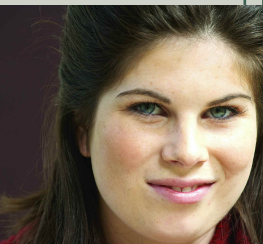


University of North Texas

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— Robert Jones, Application Team Manager for EIS (Enterprise Information Systems) Tools and User Services, University of North Texas



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The University of North Texas (UNT) is a recognized student-centered public research university that harnesses the power of ideas through a culture of learning based on diverse viewpoints, interdisciplinary endeavors, creativity, and disciplined excellence. With more than 33,500 students, UNT is one of the largest universities in Texas and is the flagship of the UNT System, which consists of UNT, UNT Health Science Center at Fort Worth, and the UNT Dallas Campus. It has 11 colleges and schools offering 96 bachelor’s, 111 master’s and 50 doctoral degree program in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. UNT is in its 11th consecutive year on the list of America’s 100 Best College Buys, compiled annually by Institutional Research & Evaluation, Inc.

UNT’s mission is to be known for its educational, intellectual, research, public service, and cultural achievements. In support of these objectives, UNT wanted to provide employees with the IT foundation necessary to help improve the quality of its education and overall student experience. In pursuit of these goals, UNT decided to overhaul its IT environment. It began by moving its mainframe legacy system to PeopleSoft ERP and then selected an Oracle data warehouse. With its new IT environment in place, the time was right for UNT to deploy a BI solution. UNT selected Cognos 8 BI so that it could easily provide employees with information needed to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively.

Challenges Faced

“We wanted an easy-to-use tool that would provide our employees with quick access to the information they needed to do their jobs effectively,” explains Robert Jones, Application Team Manager for EIS (Enterprise Information Systems) Tools and User Services, at the University of North Texas.

With its legacy system, UNT had struggled with delivering information to decision-makers in a timely and easy-to-read manner. Using a cumbersome reporting method that pulled data from their legacy mainframe system slowly, the reports delivered results in a format that was difficult to analyze.

These issues often hindered users from securing data needed to make the best decisions possible.

Industry:

- Higher Education

Geography:

- North America

Information Needs:

- Ease-of-use
- Scalability
- Flexibility
- Seamless integration across PeopleSoft ERP and Oracle Data Warehouse
- Web-based reporting

Platforms:

- Oracle
- Unix
- PeopleSoft ERP

Solutions:

- Cognos 8 BI

Benefits:

- Tight integration with PeopleSoft and Oracle
- Access to information that was previously unavailable
- Instant access to reports that used to take 500+ hours to create
- Streamlined budgeting and increased accountability
- Ability to integrate with home-grown security system
- Minimal training

Strategy Followed

UNT reviewed business intelligence solutions from Cognos, Business Objects, SAS, and Hyperion. The University was looking for a solution that would integrate with its Oracle data warehouse and PeopleSoft ERP portals that housed student information, financial accounting, and HR systems. Additional requirements included Web-based access, ease-of-use, flexibility, and scalability.

UNT was drawn to Cognos due to its best-of-breed offering and tight integration with PeopleSoft and Oracle. “Cognos is the recognized market leader so it was an easy choice. We were also able to talk to other

higher-education users that had deployed Cognos. These references made us confident about moving forward with Cognos,” explains Jones.

With the help of Cognos Technology and Consulting partner, Focus Technologies, LLC, UNT went live with Cognos 8 BI in April 2006. UNT also tapped Cognos Consulting to help on performance tuning of specific reports. “Cognos Consulting, along with Focus Technologies, was incredibly helpful during our deployment and implementation process,” states Jones.

The University also leveraged Cognos phone support services and was pleased with the quick response time. In addition, UNT invested in public classroom training from Cognos as a way to make sure report authors and data modelers, as well as users, were employing the best practices and procedures for using the system right from the start.

The University was up and running in only four months, a success attributed to the assistance provided by Cognos Consulting and Focus Technologies, the knowledge gained from Cognos Training, the help from Cognos Support, the ability to seamlessly integrate with its Oracle data warehouse and PeopleSoft ERP portals, and the intuitive ease-of-use of the solution. Standardizing on Cognos for all of its reporting and business intelligence needs, UNT has rolled out the solution to its finance and Institutional Research (IR) departments. Between these departments, the University runs approximately 60 reports that are accessed daily by 1,200 users.

The strong functionality of Cognos 8 BI has created excitement within the University community. As a result, many departments have requested Cognos, with the Admissions department slated to deploy the solution next. “Cognos generates its own interest,” stresses Jones. “Employees clearly see the benefits and want to use Cognos for their own reports.”

Moving forward, UNT is investigating Cognos 8 BI to develop an executive dashboard. It also plans to round out its solution by deploying a Cognos Planning solution to help with planning, budgeting and forecasting.

Benefits Realized

“We’re really happy with our decision to deploy Cognos 8 BI. We’ve already experienced a strong, positive response with Cognos and we anticipate so much more. We plan to continue expanding our solution and making it available to more users,” emphasizes Jones.

The tight integration between Cognos and UNT’s PeopleSoft portal has been the most important feature for the University. Cognos 8 BI offers a common interface to

UNT’s portal, which allows users to operate in a familiar setting and gain access to all data from one central location. In addition, users are able to log on from a single sign-on point, saving them time while eliminating the hassle of remembering multiple passwords and sign-on procedures.

Another key benefit has been the flexibility to work within the University’s home-grown security system, a decentralized function controlled by each department. Cognos was one of the only solution providers that offered this integration. Leveraging Cognos, UNT minimized training, eliminated the need to re-train users on additional security administration process.

With Cognos 8 BI, the IR department has saved time reporting and has been able to identify trends in the student body. Prior to Cognos, IR had to manually develop and print Microsoft Word reports that took between 500 – 600 hours to produce. With Cognos 8 BI, these reports are done automatically, allowing Deans to easily monitor enrollment periods in real-time. In addition, the IR department is responsible for developing *The University Fact Book*, which was honored with the “Best Electronic Fact Book” award by the Texas Association for Institutional Research for its 2004 – 2005 edition, based on its effectiveness and ease of use. *The University Fact Book* provides statistics on enrollment data to the public, which previously this took hundreds of hours to complete each semester. Now, UNT is able to produce this information instantly.

“With Cognos, we can drill down into student data, identify student preferences, and develop programs that are attractive to current and future students,” states Dr. Allen Clark, Institutional Research Director, UNT. “Cognos is helping us provide a more positive experience and attract students that will thrive at UNT.”

Cognos has significantly streamlined the Finance department’s budgeting process while increasing accountability. With Cognos, users now have instant access to account information, eliminating previous calls to the Budgeting office for help securing this data. Cognos also provides UNT management with an easy audit check by allowing them to track department budget expenditures and ensure money is being allocated correctly.

Jones sums up UNT’s Cognos experience, “With Cognos, information is always at users’ fingertips. The solution has replaced processes that were inefficient, or weren’t even there before. This has thrilled our user community and we have heard nothing but strong, positive feedback.”

