

## Salem State College Takes a Technological Leap Forward

### The Customer:

Founded in 1854 as Salem Normal School, Salem State College offers more than 40 diverse traditional and nontraditional undergraduate programs, eight graduate programs, and a variety of certificate and non-credit enrichment courses. Located near the center of historic Salem, Massachusetts, 14 miles north of downtown Boston, Salem State College has a total enrollment of 8589 full- and part-time students.

### PeopleSoft Products:

Student Administration: Student Financials, Student Records, Academic Advisement, Campus Community, Financial Aid, Recruiting and Admissions  
Financial Management for Education and Government: Asset Management, Billing, General Ledger, Payables, Receivables, Purchasing

PeopleSoft Advancement

### Computing Environment:

- Hardware: Sun/Unix
- Database: Oracle

### Web Site:

[www.salemstate.edu](http://www.salemstate.edu)



“Higher education is under a lot of scrutiny to provide outstanding service to students, and yet make education affordable. We need to be able to account for how we’re spending our money and how the process is working,” asserts Robert Paterson, Chief Information Officer at Salem State College.

Over the years, Salem State College created its own COBOL systems to handle financial operations and student administration. As time went by, several shadow systems sprung up, each keeping their own data. The hardware became difficult to maintain. “We had systems in place that automated processes, but they were pretty rudimentary,” recalls Paterson. “We had a lot of problems getting bills out to students in an accurate and timely fashion. The systems had difficulty reconciling old course records and keeping track of courses that students were taking.”

The solution, according to Paterson, was to take a leap forward in technology with PeopleSoft Financial Management and PeopleSoft Student Administration solutions.

### More Than What They Were Looking For

When they began their search for software, the key benefit that Salem State College was looking for from a new system was to have one database to maintain all campus data. As they evaluated software products, it became clear that PeopleSoft offered that, plus quite a bit more. “We saw the potential in the technology,” explains Paterson.

“The breadth of what PeopleSoft offered was wider than the others. PeopleSoft gives us room to expand our functionality.”

### Changing the Way Business is Done

Implementation of Financial Management started in May 1999. The college’s first move was to bring in KPMG Peat Marwick LLP to assist with the implementation. The project team’s implementation strategy was to change business processes rather than modify the software to accommodate old procedures. “We didn’t want to have a brand new system that did everything exactly as we did before,” states Paterson. “We changed our business processes to meet the demands of the product. That’s one reason that our implementation went so quickly and was so successful.”

By July 2000, General Ledger, Purchasing, Payables, Receivables, and Billing were live throughout the college. The implementation of Student Administration was well underway by March 2000. Recruiting and Admissions was the first module to go live, in November 2000, just in time to admit students for the fall semester of 2001.

“The implementation of PeopleSoft was relatively straightforward,” says Paterson. “The big curve was getting folks to change the way they do business. That is much more perplexing to us than the functionality of the product.”

Plans call for the rest of the Student Administration system to be implemented during 2001. Campus Community, Financial Aid, and Student Records are scheduled to go live in March. The Student Financials implementation is planned for June and Academic Advising is planned for August. Salem State College also plans to implement Advancement by December.

### A Big Leap

Since July, the project team has been gradually introducing the Financial Management system to every campus department, from the President's office to the academic department chairs—a total of 350 users. "Everyone is just ecstatic about it," says Paterson. "We're doing all of our financial operations on the system, including all of our purchasing and budget work."

Even though PeopleSoft has been live only a short time, Paterson reports a significant increase in productivity. "The purchasing staff used to have to hand-enter all their information," he says. "Now they have time to do other, more value-added functions in that area. We're starting to see people's jobs change."

He predicts further productivity improvements as the campus staff becomes proficient with the new system. "One year from now the productivity of everyone will be much higher as they begin to understand the system better," he says. "For example, people are going to be able to manage their budgets much more effectively. Many of these people never saw any of this information, until now. You can just see people's eyes lighting up. We're starting to see the paper flow and business processes change."

Ultimately, Paterson expects that this technological leap with PeopleSoft will lead to better financial management throughout the college. "The system allows us to accurately show people how we are spending our money and what they are getting for their dollars. Having this knowledge, along with a much more proficient financial organization, will allow us to do more with the resources we have."

### Serving Students More Efficiently—and Effectively

Expectations are equally high for the Student Administration system. "We're going to see better service to our students," affirms Paterson. "They'll be able to do more things online, such as register for classes, work with their advisors, and get their grades. We'll be able to get more information to them faster."

"PeopleSoft is going to make us much more effective in our interactions with our students, whether its recruitment, student services, or the quality of the education we provide," he sums up. "It's going to make us a lot more competitive."

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**Robert Paterson**  
Chief Information Officer  
Salem State College

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