Implement touch-free transcript processing

By Joan Hope, Editor

CHICAGO — The Registrar's Office at Brown University fulfills more than 30,000 transcript requests a year. That requires three-and-a-half full-time-equivalent staff members' time, said Rob Fitzgerald, university registrar.

And alumni often wait till the last minute to order transcripts because they assume the service will be instant, he said. Other requests get backed up if one has to be handled on a rush basis.

"It's the end document — what students use as their credential," Fitzgerald said. But despite transcript processing's critical importance, it's a big drain on human capital, he said.

Fitzgerald spoke at the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers Strategic Enrollment Management conference about Ellucian eTranscript, the solution that is fully automating PDF transcript fulfillment for Brown's Registrar's Office.

The partnership between Ellucian and the National Student Clearinghouse will make the process touch-free for most e-transcripts. It provides real-time ordering and fulfillment, said Lisa Goldberg of Ellucian.

Institutions that use the NSC ordering service and have an Ellucian student information system can take advantage of the solution. No additional software or cost is involved, Goldberg said. At the time this article was written, officials at NSC and Ellucian expected the system to be released by the end of December 2013 for Banner and Colleague and in the first quarter of 2014 for PowerCampus.

The system meets the expectation of Brown alumni that they can order transcripts any time, Fitzgerald said.

Brown has used the NSC transcript-ordering service for about 10 years, Fitzgerald said. About 70 percent of students and alumni who request transcripts want paper. But a PDF is at least as time-consuming to prepare as paper, he said.

With Ellucian eTranscript, requests for PDF transcripts will be fulfilled automatically, assuming requesting students don't have holds on their records. If the student has a hold or the system can't find the record, the request is placed in a queue for staff members to handle manually.

And the system will save time even for paper transcripts because the staff members won't have to input the request into Banner, Fitzgerald said.

NSC's transcript-ordering site can be customized for institutions, said Adriene Doray-Franklin of NSC. For example, the institution can have its colors on the site.

Consider benefits of Ellucian eTranscript

With Ellucian eTranscript, Registrar's Offices with Ellucian student information systems and National Student Clearinghouse transcript ordering can enjoy:
- ➢ Touch-free PDF transcript processing.
- ➢ Ability to send other documents with transcripts.
- ➢ Document controls such as "no copy" and the ability to cancel the document any time.
- ➢ Immediate delivery, even on weekends. ∎

The eTranscript system offers the capability for students to send other documents — such as letters of recommendation — along with their transcripts. They can upload the documents at the NSC ordering site, if their institution allows that. Officials should check to see what they're sending because having a document attached to the transcript gives it an appearance of validity, Doray-Franklin said.

Brown doesn't allow students to upload additional documents, Fitzgerald said. It's not the institution's responsibility to certify those documents, he added.

Officials can determine whether they want their PDF transcripts to look like the paper transcripts or to have a distinctive look. They can have a watermark, a digital signature, and a legend if institution officials want those features. Brown's PDF transcripts look just like the paper transcripts, Fitzgerald said.

The secure PDFs have a digital certificate added by Adobe LiveCycle, Doray-Franklin said.

Institutions can also add documents to the delivery. For example, Brown sends out a letter asking the recipient to accept the PDF just as if it were a paper transcript.

Document controls enable the sender to specify no offline viewing, no printing, no copying and no modifying. It's also possible to make the text accessible to the visually impaired. The sender can set an expiration date, such as 30 days later. And the sender can revoke the document at any time, Doray-Franklin said.

Students can choose to receive updates about their transcript processing by email or text. And staff members can check the status of an order at any time.

Officials can also track data by the day or the month, Doray-Franklin said. For example, they might want to know how many transcripts have been processed during a certain period of time. ∎