DESTINY One

University of Minnesota

Consolidating to Reduce Costs and Drive Operational Excellence

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

DESTINY SOLUTIONS

How Destiny One is helping reduce costs and improve productivity at numerous divisions across the University of Minnesota

As individual divisions and colleges of an institution grow over time, they establish their own processes and workflows that work for them but don't necessarily translate across the institution. They invest in their own systems, build their own websites and develop their own approaches that meet their specific—often short-term—needs in isolation. As a result, siloing is a fact of life at many larger colleges and universities.

Unfortunately, this administrative decentralization creates significant inconsistency in the management of programs and the learner experience. Additionally, it drives costs way up.

In 2015, the University of Minnesota (UMN) took steps to reduce administrative decentralization of its non-credit offerings by implementing Destiny One, the student lifecycle management (SLM) software platform by Destiny Solutions. Crafted specifically for non-traditional education, Destiny One manages the entire learner lifecycle, taking care of curriculum, enrollment, marketing, finance and more. The Destiny One SLM integrates with main-campus systems, engages learners with an Amazon-like experience, optimizes staff efficiency and provides business intelligence that empowers data-driven decision making.

"We had a number of homegrown or purchased solutions from a variety of vendors, and that created multiple redundant systems," said Kristy Davis, Associate Director of Academic Support Resources-IT at UMN, when they first implemented Destiny One. "With Destiny One, it is a huge benefit to us to find one single system that lifts the administrative burden off our staff and allows our customers to own their learning experience."

Destiny One was initially implemented to serve UMN's College of Continuing and Professional Studies, the Carlson School of Management, the National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education, UMN Extension, and the School of Public Health, but since then its adoption has grown.

According to Davis, there are a few key reasons behind Destiny One's expansion across UMN. First, Destiny One is easy to use—saving staff, faculty and administrators time in managing non-credit offerings. Secondly, it makes non-credit offerings, which are developed and delivered by different divisions across the university, easier for learners to find. Since the University now has a single website, learners have visibility to a much broader array of offerings that they may not have been previously aware of, without navigating to find multiple different divisional URLs.

The University of Minnesota

At A Glance

Founded in 1851 as the state's land-grant institution, the University of Minnesota is one of the state's greatest assets and one of the most comprehensive public universities in the United States. Through its strategic positioning plan, the University is making strides to become one of the top three public research universities in the world within a decade. At all of its locations—Twin Cities, Duluth, Morris, Crookston and Rochester—the University is moving in a new direction to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

By the numbers

30,975
Undergraduates

16,389
Graduate and Professional Students

3,797
Faculty members

1913
Year the College of Continuing and Professional Studies was established

Bob Dylan
Henry Fonda
Thomas Friedman
Notable UMN alumni

When offerings are easier for staff to launch and easier for learners to find, the positive impact on registrations is obvious.

"Due to word of mouth and relative ease of use, more units have adopted the Destiny One system," Davis said. "This in turn makes more offerings available to learners all in one place, thus prompting more enrollments in offerings across the entire UMN system."

The consolidation of non-credit offering management across UMN has created a number of significant benefits for the university, including cost savings, data security, improved staff efficiency and excellence in the customer experience.

Cost Savings

By consolidating non-credit management into a single system, UMN is reducing its number of overlapping contracts and seeing significant benefits in the annual budget.

Consolidated administration brings big cost savings because instead of maintaining numerous contracts with numerous (often overlapping or identical) vendors—with all the implications that held for accounting and related costs—UMN now houses a wide range of non-credit offerings in a single system.

"Colleges and departments have recognized savings in FTEs and general savings in business processes in their respective areas," Davis said. "From a collegiate level, several have been able to reduce the number of merchant accounts and benefited from having a single administrative support unit catered to non-credit activities."

"One unit estimates that they save at least $33,000 annually from administration activities and merchant account costs," she added. "Another unit eliminated two merchant accounts—with their associated monthly fees and time investments—and estimate savings in the range of $15,000 per year."

These costs savings aren't just being realized by program-offering divisions, though. The Academic Support Resources IT team, who has a responsibility to support the effective management of other units and faculties across UMN, has realized significant annual savings—both in terms of dollars and cents, and peace of mind.

What's more, the IT teams of other colleges are seeing cost savings as well. A colleague of Davis in the College of Continuing and Professional Studies shared with her that, since they had numerous division-level systems operating to manage their non-credit activity in the past, most units did not have integration with the institutional Enterprise Financial System. This meant unit accountants needed to do weekly journal entries where they were manually distributing revenue into the appropriate chart strings. With Destiny One, there's now a streamlined invoicing process that links directly into the controller's office. As a result, unit accountants no longer have to conduct these manual processes, leading to cost savings and increased efficiencies.

Secure Data Management and Use

Destiny One's data collection, organization and security makes it easier for UMN's non-credit divisions to leverage critical information in their decision making.

Alongside cost savings from simplifying the administrative back-end for non-credit offerings, UMN enjoys massive benefits—financial and otherwise—from Destiny One's data collection and management, and from its commitment to data security.

"By retiring an antiquated system, we have reduced our risk of unplanned end of service and of security breaches," Davis said. "Destiny One provides better management of user access to constituent data and data security."

Those data breach costs are no small matter. According to IBM, the average cost of a data breach for an organization is $3.62 million. But Destiny One helps universities protect themselves from these challenges with its class-leading data security protocols and infrastructure. Destiny One is PCI PA-DSS v.3.2 certified, and constantly pursues the most updated PCI PA-DSS certifications. This means the sensitive data colleges and universities collect when processing online registrations and payments is as safe as it could possibly be in Destiny One.

> " Destiny One is the only enterprise, PCI-compliant, non-credit and event registration system that meets the needs of our business and finance staff. "

Data security is also established through careful permissions, which means only staff members who have been granted access to view certain sensitive information have the capabilities to do so. Ultimately, this confidence in the security of institutional data creates significant benefits when it comes to delivering the kind of experience today's learners expect.

"Destiny One is the only enterprise, PCI-compliant, non-credit and event registration system that meets the needs of our business and finance staff," Davis said. "Destiny One enables us to securely take credit card payments and process refunds over the phone."

Of course, leveraging data and metrics is a critical part of the management arsenal of a modern postsecondary leader. As such, Destiny One goes beyond simply collecting and securing data; it makes that data useful for the institution by providing 150 standard reports that let leaders mine specific information. What's more, it allows non-credit divisions to own and manage their own data, supporting the unearthing of contextually important insights on demand, and in real time.

So, for example, if registrations for a particular course are low with two weeks until the deadline, a leader can easily check historical data to see when registrations for that offering typically happen. If most learners have historically registered with only a few days to spare, the leader can breathe easy knowing that the course will likely fill in time. If, however, the course has historically been full with two weeks to spare, the leader knows they need to take action.

What's more, Destiny One's rich data-mining capacities allow institutional leaders to be proactive. The array of personal data Destiny One collects about learners—including employer, goals, communication preferences, and more—can be leveraged to drive marketing campaigns, ensuring the right learners know when a relevant offering is being launched.

"Within one college, they are consolidating constituent engagement data across the school to better track and understand who their constituents are, their behaviors, and how they engage with the school so they can cater their marketing efforts," Davis said.

BY THE NUMBERS

The **quantitative impact of Destiny One** at the University of Minnesota

26 program offices
161 costing units
Divisions using Destiny One

300+ staff users
Staff using Destiny One

900+ courses
2200+ sections
600+ conferences
Offerings being managed by Destiny One

137,500+
Registrations since implementing Destiny One

$15,000
$33,000
Annual savings in two divisions

Improved Staff Efficiency

By simplifying non-credit management into a single, integrated system and leveraging its process automations, staff are able to create more offerings and serve learners better.

By leveraging the automations and process efficiencies created by the Destiny One SLM, the staff experience non-credit divisions across UMN are able to deliver is far improved, as staff are able to focus more of their time and effort on high-value work and customer service.

"Historically, non-credit units and program teams at the University of Minnesota have used many registration systems," Davis said. "Consolidating the registrations into one system has increased efficiencies surrounding registrations and overall administration of courses and conferences."

After all, the Destiny One SLM simplifies and streamlines the process of managing non-credit offerings and getting learners, customers and attendees signed up and paid quickly and easily. The SLM leverages eCommerce best practices to provide an intuitive enrollment process and is designed to keep learners engaged from first interaction to registration and through their entire lifecycle. It also offers features like waitlist notification, where learners are automatically notified when a spot opens up in a desired course. What's more, staff can quickly and easily publish and update information around offerings and have that information automatically update in all relevant spaces, from the website to the student portal to the course catalog and beyond.

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By integrating Destiny One into existing campus systems, non-credit divisions can efficiently share data with the rest of the campus and to share critical information without having to involve unit or institutional accountants.

What's more, because of the consolidation under Destiny One, and the SLM's financial best practices, staff time across non-credit divisions is no longer being spent on repeatable or automatable bureaucratic tasks outside their areas of expertise—saving huge amounts of time and effort.

"Individual units are no longer required to do credit card reconciliation because it is all managed centrally," Davis said. "Debt collection and various accounts receivable reporting are now done centrally, which is a benefit for both risk and staff time, and makes the periodic controller's office audits of our system no longer necessary. We see value in using the centrally supported University Enterprise system, as it allows us to better serve our learners."

By minimizing duplication of non-credit management systems and bringing all non-credit administration under a single umbrella, the IT team can manage some of the more nitty gritty aspects through a single team. This means the university gains economies of scale while staff in individual academic units are freed up to focus on programming and customer service rather than security audits and financial reporting.

"Units no longer have to manage the important required process to document, prepare for, and participate in annual Office of the General Counsel and Office of Information Technology security audits as the Destiny support team does this for everyone," she said.

Because of the ease of using Destiny One, and the class-leading functionality that comes with it, divisions across UMN have more time to launch new offerings, which contributes to the revenue and registrations generated by non-credit activities.

"Before we implemented Destiny One, a number of units used Google Forms or other applications to collect information and enrollment for their events. Those processes were time consuming and a number of units stopped offering events," Davis said. "Now that we have a centrally supported registration system, those units are starting to offer their events again and charge for content where that may not have been an option before."

> " One unit estimates that they save at least $33,000 annually from administrative activities and merchant account costs. "

By leveraging all these automations and features, staff time is shifted away from repeatable and rote processes to more high-value work, like innovating programs, serving learners and developing unique marketing plans.

"Using Destiny One supports staff by providing a stable framework that all of us are working in and makes communication around non-credit easier," Davis said. "It has allowed non-credit units to transform the work of our staff to higher-level objectives."

Consistent Learner Experience

With Destiny One, UMN is improving its non-credit learner experience through consistent branding, more self-service tools and greater personalization.

Destiny One has also helped UMN deliver an improved and more consistent customer experience to their learners. That experience starts with the website. Destiny One ensures that branding is consistent across all non-credit divisions and offerings and that staff can launch pages that highlight the school colors, logos and other branding elements in minutes. What's more, pages are automatically responsive, mobile-friendly, and fully SEO-optimized to ensure everything is easily searchable.

Looking back on the lack of consistent branding before UMN moved to Destiny One, Davis reflected on the impact this consistency has had on the lerner experience and—ultimately—on enrollments.

"In the past, individual units used other third-party vendors to receive revenue through registrations," Davis said. "These other tools lacked consistent university or college branding, which impacts the end user's perception of the university and the offering, and could prevent them from registering for courses and events."

This increased consistency, brought together by the professional look and feel delivered through the Destiny One public view, means learners are always seeing UMN in the best possible light, and receiving an online experience that matches what they've come to expect from major eCommerce leaders like Amazon.

The delivery of an Amazon-like experience at UMN starts with the vast self-service capacity created by Destiny One. Learners can find, learn about, enroll in and pay for courses all through the UMN website—without having to ever call the school or physically enter an office. What's more, through the innovative student portal, learners can track their progress towards certificates and other credentials, request transfers, manage their registration and largely take care of the majority of their experience. According to Davis, this has created huge time savings for divisional staff.

The self-service goes beyond improving learners' access to information, though. Many of today's learners want to create their own learning packages and pathways that allow them to gain exactly the knowledge, skills and competencies they need for their specific situation. With Destiny One, learners have the capacity to select certificates that help them achieve their goals and pay a bundled price for their selection all from the comfort of home, without having to call the school or fill out extra paperwork.

"We have seen improved registration activity with certificate registration and the ability to leverage bundles, so learners can select courses within certificates," Davis said.

Additionally, learners receive more personalized and insightful service from institutional staff because Destiny One puts more relevant and critical information at the fingertips of those who need it most. As mentioned earlier, the SLM keeps full learner records, including past enrollments, financial history, employer, communication preferences, goals and more. Where once learners would be hoping to speak with a particular staff member who knew their story, Destiny One keeps all that information available so that staff members can immediately know a learner's background and serve them accordingly, without forcing them to tell their tale from the start over and over again.

"Destiny One preserves constituent data that may have otherwise been lost due to staff turnover or loss of unit-specific institutional knowledge," Davis said.

Across non-credit divisions at UMN, the Destiny One SLM facilitates a consistent and personalized customer experience that aligns with learners' expectations.

Consolidation Central to Growth

UMN transformed the development and delivery of non-credit offerings across the university while simultaneously ensuring they could offer a world-class customer experience. They established a culture of operational excellence, improved staff efficiency, and, ultimately, realized significant savings along the way.

At its core, this is because the Destiny One SLM recognizes that non-credit offerings across a single university are fundamentally similar in a number of ways, especially when it comes to financial management, the process of developing new offerings, and the kind of experience learners want. However, it creates space for divisions to bring their unique flare to programming, branding and more, allowing for a best-of-both-worlds scenario.

"Destiny One eliminates the need for separate merchant accounts for units," Davis said. "It eliminates the need for hardware and related supplies to process infrequent credit card payments and refunds over the phone. It eliminates license, subscription, or usage fees for systems that cannot leverage the pricing discounts offered to enterprise-level user base. It eliminates additional fees for customization and change requests for unit-owned systems."

As the use of Destiny One at UMN continues to expand, these benefits will continue to grow as well.

About Destiny One

Destiny One is student lifecycle management software for higher education administrators serving non-traditional students. It integrates with main-campus systems, engages students with an Amazon-like experience, optimizes staff efficiency, and provides business intelligence, empowering data-driven decisions. Destiny One lets schools unite, understand and control all aspects of their business at once.

Destiny One manages the entire learner lifecycle through the following modules:

Curriculum
Plans and manages courses, certificates and programs

Marketing
Targets marketing campaigns and defines consistent branding

Finance
Governs accounting transactions and manages financial information

Enrollment
Increases registrations by engaging learners and automating the enrollment process

Reporting
Leverages dashboards and reports to make business-intelligent decisions

System Administration
Configures workflows, staff roles and permissions, and business rules and fees

Want to learn more?

Contact us at info@destinysolutions.com

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