

# Houston Community College

Education

## Customer Overview

Houston Community College is one of the largest community college systems in the country. Since opening in 1971, it has trained 1.3 million students in various associate and technical degree programs. With campuses in every corner of the Houston area serving over 60,000 students, HCC has been providing education to those who need an alternative solution to attending a major university. Students choose HCC because they can afford it, it offers a quality academic education before continuing at a four-year university, or they wish to pursue a specialized workforce course of study such as a technical support for health or financial industries. HCC is also one of the top college choices in the nation for international students.

## The Challenge

In their vision statement, Houston Community College promises to be "the most relevant community college in the country." Despite top-notch faculty, expanded degree plans and course offerings and new educational facilities, the Houston Community College Web site was not adequately communicating any of this. "HCC's Web site was built in the late 90s using HTML and an assortment of languages for integrating user requested technologies," says William Carter, Vice Chancellor of Information Technology. Hired in October 2006 to overhaul the IT infrastructure and improve student online services, Carter knew the Web site needed to be addressed immediately. "I would say that our most pressing need was to develop a web presence with portal capabilities and workflows around enrollment management. We needed a better understanding of our user's patterns and way to provide immediate feedback to our user's requirements. Vignette provided the platform for all this to be done, but the planning was still in its infancy."

## The Goal

Before any new web presence could be planned, several issues had to be addressed. Over a decade's worth of deeply rooted organic Web growth needed to be sorted out such as functionality that had been added without regard to past classifications and enhancements that had been built as quick fixes. Additionally, no consistent business practices had been established for content creation and publishing. In all, there was no solid plan laying out who was responsible for posting what and where, and more importantly, when that content was to be removed once it became outdated.

Vignette's Next-Generation Web technology had been purchased a year before, but no one had implemented it. "The Communication Department attempted to implement the system in Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 but was unsuccessful due to the commitment required at the system and college levels for developing consistent branding and consolidating content," says Carter.

## The Solution

The overall goal of the HCC Content Management and Portal Project is to provide access to educational opportunities and services anywhere, anytime in order to facilitate the achievement of students' lifelong learning goals.

### First Step: The Plan

To help create an implementation plan, HCCS tapped Global Times, Inc. (GTI) and Xpediant Solutions Group, Ltd. (XS), one of Vignette's most experienced professional services partners. GTI and XS provided valuable support in the development of the project plan and attainment of feedback from over 250 faculty, staff and students during the implementation phase. All user comments were recorded and used for the development of the web templates and the online navigation," says Carter. "Soon after, GTI, XS and HCC's Information Technology staff provided VCM training and access to the system to more than 100 content administrators and their support staff. The major hurdle that the college had and still has is getting our users used to the idea that content management means sharing your information, not being redundant and, when changes need to be made, collaborating with a cross functional group before moving forward." After exploration and assessment, the cross-functional team set streamlining enrollment as its first and primary aim.

### Second Step: The Technology

The team knew that Vignette's Content Management and Portal software would be key to running the new site. It would enable HCC to:

- Support a worldwide brand through Web-standard style management
- Dramatically increase the number of business owners managing their own content through decentralized content management

- Support a framework to which content can be added over time while maintaining a student-centric navigation and content experience
- Support HCC's business processes and changes to those processes in a dynamic Web environment

### **Third Step: Buy-In**

The content publishing features of the Vignette solution were vital to the project's success.

Prior to implementing Vignette, the system and college sites were maintained by separate web developers housed at each college. Each site had redundant student services information that did not have consistent messages or branding. With Vignette, content administrators are able to ensure that their sections are up to date and valuable to the users as everyone works together to create a single message

### **The Results**

The new HCCS.edu site was successfully launched after nine months of hard work in November 2007. "We have pushed the responsibility to the users while maintaining central control over the Vignette software, database and servers," says Carter. "As we move forward, the ability to implement features such as webcasting and an Intranet will be accomplished in one controllable environment. Now, HCC is positioned to provide online resources that will address the ever-changing needs of our students and community." The new site has the potential to become a powerful recruiting tool to attract future students, while providing full support for HCC's current students, faculty and staff.

### **In Conclusion**

"Like any community college, HCC's needs are dynamic and evolving. Vignette provides the college with the ability to maintain consistent branding and Web site structure and the users with a rules software platform that provide them with ownership, management capabilities, approval processes for publishing and centralized services."

### **About Global Times**

Founded in 1989, Global Times is a Houston, Texas-based company and a leading provider of innovative digital solutions and services to Global 2000 companies.

### **About Xpediant Solutions**

Xpediant Solutions provides expert mode and full life cycle development services for building Web applications across the enterprise, including portal, collaboration, content management and business process management applications.

### **About Vignette**

Vignette provides software and services that deliver the Web's most dynamic user experiences. The Vignette Web Experience brings rich media and engaging content to life for the world's greatest brands. Vignette is headquartered in Austin, Texas with operations worldwide. Visit [www.vignette.com](http://www.vignette.com).