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CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT
Cumberland University

Cumberland
UNIVERSITY

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Cumberland University, one of the oldest private liberal arts universities in the southern US, is now recognized as one of the fastest-growing liberal arts universities in Tennessee. Over the past seven years, Cumberland University has doubled its enrollment from 1,600 to over 3,500 students. With this growth, the university faced challenges to scale its operations while maintaining the personalized service that sets it apart from others. To account for these changes, Cumberland recently adopted Blackbaud Financial Edge NXT, an AI-powered fund accounting software, Student First, a comprehensive student information system, and Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT, an AI-powered donor management platform.

Cumberland University Scales for Growth with Blackbaud Financial Edge NXT and Student First

Cumberland University's decision to implement Financial Edge NXT and Blackbaud partner Student First was driven by a shared vision—to enhance operational efficiency, empower staff, and better serve their students in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Cumberland University is powered by:

Blackbaud Financial Edge NXT™

Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT™

Blackbaud Partner Student First

Associate Provost and General Counsel Mark Hanshaw explained that a team spent nearly a year evaluating seven systems, using assessments and test scenarios to rank options, in preparation for replacing long-used existing systems. Ultimately, integration capabilities emerged as the deciding factor.

"We chose Financial Edge NXT specifically because we already knew it could easily integrate with Student First," said Hanshaw. "While Student First is still a relatively new product, its robust integration capabilities stood out, offering the flexibility the university needs to thrive."

Cumberland was so impressed by how seamlessly the systems integrated that they made the strategic decision to implement Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT for the development office, replacing their former third-party fundraising and CRM system, to achieve a fully unified platform.

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. Associate Provost and General
Counsel

"While transitioning to Student First and Financial Edge NXT, we also decided to migrate to Raiser's Edge NXT," said Hanshaw. "While this added complexity to our implementation journey, the promise of streamlined processes and better data alignment makes the effort worthwhile."

Anticipating Advantages and Benefits

A key advantage of having integrated software will be automation, which helps to ensure that Cumberland can provide the same level of service despite its growing student body. "Through Financial Edge NXT and Student First, we'll have the capacity to automate many of our processes—such as degree audits, billing, and applying financial aid—which historically were manual and time-intensive," Hanshaw said.

Another major benefit is improved visibility into revenue forecasting and student account trends. "We've had challenges managing forecasting as our student base evolves," Hanshaw shared. "With the new systems, the university will be able to analyze data more granularly, helping us better understand and plan for our complex mix of students, from undergraduates to graduate cohorts across different fields."

Additionally, the systems are expected to significantly enhance student engagement. Cumberland expects the new system to provide a much more robust degree audit function, allowing students and staff to clearly see where each student stands in their degree process.

This means students can easily track completed requirements, outstanding courses, and progress toward graduation. These tools give them the ability to maintain that personal connection with students, even as they grow.

"By integrating Raiser's Edge NXT, Financial Edge NXT, and Student First, we're creating a level of synergy that simply wasn't possible before," said Hanshaw.

Paving the Way for Long-Term Success

With their CRM, student information system, and financial management system fully integrated, Cumberland is setting the stage for scalable growth, enhanced student experiences, and operational excellence. "One of the reasons students attend Cumberland is for the personalized service they receive, and Financial Edge NXT, Student First, and Raiser's Edge NXT will help us maintain that standard as we continue to grow," added Hanshaw.

Looking ahead, the university plans to assess the outcomes of their implementation journey and are excited to put their plans into place and realize the full potential of the solutions.

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Simplify your workflows with Financial Edge NXT.

Learn more

About Blackbaud

Blackbaud unleashes the potential of the people and organizations who change the world. As the leading software provider exclusively dedicated to powering social impact, Blackbaud expands what is possible across the nonprofit and education sectors, at companies committed to social responsibility, and for individual change makers. Built specifically for fundraising, nonprofit financial management, digital giving, grantmaking, corporate social responsibility and education management, Blackbaud's essential software accelerates impact through unmatched expertise and powerful data intelligence. Millions of people across more than 100 countries connect, give, learn, and engage through Blackbaud platforms.