unexpectedly challenged and delayed due to Liquidus, Inc. (the vendor) merging with Rivus Inc. Therefore the transition phase completed when Liquidus, Inc. did not exist anymore. This report includes studies conducted over a span of three years, when GlobalVIEW was actively implemented in the GSU institutions. In particular, it documents the reasons why GlobalVIEW was initiated, how it was implemented taking into account its statewide scope, and what major challenges were posed by the fact that Liquidus, Inc. was acquired while the implementation and transition to Liquidus CS was in its crucial stage. Also the case study documents the importance of customer-vendor relationship, especially when the vendor is changed. All the names used in this case are fictitious.

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INTRODUCTION

In general, this case covers three themes. The first theme that will be discussed in the section “Setting the Stage” is the vision for centralizing the GSU core Information Technology (IT) services that resulted in the GlobalVIEW project. The benefits and challenges of centralizing the GSU will be discussed in the subsection “Benefits of Consolidation.” The second theme of the case study will cover the preparation, planning, and strategy of the GSU and its division Technologies for Learning Advancement (TLA) for transitioning to Liquidus CS. This theme will be described in the section “Case Description.” Since the implementation and transition phase was challenged by the vendor’s merger with Rivus Inc., these two lead to the third theme. This theme that will be discussed in the section “Current Challenges,” explains not only the importance of customer-vendor relationship and trust, but also how these relationships could be affected by the Liquidus-Rivus merger.

Before we start the discussion of the above-mentioned themes, the chapter provides an organizational background, which will cover the major stakeholders involved in the GlobalVIEW Project.

Organizational Background

The Main Customer: The Grand System of Universities

The Grand System of Universities (GSU) includes 35 colleges and universities and was created in 1931. Currently, the GSU has approximately 11,000 faculty and 28,600 staff to provide teaching and related services to more than 260,000 students and the communities in which they are located. Furthermore, the GSU Board of Regents is overseeing Public Libraries of the 159 counties in the state. To manage and support such an extensive network of institutions, the GSU consists of different units and offices. Among the various offices (Figure 1), the Technologies for Inter-Institutional Operations (TIIO) is in charge of providing information technology (IT) services, solutions, and IT support to the GSU member institutions. This includes both educational and administrative IT solutions. The Technologies for Inter-Institutional Operations office consists of several divisions, among which the division of Technologies for Learning Advancement (TLA) is solely dedicated to learning technologies and distance learning. As for the GlobalVIEW project, this project was mainly created, administered and supervised by the TLA under overall auspices of the TIIO.
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