



Client story

Enhancing student experience and improving graduation rates at the largest US four-year public university

Objectives

- Boost student metrics by strengthening the online campus environment
- Digitally support the unique profiles and individual approaches of each campus
- Shift to online teaching quickly and securely while reducing the cost of time and money

Solutions

- Deployed cloud and infrastructure solutions from Unisys to deliver a secure hybrid-cloud infrastructure
- Fully automated the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) infrastructure for greater efficiency and reliability
- Improved service management through advanced analytics in data lakes

Results

- Increased enrollment and graduation rates through an enhanced campus experience
- Streamlined and accelerated the secure delivery of educational and administrative services to half a million students and nearly 56,000 faculty and staff across 23 campuses
- Employed an affordable, more on-demand infrastructure that delivers economies of scale

“The Unisys solution creates a secure, analytics-driven cloud environment to integrate our information resources. It has allowed us to develop and deliver more innovative educational administrative services across all 23 campuses quickly and cost-efficiently.”

Steve Relyea, executive vice chancellor & chief financial officer, California State University

Data points

- 100% automation of the ERP infrastructure
- \$15 million saved annually in both cost savings and cost avoidance
- 90% increase in productivity across campuses
- 60% rise in graduation rates in three years

California State University's mission is to provide high-quality, affordable education that meets the ever-changing needs of the state. In 2019, California State University (CSU) faced declining funding and rising demand for education from a growing, diversifying population. Half of its incoming students came from underserved communities and nearly one-third were the first in their families to attend college.

CSU launched the Graduation 2025 Initiative to increase graduation rates while closing equity gaps for underserved communities. Campus leadership sought to bolster educational success by deploying mobile apps to make it easier for students to register for classes, check grades and apply for financial aid while providing the administration with improved insights into student progress. But the university had a legacy on-premises Oracle/PeopleSoft ERP Common Management System running at its 23 campuses, which made integration and innovation costly and complex. The university sought a solution that enabled greater efficiency, allowing it to share critical services across campuses.

"One of our biggest challenges has always been to use our resources prudently, leveraging our scale and size to deliver technologies critical to accelerating student success," said Mike Berman, former CIO at CSU. "By making education more accessible, we're reducing students' time to a degree. That means that Cal State graduates enter the workforce sooner, furthering their lifetime earning potential and improving their lives and the lives of their families. Plus, it reduces the cost and debt associated with higher education."

Transforming the college experience with cloud

One in every 20 Americans with a college degree is a graduate of the California State University system. When CSU needed to virtualize student, financial and administrative services for its vast student body as part of its Graduation Initiative 2025, it recruited Unisys. Across its 23 campuses and a federated CIO organizational structure, the Chancellor's Office is responsible for the school's ERP system and its performance, reliability and security in support of over 485,000 students, nearly 56,000 faculty and staff, hundreds of buildings and dozens of off-campus sites.

The cloud is key to CSU's strategy to connect students with available resources easily and efficiently. CSU's shift to more online teaching and learning, initially driven by

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Dr. Michael Berman, former chief information officer, California State University

the COVID-19 pandemic, turned the school's focus to the cloud, cloud security and mobile student experiences.

After more than 30 years of operating an on-premises centralized computing infrastructure, CSU's hybrid-cloud transformation enabled the university to accomplish many goals, including:

- Making education available on a more flexible, agile and on-demand basis that allows administrators to reimagine the experience for students and staff
- Allowing professors to develop breakthrough interactive experiences and offer an online curriculum to expand access to educational content
- Enabling students to break free from long lines required to register for classes or apply for financial aid and spend more time learning
- Analyzing data to develop and create the right and timely interventions to better support students in pursuit of their degrees and graduation timelines

"Each campus has a unique profile and individual approach to student engagement," said Rudy Gonzalez, Unisys CSU program director. "For example, San Diego State's approach differs from Fresno State and is unlike Los Angeles. Therefore, we are pleased to partner with the CSU Office of the Chancellor to support the digital strategies at each campus by enabling a hybrid-cloud architecture strategy and providing better data delivery, access and integration."

Supporting campus-specific applications through hybrid cloud

The university runs one of the largest Oracle/PeopleSoft implementations in the world. Unisys transformed it from an on-premises, CapEx-intensive infrastructure to the Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud. Building on that core cloud ERP platform, Unisys expanded CSU's application portfolio to support additional services for its campuses.

Unisys deployed teams of multi-skilled cloud engineers and architects with deep backgrounds in security, educational administration and hybrid on-premises/cloud data management platforms to deliver a secure hybrid-cloud infrastructure leveraging the AWS cloud. The solution included the following:

- Employing the Morpheus cloud management platform to integrate and orchestrate on-premises and cloud services
- Integrating Ansible and Jenkins for infrastructure automation
- Leveraging the Delphix data management platform to virtualize data and make it more portable
- Integrating the Securonix Security Information and Event Management platform to increase the security posture
- Using ServiceNow for service management and advanced analytics in AWS data lakes

Lower costs, higher graduation rates

With support from Unisys, CSU can better deliver educational services, provide access to data, integrate securely with campus initiatives to facilitate innovation for each campus and its student experience, support student initiatives and advance its digital strategies. The university has lowered its total cost of technology ownership and produced a financially sustainable infrastructure with simplified support requirements and improved analytics. It transformed a rigid infrastructure into an on-demand platform that enables each campus to provide a unique student and staff experience fitted to its community, profile and culture.

The resulting secure hybrid cloud architecture delivered an engaging impact on student experiences better tailored to support each campus and its culture. The student impact was tremendous; graduation rates climbed from approximately 40% to 60% in three years, based on new economies of scale. With the boost in student graduation rates, enrollment also increased, generating major savings and improvements in productivity.

CSU's leadership realized significant performance improvements along with key business goals, including:

- Streamlined and expedited student scheduling and registration, financial functions, human resources functions and other critical administrative services for over 485,000 students and nearly 56,000 faculty and staff across all the campuses and the Chancellor's Office
- Realized 33% savings while delivering 30% better system performance when usage demand grew more than 40%
- Enhanced campus productivity and improved operational outcomes by over 90% when measured against established metrics and ratios
- Transformed data delivery into an automated process that now takes minutes instead of hours to improve campus development initiatives and student impact
- Built an affordable, more on-demand infrastructure that delivers economies of scale across the entire university system; drove over \$4.5 million saved in computing costs and avoided costs of more than \$2.8 million annually

"Unisys has enabled us to think bigger, do work differently and achieve a bigger vision faster," said Mike Berman, former chief information officer for the CSU system. "In all our interactions, I have been comfortable that Unisys understands our critical success factors and how to right-source our solution so that we can transform on our terms. Today we continue to choose Unisys not only because they deliver on their services and commitments, but they also continue to listen to our needs and suggest cost-effective, innovative solutions that meet us where we are."

To explore how Unisys can help you turn your cloud plans into reality, visit us [online](#) or [contact us](#).



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