SJ-R.COM
The State Journal-Register • Springfield, IL • The Oldest Newspaper in Illinois

Blackburn, other area colleges moving to paperless systems

By CHRIS DETTRO
THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER
Posted Apr 21, 2010 @ 11:30 PM
Last update Apr 22, 2010 @ 06:03 AM

 CARLINVILLE — Blackburn College is the most recent university in central Illinois to move toward being a paperless institution, thanks to a campuswide shift to an online technology.

The idea will eliminate much of the school's paper waste and make many printed materials available only online.

"It's going to impact the registrar's office big time," said Kathy Ruiter, longtime admissions employee who was recently named head of enrollment services. "You don't have to print schedules, class rosters or submit grades and registration forms on paper."

Blackburn isn't alone among colleges and universities in reducing paper use through computer technology.

The University of Illinois Springfield, as well as the U of I's other campuses in Urbana and Chicago, has been "100 percent online for registration since fall of 2004," said Brian Clevenger, director of records and registration at UIS.

The U of I also uses the database system for grades, class rosters, syllabi, etc.

"We held out and did our course schedules on paper until summer-fall 2010," he said. "Some still wanted to hold that paper in their hands. If you're not great with change, it takes a while.

"It has saved us several thousand dollars," Clevenger said. "We no longer mail grades or bills to students."

Lincoln Land Community College went online with its course catalog last year and now prints the document only one year out of every two. Otherwise, much of the school's paper-reduction efforts consist of using paper more than once.

"We recycle both white and colored paper and this fall installed new recycling containers throughout campus," said spokeswoman Lynn Whalen.

LLCC also prints its class schedules and catalog on recycled paper, and all the paper it uses for copiers and printers is recycled, she said.

'Getting rid of all those forms'

At Blackburn, Ruiter is working closely with the college's tech services department to integrate the new online faculty/student system effectively into the existing information system. Working with the new system — formally called the Comprehensive Academic Management Systems -- is about 85 percent of her job, although she's still attached to the admissions office.

Many Blackburn offices already are using CAMS, and the faculty/student portion will be available by this fall.

Students will no longer be given printed course schedules or grade reports. CAMS will also decrease the need for printed course syllabi, rosters, catalogs and registration forms, eliminating much of the paper waste on campus.

"The sustainability is tremendous," said Ruiter. "The biggest part is getting rid of all those forms."

Blackburn has used a basic CAMS system since 1993. A number of other colleges use the software, including Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Mo., Spartanburg Methodist College, Missouri Baptist University, Kettering College and Marymount College.

With the campus switch to the Web-based system, the admissions and financial aid offices can "talk" to each other in one big database, Ruiter said.

"Each office had to create a record for a student," she said. "Now there will be one main record for each student."

Registration still face-to-face

Ruiter expects the technological advancement to help the college, its faculty, staff and students save time, money and natural resources.

It also allows student work to be turned in online and tests and quizzes to be taken online.

Each professor can view his or her rosters, post grades for student viewing, and maintain current class information. Similarly, students will be able to see grades, schedules and syllabi online, as well as send and receive e-mail. All will be able to engage in online discussion.

Ruiter said that although use of computer technology is "part of a cultural shift," registration will still be face-to-face between Blackburn students and their advisers.

All new and returning students will be given personal logins before the beginning of the fall term. Part of Ruiter's job is to provide one-on-one training and follow-up support for each new faculty user on campus.

She said Blackburn isn't yet utilizing some of the features — such as job placement — that is available through the CAMS software.

Not every attempt at "greening" up a campus proves successful, though.

A few years ago, LLCC stopped printing its class schedules in favor of online versions, "but found that wasn't the best way to reach the students in our district," Whalen said.

The LLCC district consists of all or parts of 15 counties, a more wide-ranging area to cover than Blackburn's private university campus.

Chris Dettro can be reached at 788-1510.

Copyright 2010 The State Journal-Register. Some rights reserved

Comments (1)
College Student
7 hours ago
Report Abuse
You must be logged in to report abuse.

Report Abuse

Glad to see other colleges are catching up with the state schools!
Login or register to post a comment:
Login
Username:
Password:
Forgot password
Login
Register
Email:
First Name:
Last Name:
I agree to the terms of use
I am over 13 years of age
NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"
Register

Contact us | Privacy Policy | Terms of Service | About our Ads

The State Journal-Register | Springfield, IL 62701

Copyright © 2006–2010 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a Creative Commons license, except where noted.

SEO by eLocalListing | Advertiser profiles | Cherrp Local