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CU I&E Submission: Leveraging Automation to Improve the Online Flexible Course Experience [1]

Category

Customer Service
Technology

Submitted By

Bryan Melville, bryan.melville@colorado.edu [2], Academic Technology Development Product Owner

Project Team

Bryan Melville, bryan.melville@colorado.edu [2], Academic Technology Development Product Owner
Jason Black, jason.s.black@colorado.edu [3], Sr. Domain Architect - SSD
Quang Do, quang.do@colorado.edu [4], Software Engineer / SW Analyst
Anita Antony Samy, anita.antonysamy@colorado.edu [5], Sr. Quality Assurance Engineer
Ahman Woods, ahman.woods@colorado.edu [6], Software Engineer/Analyst

Project Description

Online Flexible is an asynchronous program in the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies in which students can start their courses at any time, and have six months from their start date to finish. Previously, instructors of Online Flexible courses had no easy way to verify when students had exceeded that time frame and final grades were due. This led to students submitting assignments after their end date had passed and their grades were locked, creating wasted effort for the student and the instructor, as well as final grades being submitted late by instructors. Academic Technology Development has launched two new processes that help resolve these issues. The first is a custom Canvas integration that calculates and displays the end date and final grade due date to instructors. The second is an automated email notification that reminds instructors to submit their final grades once a student’s end date passes.

Project Efficiency

This is the first Canvas integration that we have built that leverages ODIN for data, and we had to create custom logic to accurately calculate the Online Flexible student end date and

final grade due date, because that data wasn't available elsewhere. Prior to this effort, Continuing Education spent a minimum of 5+ hours per week (250+ hours per year) managing these issues through a chain of emails between instructors, admins and the Records Office, which is time now saved through automation. The old process also had a single point of failure, the CE administrator, which our process has removed.

Project Inspiration

The inspiration for this project was a desire to help the students and staff of Online Flexible courses by alleviating the chaos and dissatisfaction being created by this issue. This lack of visibility into student end dates resulted in both calculable impacts to Continuing Education, such as the 5+ hours each week (250+ hours per year) spent by instructors and administrators in addressing escalated support cases and dealing with late grade submissions, as well as incalculable damage to the Division of Continuing Education and the University/system in terms of the impact on student success, student retention, reputational damage, etc.

What Makes You Happiest about this Project?

I always love delivering a solution that has a measurable, real world impact on the student experience and the University, and with this automation we've been able to do just that. Fully online, flexible courses like these may be strategically critical to the University in the future, and I'm excited that we were able to deliver a low-cost, easy to maintain, common-sense solution to a serious problem facing this course modality.

Additional Information

Source URL:https://www.cu.edu/controller/i-e-awards/past-submissions/cu-ie-submission-leveraging-automation-improve-online

Links
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[4] mailto:quang.do@colorado.edu [5] mailto:anita.antonysamy@colorado.edu
[6] mailto:ahman.woods@colorado.edu