



SELECT

THE RIGHT SYSTEM

The model for evaluating and implementing the Kualu Financial System is different from other enterprise systems. Institutions that choose the Kualu Financial System often have several commonalities.

Most are seeking to:

- Distribute access to financial data for decision-making
- Support complex research accounting and reporting
- Achieve greater control over enterprise systems
- Use a system that meets higher education's unique needs
- Contribute to the broader higher education community

How do you know if this system and approach are right for your institution?



SELECT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

When the university encountered the Kuali Financial System, stakeholders had a clear view of their needs and an understanding of the requirements that would not be met by any of the systems on the market.

Project sponsors Patrick Burns, Chief Information Officer, and Allison Dineen, Vice President of Finance, prioritized three considerations in the selection process: how well the system matched CSU's functional needs, how well the community source model aligned with institutional philosophies, and what cost savings would result.

Mr. Burns explains that of these, the importance of the functional match was the dominant decision factor: "If we could have found the functionality that we needed from a vended system, we might have selected the vended option. We have a strategic imperative for a real research-

management system, and we were just not finding what we needed among the vended solutions. The Kuali Financial System provides what we need."

KFS meets several functionality requirements that are important to CSU, including:

- **Online access for principal investigators**
- **Multi-year budgeting for long-term research projects**
- **Online workflow and tracking to increase transparency of financial approvals**
- **Document attachments to provide context for financial reviews and audit trails**

The technology organization's endorsement of Kuali was pragmatic rather than philosophical. Don Hesser, Director of Information Systems, provides the following evaluation:



Our functional users are enamored with the system. When our campus embraces something, we seek to enable them.

Code is code. We have found the KFS code to be equal to or a little better than vendor code, and we all benefit because it is “open” code.

The architecture is current and sound. Kuali Financial System is a SOA-based system that integrates easily with other systems and positions us well for future growth.

The technical learning curve was reasonable. Our depth of expertise is on Oracle and AIX. Kuali Financial System required us to learn several new technologies. We leaned on rSmart and the community to help with our learning curve, and our staff is successfully gaining the new expertise.



The CSU staff also prioritizes the ease of use of the system. Ms. Dineen explains, “While some of our staff use the system daily, there are many others – faculty, principal investigators, high-level administrators – who access the Kuali Financial System only occasionally. We require a system that is intuitive for these users and the Kuali Financial System meets this need. We believe this ease of access will improve our financial oversight and reduce errors.”

Project sponsors feel that the community source model fits well with CSU's institutional philosophies and attitudes. Moreover, they believe that the very nature of higher education lends itself to community source. Mr. Burns elaborates, “The operations of like institutions are very similar. We are public institutions and have similar regulations. We are all grappling with the same

types of issues and we are open to sharing. Our culture is suited to this type of model and we feel very comfortable with how we engage with Kuali partner institutions.”

Mr. Burns also describes the cost savings: “We believe that our selection of Kuali saved us millions of dollars in licensing and implementation fees. Some of the savings has been re-invested in our staff, but that investment stays within our institution and continues to provide benefit. The financial savings in this economic climate are important to us and to our constituents.”



SELECT

SAN JOAQUIN DELTA COLLEGE

Prior to implementing Kualii, San Joaquin Delta College was using an older version of a proprietary financial system that users found outdated and cumbersome. For a number of reasons, Delta College was using the old financial system “as is” and patching as needed rather than upgrading the system. Over the years, Delta College had realized that it required customization capabilities that its old system did not offer or that were very difficult to achieve. Even simple changes required hard coding that was complex and time consuming for their in-house technology staff. As a result, Delta College could not access and compile data in a manner that supported effective budgeting, reporting and decision-making.

Realizing their legacy finance system was not operating effectively with perpetual patches, Delta College began a gap analysis of alternative financial systems. Delta College found that all the systems, even the systems of the “big players,” did not adequately address the way

Delta College does business. The gap between Delta College’s needs and what vended solutions could provide was significant. Additionally, the price estimates for fully integrated student and financial systems ranged from \$5 million to \$12 million.

Delta College thought it would have to build its own homegrown system and began some initial modeling. Then, Delta College learned about the Kualii Financial System. As an initial step in determining whether Kualii would work for Delta College, the college sent a team of users to Indiana University, where the basic framework of Kualii originated. At Indiana University, Delta College’s team members were able to examine the relevant business processes and assess the similarities and differences in how they do business. Upon returning to Delta College, the functional assessment team informed the campus that it believed the Kualii Financial System was a viable solution for Delta College.



“Our objective is to change our culture to support empowered, distributed management of budgets and spending. The Kualu Financial System is central to enable this change.”



—Dr. Jon C. Stephens
Vice President of Business Services

While working with IU, Delta College's team was able to observe Indiana's decentralized financial structure. Dr. Jon C. Stephens, Vice President of Business Services for Delta College, shared the vision of a highly decentralized financial structure. Dr. Stephens explains, “With our old system, our central financial office was required to make educated guesses about how budgets should be allocated within different institutional organizations—organizations for which the central office may or may not have had a clear understanding of financial priorities and needs. With the Kualu Financial System, the assumption is that those managing a budget are the most knowledgeable about how the money should be spent. Therefore, beyond fixed costs such as employee salaries, the budget manager is empowered to allocate budget funds.”

The efficiencies afforded by the decentralized model are numerous. Many business decisions are turned around quickly because they do

not need to be sent to the central finance department. The process is also very transparent throughout, so there is never a question of where a purchase order might be or whether approval has been given on a particular expense. This information can be quickly and easily accessed.

Without question, the efficiencies made possible through decentralization were strong motivators, but there were additional considerations. Delta College had struggled for years to fit institutional needs to an inflexible system, but the college is configuring the Kualu Financial System to match needs. With configurations, Delta College is able to match how data is recorded, generated, and accessed to actual business processes and reporting needs. The system cleanly matches institutional needs, simplifies previously cumbersome tasks, and gives access to data vital to quality decision-making.

