



USC Dornsife College Prepares Budgets 81% Faster

Annual budgeting shouldn't be a marathon, with department heads and finance staff working months to prepare and submit a budget for approval. The finance staff at the University of Southern California (USC) Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences found out the process can be a sprint, trimming budget preparation and submittal time by 81%.

With the help of Axiom™ Budgeting & Forecasting, the college also experienced a substantial decline in errors as processes moved from manual to automated, says Javier Mosquera, Senior Financial Analyst at USC Dornsife College, the largest college at the university, with over 9,000 students and nearly 1,800 faculty and staff.

"We knocked the last budget out in about three weeks," says Mosquera, who adds the process took as long as four months before Axiom. "I got a lot of positive feedback from the vice dean and the financial director regarding the way the system worked and how much easier it made everything." Needless to say, USC Dornsife was the first college to submit its budget documents to the central office.

Automated Processes Make Budgeting Easier

Axiom provides the finance office a single source of truth, with automated data integration and standardization from other source systems. The college has five deputy directors, and each one oversees about 20 departments.

USC Dornsife

"Instead of trying to collect 20 spreadsheets from each department, cleaning the data and providing that to us, the directors are getting the information they need and putting that into Axiom," Mosquera says. "Then we are reviewing on our end, running reports to make sure what they are providing matches to what we are seeing, and providing them whatever support they need."

More automated budgeting processes proved valuable as finance dealt with mandated budget reductions during the pandemic. Often, changes were required after a budget item was submitted. Mosquera says those changes were made quickly, easily, and accurately using Axiom.

"We knocked the last budget out in about three weeks. I got a lot of positive feedback from the vice dean and the financial director regarding the way the system worked and how much easier it made everything."

Javier Mosquera
Senior Financial Analyst at USC Dornsife College

**4 months to
3 weeks**

Faster budget preparation



More value-added services with the
same number of FTEs



the number of reports
with the same six-person staff

Adding accounts is also simple, Mosquera explains. "When a deputy director needs to add a new account to their department, I can do that easily and immediately see that change," the Senior Financial Analyst says. "I like when something works the way you are expecting it to work, without issues. And we had a lot of issues with the other process."

Syntellis is currently helping USC Dornsife College migrate data as it changes its financial system to Workday. Mosquera says the transition is going well and that the move will improve the accuracy of data that the college uses.

Ease of Use Allows for Self-Service Reporting

USC Dornsife College also adopted Axiom™ Reporting & Analytics to bring more transparency and ease of use to reporting functions. For example, deputy directors can pull budget reports for individual departments or for all departments under their purview. Security features in Axiom allow users to access the reports they are authorized to view.

The self-serve features within Axiom also allow the finance team more time and energy performing analysis while helping directors get the information they need quickly.

"We are here to support directors and other departmental staff, but there can be a time crunch as well," Mosquera says. "If they come to us and we can't [prepare reports] as quickly as they need, we let them know that they can pull that data pretty quickly themselves. They don't have to send an email and wait for a response, which could be a day or more."

Automating budgeting and reporting processes is part of the university's move toward digital modernization. During his tenure, Mosquera has moved to the data analytics team charged with performing higher-level tasks and working on more strategic issues and larger picture financial decisions.

Budget Modeling in a Few Clicks

Mosquera joined the university in 2019 as the Axiom implementation was taking place. He describes the training as a great experience. "The way they presented information was pretty thorough, especially for someone like me who was just joining," Mosquera says. "The best part was the Excel piece and the way the tables worked on the back end. That was simple and easy for me to understand."

The college deals with an ever-increasing amount of data, and the Axiom software helps finance staff aggregate, understand, analyze, and report on that data efficiently. At the same time, demands on the department have increased due to the lingering effects of the pandemic on operating budgets.

For the current fiscal year, school leaders asked the finance department to create budgets based on three different percentage cuts. Mosquera says Axiom readily and easily accommodated this request versus the college's previous spreadsheet-driven processes that would have required manual input into 100 Excel spreadsheets for each change. "I don't think we would have met deadlines in that scenario," Mosquera says. "This time, it was simple. I know what my changes are; I can quickly go into Axiom, reduce my budget, whether as a whole or just a few departments. And then I'm at my goal, and I'm done."

“ This time, it was simple. I know what my changes are; I can quickly go into Axiom, reduce my budget, whether as a whole or just a few departments. And then I'm at my goal, and I'm done. ”

Javier Mosquera
Senior Financial Analyst at USC Dornsife College