TAB Case Study: Malcolm X College, City College of Chicago

Imagine having close to a 100 years worth of records—and no Records Management system to manage them.

This was the daunting challenge Eddie Phillips inherited when he became Registrar of Malcolm X College (MXC), one of the City Colleges of Chicago. Founded in 1911, the college had tens of thousands of records and many of them were stored in dusty boxes and lateral filing cabinets in a huge, dreary storage room. Phillips was determined to overhaul the college's file room and implement a proper RM strategy.

Phillips initially had a strictly physical conversion in mind, but when the TAB team presented him with a hybrid solution, he knew that was the way to go. The hybrid environment would allow the college to meet its short term goal of having an efficient RM system, and could lead to a purely electronic environment in the future.

Records Upon Records Upon Records

Apart from student grades and transcripts, which colleges are mandated by accredidation bodies to manage, none of MXC's student records were tracked or organized. Once a student record was created, there was no real process to manage or store it. This resulted in a massive file room stacked with boxes upon boxes of records. Staff were forced to spend hours (and sometimes days) sorting through the files in order to find the record they needed. As time went on, the problem got worse—and Phillips had to deal with one monster of a RM challenge.

Planning for the Future

The college needed a simple, streamlined solution that was intuitive, systematic and easy to understand. Initially, the college had planned to do only a physical conversion, consisting of replacing their current vertical tab filing system with the space-saving and efficient side-tab system and creating custom folders and barcoded labels using TABQUIK software. But once the TAB team presented MXC with the TAB FusionRMS, Phillips realized a hybrid solution was the perfect way to

take the college's archaic RM system into the 21st century. The hybrid environment would allow MXC to track both their physical and electronic records, and lay the groundwork for an entirely digital records collection in the future.

Sorting Through the Records

MXC had only a rough estimate of just how many records it had accumulated over the past 100 years. TAB was able to provide Phillips with a highly accurate estimate using cubic filing measurements. TAB measured the height and depth of the existing cabinets to determine the total cubic filing inches. Using this information, TAB was able to accurately determine how many supplies MXC needed, how much shelving space would be required and how many team members were needed to complete the job on time.

Scrubbing

TAB and MXC worked together to thoroughly scrub the college's existing records so that only essential files were converted to the new system. During the process, the team discovered that the existing file information was incomplete. TAB helped the records staff locate the missing information and created a uniform labeling process to ensure all files contained the same information for more efficient retrieval of records.

Converting for More Space

The school also needed to maximize its existing storage space and create a more pleasant working environment for file room staff. Phillips relocated RM staff from their office inside the grey and cold file room to a more worker-friendly location. MXC's existing vertical filing system, which dated back to the 1920s, wasn't large enough to store all of the student records. TAB worked with MXC to determine how much space they needed and recommended converting to a side-tab system that has increased storage space. During the conversion, TAB helped MXC become more environmentally sustainable by using the carbon neutral tabZEROfile folders to store all of the college's records. The folder is 100% recyclable and made from certified products from well-managed forests. TAB also implemented the TABQUIK software to create customized, bar coded labels that made it easy to store and retrieve physical records and maintain a consistent labeling process.

Managing the Hybrid Environment

TAB also implemented the TAB FusionRMS to optimize the hybrid environment. The innovative software allowed MXC to digitize and track physical files, meet accreditation requirements by managing their student grades and transcripts more efficiently, and use the comprehensive search function to quickly locate and retrieve files. The software also provided the college with imaging capabilities, which would allow them to digitally import records on-demand as they were submitted as well as preserve some of their legacy documents.

Unparalleled Support

Phillips was impressed with TAB's ongoing support and help. A member of TAB's team was in frequent communication with Phillips and proactively assessed any potential problems. The team answered questions quickly and if an issue couldn't be resolved over the phone, someone came out to the college right away. TAB also assembled a larger team than they usually would to make sure the engagement was completed on time.

The Perfect File Room

After the conversion process was over, Malcolm X College was left with a streamlined file room that had more space than staff knew what to do with. TAB's new side-tab system housed all of the college's existing student records with enough room left over for other departments to store their files.

File room staff loved the ease of use and efficiency of the TAB FusionRMS software. Searching for a record and retrieving it became simple and hassle free. Gone were the days of constantly running back and forth between departments trying to locate a particular record. Staff could type in a query and instantly know the status of a record, where it was located and see how often it had been retrieved.

Malcolm X College continues to work with TAB to expand their hybrid environment management capabilities. Because they've already leveraged the software's basic capabilities to electronically track close to 100 years worth of documents, Phillips is excited to see what opportunities are available with TAB FusionRMS's more advanced features.

Phillips was so impressed with TAB's solution that he is now presenting it to the other sister colleges of the City Colleges of Chicago district and hopes to eventually have a standardized process across the system. "They're really knowledgeable about their craft. The hybrid solution TAB presented us with allowed us to meet our ultimate objective of having a manageable and easy to use RM system and laid the ground work for a digital system in the future," said Phillips.

Create a Hybrid Environment for Your Records

Interested in creating a hybrid environment for your records collections? We can help! Visit our website or call us for more information.

Technology
Solutions

TAB

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