

A Banner year for Colorado



Across Colorado, community colleges and other schools have been working for months to convert their automated processes to SCT Banner, a school-based software system that automates activities campus-wide, from Admissions to the Business Office to Financial Aid, Payroll, and others. In addition to the state's 15-campus community college system, both the University of Northern Colorado and the Colorado School of Mines participated in the switch this year.

The conversion reads like a "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" essay for many financial aid offices – figuring out what the system does and how it's unique, troubleshooting a variety of unexpected issues and, finally, making it work to process financial aid for students. Throughout the long-term project, schools continually exchanged information with each other, sharing new discoveries and shortcuts to ease the learning curve. Our Loan Guarantee Operations staff watched the monumental effort as an interested partner and often became directly involved.

"We've seen and heard from so many financial aid professionals who realize the benefits they'll ultimately get and who have put in a lot of hard work to get

there," said Lori Gloer, Associate Director of Loan Guarantee Operations. "It's impressive to see the level of commitment and sense of cooperative spirit in Colorado's financial aid community."

School and Lender Relations Coordinator Haley Majewski previously worked at a school that used SCT Banner, so she took her knowledge and expertise on the road, visiting many campuses during their conversion and offering training on how Banner interacts with the *College Access Network* system. She also helped to troubleshoot system problems, decipher error messages, and even get schools caught up on regular processing tasks when they needed it.

"Loan processing in Banner did not go very well at first so we got behind early," said Nancy Gregory, Associate Director of Financial Aid at University of Northern Colorado. "With help from CAN staff Luke

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Banner continued...

Rabbe, Susie Trujillo, Rhonda Green and others, we were able to get file transfers going and problems fixed as they arose. Haley was my personal heroine, teaching me how to do adjustments in Banner, getting procedures and contacts from other schools, and she and Misti (Ruthven) processed

“We can see that Banner will eventually be an advantage to our processes in the long run...it does seem to have great potential.” – Barb Buechler, Front Range Community College

a substantial number of loans to help us get caught up. Our staff is great but we just needed the extra help this year, and we’re grateful to (CAN) and to our lenders who pitched in.”

As fall has set in, many schools have now completed or nearly completed the conversion and are well into the next phase of development: getting to know Banner on a much more practical basis. The system affects everything a financial aid office does, starting with the import of ISIR records (ED data) through packaging and certifying loans, and disbursing all kinds of aid, including Pell Grants and

work-study. It also creates certain efficiencies, so many offices are looking at creating new process flows as well.

“We can see that Banner will eventually be an advantage to our processes in the long run. While it may take some time to become accustomed to the ins and outs of the software and work out all of the ‘bugs’, it does seem to have great potential,” said Barb Buechler of Front Range Community College.

Other benefits of the Banner software include switching to CommonLine version 5, and using CommonLine functionality to automate changes that previously might have been handled manually.

Walking tall: Christy Jensen

On Veterans Day weekend, Christy Jensen, associate director of financial aid at the Colorado School of Mines, walked 60 miles and camped out with more than 4,000 fellow walkers.

The seven-year financial aid veteran flew, for the second consecutive year, all the way to San Diego, California, to raise money for breast cancer by participating in the Susan G. Komen Foundation’s “San Diego 3-Day” walking event. Last year’s 3-Day raised more than \$10 million for research, outreach and treatment.

“It’s a pretty phenomenal experience. Humbling and poignant,” says Christy. “You’re walking with several hundred survivors, and you’re part of a group that is just so positive.”

Giving back, helping others – they’re common threads that weave through Christy’s professional life as well. At the campus where she works, about 74 percent of the 3,900 students receive some form of need-based financial aid (85 percent receive assistance from all sources). Christy values the opportunity to help so many students become college graduates with a career path.

outlook

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