

Case Study



Criswell College

Getting most out of academic ERP yields many unexpected benefits

After nearly two years of staff turnover, CAMS Enterprise use drops until college brings on new technology leadership



When Bill Watson stepped in as Criswell College's *de facto* CAMS Manager in 2011, the position had been unoccupied for nearly two years, an event he calls "the great hiatus." Although the Christian college in Old East Dallas, Texas, had successfully been a CAMS client dating to the 1990s — using previous versions, then updating to CAMS Enterprise in 2009 — department turnover had created a campus-wide knowledge vacuum regarding system best practices, or even not-so best practices.



According to Watson, the student information system was the scapegoat for many organizational shortcomings. Formerly an IT consultant in the health-care industry, Watson had been there and done that many times. He suspected dissatisfaction with CAMS was masking more serious systemic problems. "While I didn't know much about CAMS Enterprise, it impressed me as a suitable solution. It seemed to me the greatest likelihood was that we had a pretty common PEBCAK situation — problem exists between chair and keyboard," he laughed. "We had failed, as an institution, to provide proper direction to our users and many of our best staff were frustrated and confused by our procedures in

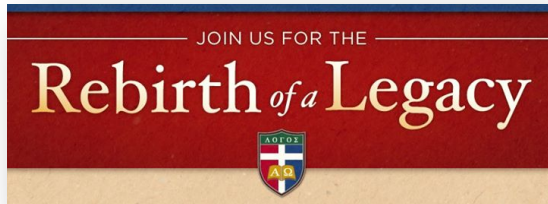
CAMS Enterprise."

Believing CAMS Enterprise was part of the cure rather than the source of the problem, Watson and key stakeholders at Criswell College realized that "we needed to fix ourselves and our processes." They set out to do this by forming a CAMS Committee including representatives from admissions, the registrar's office, financial aid, student life, IT and the bursar's office. Using CAMS as the catalyst, the committee carefully benchmarked the school's policies and procedures against higher-education best practices.

"Data we had been feeding CAMS needed to be cleaned up. It's the old 'garbage in, garbage out' syndrome," Watson said. "CAMS gave us a yardstick by which we could measure our processes and procedures — fundamental things like standardizing our administrative vocabulary and data field terminology." These and other incremental changes when applied to the CAMS modules in use increased efficiency by orders of magnitude. Buoyed by these successes, Watson and the CAMS committee moved to revise the student and faculty portals, which had fallen into disuse during the great hiatus. "The contribution of this group of staff members has been essential to our institution's procedural improvement and to the reversal of our perspective on CAMS Enterprise," he said.

The CAMS housing module was added and data gathered via the Build Your Own Report feature soon followed. Watson said the CAMS renaissance is also fuelling greater student satisfaction with many users now asking for additional features. “Student interaction with software is an essential contributor to our overall student retention and satisfaction,” Watson added.

“CAMS Enterprise has now become an excellent platform for assessing our overall institutional health,” Watson said. “Because CAMS is customizable in vital areas like reporting, we are able to measure performance and make adjustments quickly.”



His team recently tested Degree Audit successfully and will begin rolling out the function soon. On the subject of teams, Watson believes the CAMS Enterprise support team is outstanding. “CAMS is a great software system,” he said, “and it is supported by an exemplary support team, a strong user community and incredibly helpful users conferences. Three Rivers Systems has done

an excellent job of building a meaningful relationship with our institution and we are excited about the ongoing improvement of our college through the use of CAMS Enterprise.”

About [Criswell College](#)

A Christian college and divinity school in Old East Dallas, Texas, Criswell College’s stated objective is to train students to teach and preach the Bible with emphasis on evangelism, the original languages and biblical truth. Founded in 1971 as Criswell Bible Institute, it later became Criswell Center for Biblical Studies. Affiliated with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention since 2003, the college has more than 300 students from more than 30 states and 30 countries. The college offers Associate of Arts, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts and Master of Divinity degrees. The school is fully accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools with a renewal date of 2020.

About [Three Rivers Systems Inc.](#)

Three Rivers Systems Inc. is a leading provider of comprehensive administrative software solutions for higher education institutions of all sizes. Headquartered in St. Louis, the company has been delivering innovative technology-driven solutions to the educational community since 1985. Three Rivers Systems has a large worldwide client base using CAMS, its Comprehensive Academic Management System. A full-service solution provider, the company delivers software and all implementation, training, project management and support services for its clients.

Source: Criswell College



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