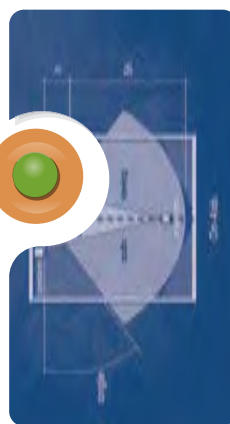
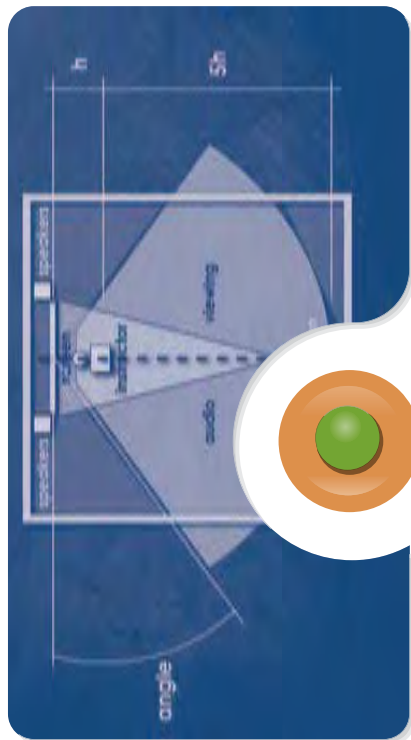


INTEGRATING

# Sustainable Design



De Anza College's Mediated Learning Center wins the 2010 Best Practices Award for Best Overall Sustainable Design



# Austin Community College Meets Growing Enrollment Challenges

On Oct. 5, at the White House Summit on Community Colleges, President Obama reiterated his goal to graduate an additional 5 million community college students by 2020. He also discussed the launch of his “Skills for America’s Future” program, a partnership between community colleges and employers created to help meet the job training and educational needs of the nation’s workforce. This emphasis on the importance of community colleges ensures that student populations will continue to expand. With growing student bodies, however, comes the demand for increased efficiency in every facet of college administration.

Austin Community College District (ACC) is among the country’s largest community colleges. ACC offers 235 associate degree and certificate programs, including university transfer courses, workforce training, adult education, and continuing education opportunities for personal enrichment. The college is serving 44,000 credit students this year compared with 40,248 in fall 2009, an increase of nearly 10 percent. In addition, ACC also serves 10,500 continuing education and 3,000 adult education students.

To keep up with its rapid growth, ACC implemented document management technology throughout the school’s administrative departments. Initially, the previous Institutional Records Manager, Kay Barclay, installed **Fortis** document management software from Westbrook Technologies to replace the microfilming of student records. The college was faced with the challenge of managing millions of pages of student records, including: state residency forms, applications, international documents, high school transcripts and transcripts from other colleges. With student records on microfilm and in paper format, sharing information across campuses, as well as between departments, was time-consuming and labor-intensive.

New records are now maintained in the **Fortis** electronic repository and the back file of microfilm and paper records has been converted to electronic format, creating a centralized file system for student records. The elimination of manual processes, such as copying, retrieving, faxing and re-filing records, paved the way for the administration to re-direct staff efforts to other student-related functions.

This initial document management implementation proved to be an effective online resource that connected our campuses and improved access to student files. Counselors, advisors, Admissions and Early College Start staff use the system to obtain transcripts and other enrollment information for students.

Following this success, ACC implemented **Fortis** in the Financial Aid Office which processes more than 39,000

financial aid applications annually and awards over \$93 million each year in various forms of aid.

The manual process of handling the financial aid applications involved travel to a storage location to retrieve information – so the manual processing was both inefficient and time consuming. Because of these challenges, financial aid specialists were not able to immediately share information regarding a student’s application or verify student responses to financial aid questions with the supporting data and documentation. With documents available online, financial aid specialists are able to verify information in a timely manner, which has sped up the time for granting an award.

Terry Bazan, director of financial aid, estimates that her department has halved the time between receiving the completed application and mailing the award letter. She attributes this to the increased accessibility of the files along with improved records classification and retrieval. The Financial Aid Office eliminated 29 five-drawer file cabinets that created space for six additional cubicles. Bazan also reduced her budget for hourly employees because she no longer needed to maintain paper files. Therefore, she was able to use those funds for full-time positions. The department also benefits from multiple security levels provided by the document management system that safeguards confidential information.

BY MARY ANN BRIDGES  
and AZURE BROWN

In addition, **Fortis** is used several other departments: Human Resources, Payroll, Business Services, the Office of Students with Disabilities, and Facilities and Construction. Integrating **Fortis** with Datatel, our ERP system, adds even greater efficiencies. Using **Update Assistant**, a **Fortis** add-on, we automatically import data from Datatel to populate index fields in the document management system without duplicate data entry. For example, in Business Services they use the check number as a unique identifier, and automatically populate the document management system with the check amount, vendor number, vendor name and whether the check has been reconciled or voided. Datatel integration is used to index employee files, student records, faculty credentials and W-9 forms.

ACC also uses the document management system to house faculty credential files for the Virtual College of Texas (VCT). The VCT is a collaborative effort between 40 public two year colleges to facilitate sharing of distance learning courses among member colleges. All faculty credential files for each member college are stored in the document management repository for access by host colleges, and most recently by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) during their accreditation review.

ACC is currently working on several new document management projects. We've almost completed scanning of the back files of former employees and we are now scanning files of current employees. The school hopes to implement Web access to allow college employees to view their personnel files and is also considering adopting online forms for the hiring process. Electronic document management is already incorporated into the process by making faculty applicant credentials available to the hiring committees online.

An added benefit is that **Fortis** provides ACC staff with the assurance that they are complying with state and federal

record-keeping requirements. Plus, with web-based access to the system, administrators can log on to view and modify records, annotate documents and add files instantly from their desktops.

With the added efficiency of document management, we are ready to take on our expanding role to meet the nation's evolving job training and educational requirements.

*Bridges is institutional records manager at Austin Community College. Brown is the college's records management coordinator.*