

Indiana Wesleyan University saves hundreds of thousands of dollars with ACI Worldwide

New campus-wide e-commerce system gives students convenience while reducing the administrative burden

Handling tuition payments and donations for an institution with 15,000 students can be a complicated process that is time consuming for finance staff—especially without an integrated electronic system. Before 2011, that was exactly the situation at Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU), the largest private institution in the state.

“Because of the lack of an integrated system, we had to manually receipt payments into our ERP system, Ellucian Colleague,” says Zach Whitesel, assistant controller and director of cash, investments and endowment accounting.

To end these unnecessary manual processes, the university’s finance team implemented ACI Worldwide’s UP Bill Payment Solution. ACI (formerly Official Payments) seamlessly integrates with IWU’s existing payment gateway in Ellucian Colleague.

The team at IWU also appreciated ACI’s pricing structure. Rather than an annual maintenance charge, a service fee is charged per transaction. Students, parents and others can use credit cards, debit cards and e-checks to make payments for tuition, fees, donations and more on a secure, fast online platform that maintains the highest level of security possible.

IWU first used ACI for regular payments in 2011, adding the payment plan functionality a year later. Starting in 2013, Whitesel enabled an e-commerce solution hosted by ACI for non-tuition payments.

“If there is a one-off event like a charity golf day or an accreditation test, ACI can build dedicated payment pages that are hosted on their site,” says Whitesel. “The turnaround for these



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is 60 days or less. The ACI team meets requests very quickly.”

That customer service has been consistent since implementation, according to Whitesel. “Any time we want to bring in new functionality, it has been seamless,” he says.

Because ACI charges a per-transaction credit card service fee, IWU was able to pass along all costs of the system to the purchaser. IWU saves \$500,000 annually and these savings are used to improve academics at the institution, while enabling IWU to keep tuition as low as possible.

“Many students have taken advantage of ACI’s e-check option to pay their tuition, and that option is free to the student,” he says.

And instead of waiting for days to see if a payment has gone through, students receive instantaneous confirmation. Other top benefits include the reduction of the burden on finance staff, says Whitesel.

“We have saved countless hours because the payment system automatically receipts into our ERP,” he says. “We have removed the manual part of the process.”

ACI Worldwide’s acquisition of Official Payments opens up expanded financial opportunities, says Whitesel. “I look forward to ACI’s product development in the collections space. I feel the company is actively seeking ways to help institutions in reducing student debt write-offs.”



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