



Workday and the California College of the Arts

Achieving Efficiencies by Unifying HR and Payroll

California College of the Arts (CCA) motivates students to shape culture and society through the practice and critical study of art, architecture, and writing. When the college examined the administrative systems that it depended on every day, however, it found that the design standards were pretty low. “The aesthetic quality of paper timesheets printed from Microsoft Excel spreadsheets didn’t reflect our values as an art college,” says Annemarie Haar, director of libraries.

The college wanted to provide its constituents with a better HR system user experience. “We rely on a lot of adjunct faculty who have their own architecture firms or design firms,” says Mara Hancock, CIO and the vice president for technology at CCA. “And they are accustomed to high design standards. So we wanted to create a very seamless and modern user experience for them.”

CCA was operating with a mix of disparate HR and payroll systems with error-prone spreadsheets and time-consuming, manual paper processes. Accessing accurate employee data was difficult, and insight into company-wide talent was limited.

Obscured Staff, Faculty, and Student Data

“We were having challenges getting information out of our systems,” explains Laura Hazlett, chief financial officer. “For example, end users had no visibility into personnel information. If a manager wanted to look up a staff salary, he couldn’t do it without going through HR or payroll [teams]. And then if he reached out to Payroll to get information, it was sometimes different than if he contacted HR, because the data wasn’t in one system.”

According to Amy Flaherty, director of payroll and benefits administration, the lack of visibility became a larger issue during budget season. “We were inundated with calls from managers needing to know the salaries of their current employees. They didn’t even have access to that level of information.”

Even pulling a simple report in the old systems, like a list of all the directors, wasn’t easy. “You had to do a bunch of manual digging around, and then you would often come up with reports that were either incomplete



Business Case at a Glance

- 1,500+ employees
- 1,800+ students
- Headquartered in Oakland, California

Workday Applications

- Workday Human Capital Management
- Workday Payroll
- Workday Time Tracking
- Workday Recruiting

Summary of Business Benefits

- Increased employee productivity
- Greater visibility into HR data
- Improved reporting abilities for more effective management
- Continuously updated software without costly upgrades

or inaccurate,” says Hazlett. “Managers didn’t have the data to make good decisions.”

The school wanted to connect HCM and Payroll to achieve greater efficiencies. Improving processes and gaining insight would enable CCA to eliminate unnecessary steps that were draining productivity in key business processes.

The college chose Workday. “I have a strong belief in the power of technology,” says Hazlett. “I felt like we were being underserved with our old systems. And Workday seemed to be cutting edge.”

Improved Productivity and Support

After a successful deployment, CCA quickly began to see real benefits. “A task that before took me an hour to complete, now I can probably get done in 15 minutes,” says Haar. “When you’re managing a team of people, it saves a huge amount of time to be able to remove the manual processes of inputting numbers and printing those spreadsheets for your record-keeping.”

The feedback from users has been positive. “I remember right when it went live, we needed to give a bonus to someone who had worked over the winter break,” recalls Hazlett. “The manager asked our IT person to show her how to submit the request through Workday. It was done in less than a minute and the manager commented, ‘Wow! This is transformative.’”

Hazlett is also pleased with the support CCA has received from Workday since going live. “Many times you get sold a bill of goods, and everything’s great until you implement. Then, the level of customer service tends to deteriorate, if not go away altogether. But the team at Workday is different. They seem genuinely concerned that we’re happy with the system.”

HR as a Strategic Business Partner

Workday’s unified approach to managing multiple HR functions is proving to be a real advantage. “Having one place where both staff and student workers can manage their timesheets has saved us considerable time and

improved our workflows,” says Flaherty. “That frees us up to provide better customer service.

“But the biggest thing is being able to develop reports that we can share with managers across campus. Now, with these reports, managers can determine if they’re on target for goals and understand what their employees are doing—or not doing.”

Giving managers the information they need has eliminated many extra steps and has allowed HR to play a more strategic role.

“It’s providing a structure for our HR team to be able to craft a framework around our compensation grades, our job profiles, and all of those important HR protocols that we just didn’t do before,” says Hancock. “It’s opening up new avenues and improving our work.”

Elegant User Experience

CCA is happy that Workday delivers the visual aesthetic and usability of popular consumer technology. “The design is a huge improvement on where we were before,” says Haar. “It’s clean, it’s simple, it’s colorful, and it’s very intuitive.”

“It’s kind of amazing how easy it is,” says Hancock. “Our faculty, staff, and prospective students have high expectations. What they want to see is something that is much more modern and flexible. And that is what Workday gives us.”

Smooth Upgrades

Moving to a new release of business software is no longer a daunting initiative involving downtime, high costs, and difficult customizations.

“The fact that Workday has two releases every year makes a huge difference,” says Hancock. “Our current legacy systems have code in them that dates back to the 1980s. We had to customize the system to meet our needs and the cost of maintaining that is extensive. With a Workday update, we basically flip a switch and turn it

on. For staff who have been banging their heads against legacy-system upgrades over the years, this is huge.”

Next Steps

Moving forward, CCA expects to realize even greater benefits as more users take advantage of Workday’s mobile capabilities.

“I think our students will respond positively to being able to do their timesheets on their mobile devices, since they’re on them all the time anyway,” says Flaherty.

Plans are also in place to optimize the college’s outdated talent-acquisition processes. “Once we roll out Workday Recruiting, it will be transformational in the way that we use staff resources,” explains Hancock. “Our staff will be able to focus more on supporting benefits and employer relations in a way that we just couldn’t do before.”

“Moving to Workday was a significant decision for the college. I am pleased we had the support from our stakeholders to switch systems, and I am sure that Workday will serve us well,” says Hazlett.



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