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Dakota County Technical College

Balances Academic and Workforce Missions, Preparing Students for Work Today and More Education Tomorrow

*A business case analysis showcasing four entrepreneurial units
and the technology used to support it.*

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An Augusoft Strategic Partner

Dakota County Technical College (DCTC) located in Rosemont, Minnesota, faced the challenge of generating revenue to support its technical programs in addition to selling General Education credits. To achieve this goal DCTC uses four entrepreneurial units to help support their technical education mission and advance entrepreneurship in the community it serves. DCTC also implemented Lumens, Augusoft's web-hosted Lifelong Learning Management System, to eliminate repetitive and time-consuming tasks so staff could focus on more critical activities. This case study describes how DCTC generated revenue through its four entrepreneurial units and significantly increased non-credit program registrations and streamlined its processes using new technology.



Background

Dakota County Technical College (DCTC) is located in Rosemont, Minnesota, 30 minutes south of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The 40-year-old school draws primarily from the metro area's southern suburbs, but its student body also includes people from the inner city and from the rural area to its south.



Dakota County Technical College, Main Campus

DCTC serves more than 4,500 students in over 50 career programs leading to either a degree or a certificate. Over 8,500 students participate in customized training, non-credit courses through the school's Continuing Education and Customized Training Department. About 200 students are engaged in various entrepreneurial courses.

"We strive to balance our academic and workforce

missions," says Christine Pigsley, DCTC's Dean of Student Affairs & General Education. "We are preparing students for work today and also giving them the opportunity to acquire more education tomorrow through our Continuing Education and Customized Training programs."

Pigsley notes that one of the major challenges a technical school like DCTC has that a general community college does not is finding funding to support their technical programs, which require heavy investment in technology. "We've had to generate revenue to support the technical programs above just selling General Education credits," she says.

To achieve this goal, DCTC has four units that help support its technical education mission and its efforts to advance entrepreneurship in the communities it serves. These units are:

Continuing and Customized Training, which consistently ranks as number 1 or 2 in the state for providing training to business and industry. In operation for over 20 years, this department has a remarkably successful track record in attracting large and small employers throughout the region that are seeking customized training for their

workforce. It also serves a growing number of individuals who are looking for non-credit courses to help them expand or retool their skills so they can compete in today's tight job market.

IT Training Center, which offers short courses and certification training and testing in Eagan, a town that is convenient to the downtown metro area and to the airport.

Apple Valley – Partners in Higher Education, a partnership with Inver Hills Community College and Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. When the former town hall became available for lease in Apple Valley, DCTC took an entrepreneurial leap of faith and formed a partnership to create a university on a small campus. With 100,000 cars passing the site daily, it is perfectly situated for a program that combines credit-based and customized training. The successful venture generates funds to support programs on DCTC's main campus. Credit-based programs at Apple Valley now attract over 1,000 students annually. The location also includes a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) that operates as an extension of the SBDC at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul and serves approximately 250 individuals a year.

Institute for Business, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which opened in 2004 and serves as the center of DCTC's efforts to encourage entrepreneurship. The institute provides seminars and workshops on business topics, a speaker series, and a summer youth entrepreneurship camp for STEM students.

"Through the institute, faculty get to explore and take risks and do things they wouldn't normally do – not only on the credit side, but also on the non-credit side," says Pigsley. "For example, we began offering occupational Spanish courses to police officers and other first responders."

In-depth Continuing Ed and Customized Training

DCTC's Continuing Education and Customized Training Department includes 20 customized training directors who work with companies to develop specialized training contracts. "The department has ongoing contracts with over 200 companies," says Gary Hebert, Dean of Business, Technology & Customized Training. "The department has been used to test new programming and new training opportunities,

Customer: Dakota County Technical College

Location: Rosemount, MN

Business Units: Continuing and Customized Training, IT Training Center, Apple Valley-Partners in Higher Education and the Institute for Business, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Websites: dctc.edu, dctc.augusoft.net

Students Serviced: 3,000 Credit, 4,500 Career Program, 8,500 CT/Non-credit, 200 entrepreneurial students

ERP: Legacy - ISRS

Augusoft Product: Lumens

Augusoft Services: Online Class Integration

"We had an increase of 2,000 registrations the first year with Lumens, and I would attribute most of that to the online self-registration capabilities we now offer our students."

Gary Hebert, Dean of Business, Technology and Customized Training

"First, Lumens facilitates a 24/7 ability to serve our customer. Second, it allowed us to walk the talk in terms of being an institution of higher learning. We teach our entrepreneurs that they need to do market research and that they shouldn't just operate from the gut. That's what Lumens does for us; it allows us to let the numbers talk, not our gut. It helps us make more informed decisions.

Christine Pigsley, Dean of Student Affairs and General Education

some of which have then migrated from the non-credit side of the school to the credit side.

“We focus primarily on a few key areas – IT, business and professional development, manufacturing, and transportation,” adds Hebert, who divides his time equally between directing the programs of DCTC’s Business Department and heading the Continuing Ed and Customized Training Department. “We’re looking at some expansion on the health care side. We do a little bit on that area now but not enough to call it one of our major divisions so we’re looking to expand in that area.”

One of the reasons DCTC has been so successful in the customized training arena is its ability to leverage the power of grants from the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership to support companies that need employee training to grow or that have employees who need to be retrained in order to retain jobs. “Grant money is available for these companies, but they’re not experts in locating the grants and applying for them and managing the grants,” says Pigsley. “This is where our institution has been entrepreneurial in not only supplying the training, but also providing the value-added service of bringing in the grant money. This is the piece that really makes it work.”

Examples of grants that DCTC has been able to garner include a \$255,701 grant to train 136 Rollx Vans employees and a \$263,945 grant to provide frontline management training for 1,700 employees of Northwest Airlines (now Delta Airlines). Because many of its customized training clients are national and even global companies, DCTC is actively exploring how to serve their clients training needs outside of Minnesota through online courses.

“Our customized training directors end up facilitating conversations instead of selling training,” says Pigsley. “They’re out in the marketplace finding what

companies need and having conversations about how we can help improve their bottom line, what do they need to grow and informing people about how we can facilitate that through monies that are available at various levels of government. We’ve been very successful when presenting that message.

“We compete with large national training companies for these contracts,” adds Pigsley. “One of the things that sets us apart is our ability to offer both non-credit and credit training, which the large national training firms can’t. Often times a company doesn’t realize until we’re in the process of developing a training program that what they want could be credit based.”

Open Enrollment

The department’s open enrollment Continuing Education division provides technical training for individuals who are looking to upgrade their skills and obtain a certificate. Non-credit Continuing Ed offerings include some entrepreneurial courses. “We have a four-hour Business Plan Development course along with a Business Writing course, and a Starting Your Business course,” says Hebert. “These are taught by the person who teaches our 18-hour Entrepreneurship



Student Entrepreneurship - Landscaping Business

certificate program. These non-credit courses often lead to people signing up for that credit program.”

Hebert, who has been a member of NACCE since the organization’s first conference in 2003, notes that many students from DCTC’s 50+ credit programs also take advantage of the Entrepreneurship certificate program. “Whether they’re a graphic artist or working

in auto body, for example, many of them are interested in starting their own business so when they couple their two-year program with the certificate, it can help them launch a new business. That was one of the big impetuses behind starting the certificate program; students were saying, 'I'd like to start my own business.'"

In 2011, DCTC will launch an 18-credit online program called Small Business Operations that will be available to students in all the college's curricula. Since the program is online, it will also be available to students across the nation.

Introducing Lumens

In May 2008, DCTC implemented Lumens, Augusoft's web-hosted enrollment management system, for its Continuing Education courses. Prior to that the department had no online self-registration or payment system; registrations were done by fax and phone and manually processed.

"When Lumens first became available, I think folks like myself who were on the front lines dealing with consumers and with large corporate clients felt that all of a sudden we had moved into the 21st century," Pigsley says. "Prior to that, people would ask if they could go to our website and pay and we'd say, 'No, we can't do that.' Lumens allowed us to get down to the community level and provide individuals with training and to facilitate that in a much more consumer-friendly way."

For Pigsley, Lumens has brought two major benefits to DCTC. "First, it facilitates a 24/7 ability to serve our customer," she says. "If they want training, they can get in there and find what they need and pay for it and there's no having to wait for the next business day. It's very just-in-time."

"Second, It allowed us to walk the talk in terms of

Data Points

Before Lumens

- 5,480 registrations; \$2.6 million+ revenue (2008)

After Lumens

- 8,425 registrations; \$2.5 million+ revenue (2009)
- 6,953 registrations 2.9 million+ revenue (2010)
- Business served = 500+
- New entrepreneurs created = 100+

being an institution of higher learning. We teach our entrepreneurs that they need to do market research and that they shouldn't just operate from the gut. That's what Lumens does for us; it allows us to let the numbers talk, not our gut. It helps us make more informed decisions. If we practice what we teach, then we are more authentic in the education that we deliver to entrepreneurs. We are mission driven, and to uphold our mission we have to serve the public. We have to be as efficient as possible. These are not private dollars; these are public funds that we are good stewards of."

Big Changes Quickly

"Lumens has also made us more profitable because of the reduced staff time it now takes to handle registration. Our profitability continues to increase and our net revenue is way up," says Hebert. "We had an increase of 2,000 registrations the first year with Lumens, and I would attribute most of that to the online self-registration capabilities we now offer our students. The feedback from students is that they really appreciate Lumens. From a user-friendly perspective, being able to put things in their online shopping cart and check out is great. Some of them struggled with our previous system. We literally lost people because for a \$29, two-hour course, they were not going to go through the hassle; it wasn't worth it. Now, making the payments is like buying a book on Amazon.com. So we get lots of good feedback."

Lumens has helped the department expand its offerings as well. “Lumens has helped so much in our ability to handle registration in a very efficient way and has allowed us to expand the types of things we do,” says Hebert. “We have a couple different programs that Lumens has been particularly helpful with. For example, we have a program called The Edge, which consists of eight workshops that help people look for jobs, with resume building, with interviews and so on. This was one of our offerings for dislocated workers across the county. Before Lumens, doing all those registrations for eight workshops was challenging because all the registrations were processed by hand.”

Hiring someone to handle such complicated registrations or to just process the registrations for other open enrollment courses was not cost effective. “The price point of an open course usually wasn’t such that it allowed us to hire a person to handle registrations,” said Hebert. “Now, with Lumens, we can offer relatively inexpensive courses and make a profit.” Because Lumens has freed up staff time Hebert’s department is busy developing additional business and IT courses and courses in several additional areas that are seen to have growth potential.

Other Advantages

“Lumens allows staff members more time to do other more important jobs,” says Hebert. “It also allows us to track the type of training that people have signed up for and to offer them other courses that we have in their system. So we can easily do cross marketing.” Hebert believes his department’s staff feels more professional now that Lumens is in place. “They’re not just pushing paper and they’re working at a higher level with other skills to help set up new courses and bring in new experts to provide those resources,” he says. “I think they feel more important in what it is that they do. I think they’re very proud of the fact that we’re doing more with the same amount of employees. Before it seemed that we had to keep adding people

if we wanted the registration numbers to go up, but now we’re able to keep this staff at the current level but they produce more. If you can do that in today’s economy that’s important. We’ve had no need for layoffs and we’re doing a better job.”

More Accuracy

DCTC has also been pleased with the reporting functions of Lumens. “We have a financial person, sort of an accountant within our continuing ed/customized training side, who is now able to do daily reports that help her do her work and keep track of things in a much more user-friendly way,” says Hebert. “There is a daily report of all registrations that came in overnight and then the financial person can easily track payment. Again, in the past all that was a paper trail set-up that we had to track manually; now it is done electronically.

“As a result, we’re more accurate,” Hebert adds. “In the past there was a tendency once in a while to lose a piece of paper or miss a registration, or for us not to have all the information that is needed and to leave blanks in a registration. When you’re in Lumens it prompts you; it forces you to give those responses that you need to complete the registration. We’re audited by the state on how we transact our business, and Lumens has cleared up accuracy issues we used to have. In particular, we had accuracy issues with credit cards and kept putting in manual fixes. Lumens became our savior, so to speak.”

Continuing Education Assistant Gloria Kowalczyk uses Lumens on a daily basis. “The ability to create reports quickly and easily has been a substantial improvement,” she says. “It has been so much better to actually have a system where we know what classes are running and what isn’t, that the student demographics are real and up-to-date, and can be easily accessed. I am so grateful to have accurate reports to access at any time. The learning curve was

great at first, but once we went online with it, I find it to be very adaptable and intuitive.”

Future Plans

With Lumens in place, Hebert’s department is hoping to greatly increase its online education potential. “We have partnered with ed2go®, which has worked to bring our courses online,” he says. “We used to have a different online provider and offered just a few courses a month. Now we’ve had a 200 percent increase in what we’re offering and what we’re selling to local customers.

“We have a pretty good online program on the credit side, but this has now given us an opportunity on the non-credit side. The online class interface within Lumens allows us to upload the ed2go programs directly into our course schedule without building hundreds of courses; it’s just automatically there. It’s been terrific!”

Looking ahead, plans call for implementing Lumens for the customized training clients. On the non-credit side, Hebert hopes registration numbers will continue to increase. “I am hoping we can hit 10,000 just on the non-credit side,” he says. “We should be able to do this, which would mean we’re literally doubling our ability to deliver over from what it was two or three years ago.”

Learn More

To learn more about how DCTC’s four entrepreneurial units were created as funding streams and how Lumens benefits their programs, select the free webinar entitled “Running a Successful Non-credit Entrepreneurial Program with Your Credit Based Program” at augusoft.net/webinar. To learn more about Augusoft, please visit augusoft.net or call (763) 331-8300.

About NACCE: The National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) fosters economic development by serving as the hub for the dissemination and integration of knowledge and successful practices regarding entrepreneurship education and student business incubation. As a membership association, NACCE helps community colleges nationwide link their traditional role of workforce development with entrepreneurial development. The results are innovative programs and courses that advance economic growth and prosperity in the communities served by the colleges. NACCE members benefit from: an annual conference and symposium, quarterly journal, monthly webinars and podcasts, dynamic membership list-serve, grant proposal tips specific to entrepreneurial endeavors, entrepreneurship curricula and syllabi for faculty via shared web resources, and beginning and sustaining entrepreneurship and student business incubation program guides. NACCE continues to experience phenomenal growth, and now has over 1,000 individual and institutional members. To learn more about becoming a member or to make a tax deductible donation to this important work, visit nacce.com or call (413) 306-3131.

About Augusoft: Augusoft, Inc. the leader in non-credit education software, develops and maintains Lumens - the first entirely web-hosted Lifelong Learning Management System. Augusoft Lumens is designed for the unique needs of continuing, community, corporate education and workforce development programs in the US and Canada. Complementing institution-wide ERP solutions, Lumens increases online self-registrations, streamlines business processes, reduces overhead and provides easy data analysis with proven ROI.



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