Wake Forest University Secures Student Records and Accelerates File Retrieval with ImageSilo®

As one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in North Carolina, Wake Forest University (WFU) is responsible for safeguarding permanent student records dating back to 1834. The job hasn't always been easy. In the early 1980s, the registrar's office had problems with deteriorating paper records and had been using a microfilm system for a number of years to capture and store information. However, the document conversion process was tedious and the equipment was costly and unreliable. Through the 80s and 90s, Steve Benton, the Associate University Registrar, tracked Enterprise Content Management (ECM) and watched it improve. He knew the time would come when the university would be ready to reap the benefits of managing their documents electronically. That time arrived in 2006.

Since implementing ImageSilo, the Software as a Service (SaaS) ECM technology, WFU effectively manages student records, enhances disaster recovery and enjoys instant and remote access to both old and new critical information.

> *"When a tenured professor retired after 35 years, we were asked to provide a list of every student he had ever taught. We were able to query the system and pull the information right up. We would have never been able to do that without ImageSilo!"*
>
> -Steve Benton, Associate University Registrar

The Situation

Founded in 1834 by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Wake Forest University (www.wfu.edu) is a private, liberal arts school serving a total student body of approximately 6,500. WFU offers undergraduate and graduate degrees and provides schools of law, divinity, management and medicine. They were recently ranked 11th in undergraduate teaching by *U.S. News & World Report*.

In 1975, the registrar's office began using computer-generated adhesive labels for their paper student record system. These labels were physically pasted onto a student's file and contained critical class rosters and grade information. Each student record contained two to four labels per term and was stored in a large walk-in vault, which was built in the 1950s. Without climate control, the vault left student files vulnerable to extreme temperatures that eventually deteriorated the adhesive. When labels started falling off, there was occasionally no way to match stray labels with the proper student files.

For security purposes and to prevent information loss, the registrar's office implemented a microfilm system that captured all student class rosters and transcripts. However, the new system was expensive and equally as burdensome as their paper-based methods. It took about two weeks to convert student records to microfilm, and even then, there was no assurance that the microfilm was legible. Their three microfilm machines were unreliable, and when needed, employees spent about five minutes finding each student record, printing a copy and filing the film back on the shelf. "Microfilming was a real resource drain. Many times documents had to be re-filmed. Plus, the machines would break and were expensive to repair. The whole process was slow and outdated," said Benton.

The Solution

Since 1984, Benton had been keeping an eye on ECM technologies. "I knew that someday our processes and microfilm costs would justify the investment," he said. In 2006, Benton had a consultation with Advanced Imaging Systems (AIS), a Digitech Systems reseller. "After seeing the Digitech Systems ECM product suite and the AIS facility, it was immediately clear to us which route to choose," said Benton. ImageSilo combined with AIS's document conversion services gave Benton an affordable and reliable option. The solution included reasonable fees for scanning paper transcripts and class rosters as well as the technical capabilities WFU needed to store the electronic student records and to protect them indefinitely.

First, the registrar's office set up a scanning station and used PaperFlow document capture software to convert new student records to electronic images. "The setup and training was remarkably fast. One day was all we needed," said Benton. Then, AIS converted older, hard copy records (dated from 1970-1986) to electronic documents and uploaded them to ImageSilo.

Recognized Benefits

Since implementation, disaster recovery strategies have greatly improved. The ECM system provides WFU with an offsite, ultra-secure data center including elaborate physical and technical security features, data encryption, automatic data backup and multiple redundant systems. Not only is WFU now better able to protect student information, they can do it without straining their IT resources. As an outsourced service, Digitech Systems maintains the database and expands the storage space for growing amounts of student data. Additionally, the WFU IT department saves time, because they don't have to install ImageSilo or update software on each user's computer.

> *"ImageSilo is a maintenance-free system that we all love. Our security and disaster recovery is stronger than ever, and our student records have never been safer."*
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> -Steve Benton, Associate University Registrar

Converting paper documents to electronic files is quick and easy, and the registrar's office no longer has to wait two weeks to access student records. After graduation, employees scan each graduate's file and upload images to ImageSilo. The office is then given security-protected access to 30,000 new documents each year.

Retrieving student information from any location and sharing records is simple and convenient. As a SaaS solution, ImageSilo can be securely accessed from anywhere, via the internet. "Even if I'm in Japan, I could pull a record and email it as needed," said Benton. Eight employees in Benton's office effectively manage the undergraduate, graduate and divinity school records by easily retrieving electronic documents. They just log in online and perform a simple search. Seven other staff members, who work in the law and MBA registrar's offices, can also login and view the undergraduate, graduate and divinity school records. Now, employees can quickly reply to information requests, because they have transcripts, grade verification rosters, advising forms and FERPA records at their fingertips.

This success is creating envy across campus. Others see Benton's office as a leader in information management technology. As a result, WFU is exploring how it will expand ImageSilo to more offices, manage more records and reap even more benefits.

About Advanced Imaging Systems

Advanced Imaging Systems has distinguished itself as a provider of imaging and document and content management services for more than 30 years in the Charlotte, NC area. Founded in 1972, the company built its early customer base by providing microfilming products and services. Today, AIS offers a full range of image and data management services and product solutions. They are committed to quality and to building their customer base through a consultative selling approach. To learn more go to www.aisimc.com or call 800.365.1038.