# University of the Free State

Perceptive Content helped UFS streamline administrative tasks, allowing staff members to eliminate filing and paper-based tasks, and increase productivity by 35 percent.

## Challenge

### Higher enrollment increases paperwork demands

As University of the Free State (UFS) grew in recent years, the volume of paperwork began to get in the way of performing student administration duties effectively. Staff members grew frustrated at the length of time it took to search for documents, which were often unavailable or misplaced. In such cases, employees could not carry out student requests in a timely manner, especially when documents were located at different campuses.

By the time employees retrieved the requested information, it was often too late for the information to be useful. The paper-based system also caused concerns about lack of confidentiality, risk of disaster, the availability and cost of storage, and inconsistent processes. These concerns led UFS to research a solution that would streamline processes while boosting the value of its existing PeopleSoft system and other applications.

After careful evaluation, the university selected process and content management solutions from Lexmark. Managers at UFS worked with Visions Consulting (www.visions.co.za), a South African business management consultancy and a Lexmark partner to select a process and content management system. UFS chose Perceptive Content from Lexmark over other systems because of proven integration capabilities with Oracle PeopleSoft, as well as its ease of use and maintenance.

"Perceptive Content does not require excessive IT resources for integration or maintenance, and it gives us the flexibility to define our own workflow processes and security levels," says Michael van Rooyen, Deputy Director, ICT Services at UFS.

## Solution

### One stop for student information

After integrating Perceptive Content with the UFS PeopleSoft system, now each student's documents are linked to his or her student for simple, instant document retrieval directly from staff members' computers. Documents in Perceptive Content are indexed automatically using PeopleSoft fields, ensuring that data is accurate and consistent. When administration staff members receive documents from students, they note the receipt in PeopleSoft, scan the document into Perceptive Content, then send the paper copy to offsite storage. The paper documents are only accessed again when legally required.

### Meet University of the Free State

Established in central South Africa's Free State province in 1904, the UFS main campus in Bloemfontein serves 27,241 students, with 3,000 enrolled in distance and online education programs.

▸ **Main Campus:** Bloemfontein, South Africa

▸ **Founded:** 1904

▸ **Enrollment:** 30,241

**Products in use:** Perceptive Content

### Increasing content security

Employees can access content in Perceptive Content via a secure web connection from a link in PeopleSoft. The retrieval process takes seconds instead of the hours or days it used to with physical paper. Access is controlled by PeopleSoft security profiles together with Perceptive Content security profiles, ensuring users see only documents they are authorised to view. Rather than physically transport documents from desk to desk, electronic workflow allows employees to route documents to the appropriate colleagues' work queues, speeding up processes, eliminating the risk of loss, removing security concerns, and providing access to documents from anywhere, at any time.

## Results

### Boosting productivity by 35 percent

The speed of document retrieval has increased productivity across the university, especially in student administration, where Perceptive Content eliminated hours of time-consuming document searches. "Our staff productivity has increased by 35 percent since implementing Perceptive Content. We can now focus our workforce to concentrate on servicing students rather than searching for files in cabinets," van Rooyen says.

Perceptive Content is a powerful tool in UFS's strategic effort to improve the quality and speed of service. Quick access to information means that students can walk into service centers and receive the information they need within a few minutes rather than making appointments days in advance.

### Improving debt collection rates

In addition to granting authorised users within the university instant access to student documents, UFS has extended access to legal firms that settle debt collection. Accessing needed documents online streamlines the legal process while keeping student records accessible to university departments.

"Perceptive Content makes debt collection easier for our legal firms," van Rooyen says. "Our rate of debt collection has improved by five percent since we began using it, which amounts to millions."

The flexibility of the software allows UFS to leverage its capabilities in any department across the institution. In the HR department, staff members instantly access employee documentation with a single click from their PeopleSoft HR screens or ePerformance system. Across the university, faculty and staff can access personnel, academic, expense and other documents in Perceptive Content via UFS's Microsoft SharePoint system and other web applications. Many departments no longer print documents. This supports the university's green movement and leads to a savings in paper budgets.

### Early user adoption

The project team spent considerable time planning its solution. These efforts helped build strong user acceptance early on. "With meticulous consideration of user input and comprehensive analysis of the past environment, we managed not only to achieve user acceptance of Perceptive Content, but true user ownership," van Rooyen says. After implementation, users quickly adapted with little training required.

**Finding new efficiency campuswide**

Perceptive Content has met all UFS's initial needs and continues to provide unexpected benefits. The time savings, productivity gains, cost savings and debt collection impacts have resulted in UFS saving millions since it went live over three years ago. While the system was adopted to streamline administrative procedures, the efficiency gains and increased effectiveness have also resulted in better student service, leading to greater student satisfaction and making UFS more competitive. The satisfaction with Perceptive Content and the continued return it delivers has opened up possibilities for more uses across UFS, including expanding in student services, finance and human resources.

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**Michael van Rooyen**
Deputy Director, ICT Services,
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