

SAVING GREEN, GOING GREEN: NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE TAKES ITS COLLEGE CATALOG ONLINE



BY JENNIFER
DRUCKER

Creative
Designer/Assistant
to the Director
Nassau
Community
College

Nassau Community College is the largest single-campus community college in the state of New York with nearly 24,000 students and is part of the State University of New York system. Like many community colleges in recent years, we are always looking for ways to reduce operational costs and become a little greener. We found a perfect opportunity in our printed college catalog.

In addition to the massive paper requirements for printing, traditional methods for putting together the college catalog were very costly at around \$500,000 over a projected 5-year period. The process was also very inefficient and labor intensive and resulted in outdated content by the time the catalog was printed. It had become an ineffective method for serving our students.

By taking the college catalog online and out of print, NCC was not only able to significantly reduce the cost of producing the catalog, we were able to produce a better product that is more cost-effectively managed. Updates now are made twice a year, instead of every 2 years, far better serving the needs of students. We have also eliminated the printing of more than 100,000 catalogs per run, allowing the college to become environmentally greener. Many other benefits were realized along the way.

THE PATH TO AN ONLINE COLLEGE CATALOG

We knew the printed catalog was not the best communication and marketing tool. We spent more than \$160,000 every 2 years to design and print the 300-page catalog. So, cost was certainly one reason an online version was appealing. Putting the catalog online would save a lot of paper and ink, allowing us to positively contribute to the environment, which was another incentive. The printed version also took 6 to 8 months to produce. During production, many changes to courses would occur. So, the catalog was always very outdated coming off the printing press. Moving it online would allow us to keep it more current. It was clear from the get-go that we would benefit greatly with an online college catalog.



With the support of a new technology-driven president, we designated an implementation team comprised of stakeholders at the College. This included the Marketing and Communications department, Academic Student Services, Academic Affairs, and the IT department.

Our initial strategy meetings, return on investment (ROI) documents, and planning took around 6 months to finalize. In addition, the actual implementation, from start to finish, took approximately 6 months. The catalog went live November 1, 2010.

THE END RESULT

We broke down our online catalog into three primary sections: an overview section, policies and procedures section, and a programs section. Within the overview section of the catalog on the NCC website, users can find out about the College, clubs, academic calendars, and so forth. The policies and procedures section describes all the important College policies on topics such as admissions, registration, and special programs. And, of course, the programs section holds all the details on our programs and courses.

The catalog was created using two primary technologies. All of our course data is housed in SunGard's Banner™ and we used OmniUpdate's OU Campus™ web content management system (CMS), which we also use to manage our website, to retrieve the XML data that was exported from Banner. The XML data then was transformed via XSL into multiple channels, including PDF and web pages. OmniUpdate created a search solution for the catalog and set up custom templates that allowed our staff to easily create and edit the supporting content for the catalog.

The data is where we ran into the biggest implementation obstacle. In the past, when we created a print version, all corrections were made directly in the print version, but not within the database. At the start of this project, when we printed a PDF of the sample course data, we saw many inconsistencies that needed to be fixed in the database. For example, for the "Music" courses, we had three different abbreviations. For this project to be successful, these inconsistencies needed to be reconciled. A by-product of this project was to make the data consistent with the online version and set up data entry standards. With the data well-prepared, we could clearly export it to create the online catalog.

Now, OU Campus automatically generates both the searchable web-based and printable PDF versions of the college catalog. We print a small run of the course section of the catalog as a desk reference for faculty and staff to supplement the online version.

The current online catalog is much more user-friendly, allowing our students, faculty, and staff to quickly find what they need. The programs area of the site allows users to browse an alphabetical list of our departments. A link on a department will take the user to specific programs offered by that department. Once a user clicks on a program, a suggested course sequence and links to specific courses are also displayed. In addition to browsing through our programs, users can search for them by department or keyword.

REAL ADVANTAGES

With a true online college catalog, we now have accurate information that is easy to access and that better serves our students. With a one-time programming cost of \$24,000,

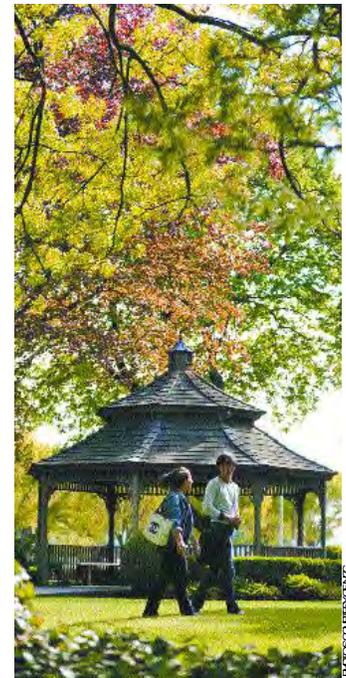


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our College will save approximately half a million dollars over the next five years compared to keeping a print catalog. Rather than every two years, we can now update the catalog each semester to include the latest course offerings and updated policies, and our staff can update content as needed. So, it's no longer outdated right off the printing press. It's been a success in terms of cost savings, environmental conservation, and usage. ▲