

# University of Central Florida Upgrades Financials to Manage \$817 Million—and Growing—Budget



University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida  
www.ucf.edu

## Industry:

Education & Research

## Annual Budget:

\$817.5 million

## Employees:

9,286

## Oracle Products & Services:

PeopleSoft Enterprise  
Financial Management  
Supply Chain Management  
Human Capital Management  
Campus Solutions  
Oracle Database  
Oracle Consulting Services  
Oracle University

## Key Benefits:

- Reduced time needed to authorize purchases orders from overnight to instantly
- Gained the ability to manage student aid disbursements and human resources with the financials system
- Met state timeline for creating its own financial system
- Enabled fast, individually tailored reporting to the university's many departments

*“Oracle’s PeopleSoft applications help us address the challenges of running our university and business operations effectively.” – Rebecca Vilsack, Associate Controller, University of Central Florida*

Like the city in which it is based, the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando has been shaped—and reshaped—by two major social and demographic forces: stunning growth and rapid change. Originally founded as Florida Technological University in 1963 at the direction of the state, the university changed its name and expanded its curriculum in 1978. Today UCF matriculates more than 46,000 students on 21 campuses and employs more than 9,000 faculty and staff. Among its missions is to “offer the best undergraduate education available in Florida.”

UCF has made technology and technological innovation the cornerstone of its educational and administrative strategy. As evidence, it is the only state institution to rank as one of Yahoo’s “most wired” U.S. colleges for four consecutive years. It also was one of the first state colleges in Florida to move off a statewide legacy accounting system and adopt a more flexible, innovative platform that met the university’s specific needs.

“Managing growth is one of our university’s ongoing challenges,” said Rebecca Vilsack, an associate controller at the University of Central Florida. “In a relatively short time, we have become the seventh-largest university in the country. It is critical that we provide a financial structure that allows flexibility in managing information.”

To achieve this flexibility—and with an eye toward becoming a model for other state universities throughout Florida—UCF built a financial technology infrastructure on Oracle Database and stacked it with a comprehensive financial and supply chain solution from Oracle’s PeopleSoft Enterprise line of products.

### Huge and Growing Budget

As UCF's student population and campuses have grown, so has its operating budget. During the 2005-2006 academic calendar year, UCF's operating budget was \$817.5 million. Administering and overseeing the budget is a complex undertaking: some 1,500 employees use the accounting system, and more than 800 employees are authorized to create requisitions.

"For our financials alone, the university uses total disk space of 111 gigabytes," Vilsack said. "We have 61,257 indexes using 23.7 gigabytes; we have 53,555 tables using 87.3 gigabytes; and we have 25,975 views."

The system the university inherited—a state-run software package called the Florida Accounting Information Resource, or FLAIR—had limited reporting capabilities and no Web resources. It also required long sequences of manual tracking procedures. "With our legacy system, static reports were distributed to departments either via a hard copy or through e-mail," she said.

To complicate matters, the FLAIR system was being phased out for the state's 11 universities. The universities were authorized to implement independent accounting systems beginning in fiscal year 2004, and UCF elected to move as early as possible. "It was a major transition for the 11 state universities to move away from the legacy FLAIR system and implement new accounting systems," Vilsack said.

### Twenty-one Campuses, One Solution

UCF used the opportunity created by the migration from FLAIR to improve its system for the long haul with Oracle's PeopleSoft Enterprise Financials application, which integrates seamlessly with UCF's PeopleSoft Enterprise Supply Chain, Human Capital Management, and Student Financials applications. In planning for its new solution, UCF knew it wanted to avoid one management headache: having different financial and purchasing solutions at each of its 21 campuses.

PeopleSoft Enterprise's Web capabilities eliminated that concern. For the first time, UCF could centralize management while localizing access. "The great thing about our solution is that it is managed from a central location, and all sites use and access the PeopleSoft financial system via the Web," Vilsack said.

In addition, all the slow manual processes associated with the FLAIR legacy system have been eliminated or streamlined through automation. As a result, UCF's accounting operations have become more up-to-date, autonomous, and useful to the university's various departments.

"By implementing PeopleSoft Enterprise applications, the university has moved away from centralized reporting to decentralized self-reporting at the campus and departmental level," Vilsack said. "Now employees can create reports when needed via the Web—without programming intervention. It allows them to get information faster and frees up IT staff members to focus on other activities. The analysis individual users can do with the data is also phenomenal."

"At its most fundamental level, Oracle has met our needs because we were able to successfully devolve from the state's FLAIR system," she continued. "We also gained integrated data, better reporting capabilities, and improved access for authorized users from any Web browser."

UCF ultimately received an award for the project. "We met our devolution go live date of July 1, 2003, on time and under budget. UCF's excellence in converting more than 1,000 users from the legacy FLAIR system earned the financials implementation team a 2004 Davis Productivity Team Award," Vilsack said, explaining that the award recognizes and rewards state government employees whose work significantly increases productivity and reduces costs or promotes innovation within the delivery of state services.

### **The Next Step: Upgrade**

In time, UCF wanted even more from its solution, and again it looked to the PeopleSoft Enterprise product line. "Our original PeopleSoft Enterprise Financial Management implementation was really about the mandated devolution from the FLAIR system," Vilsack said.

To take the system to the next level, UCF sought to participate in Oracle's Early Success Program (ESP), which provides dedicated resources and support to accelerate the upgrade to PeopleSoft Enterprise Financial Management and PeopleSoft Enterprise Supply Chain Management version 8.9.

**“Oracle’s PeopleSoft financials solution has been invaluable. We’re now a 24/7 operation for information retrieval.”**

Rebecca Vilsack  
Associate Controller  
University of Central  
Florida

### Approvals in Minutes

Each year, the university processes more than 32,000 requisitions and nearly as many purchase orders. Moving its entire purchasing operations online has trimmed costs, reduced errors, eliminated needless paper trails, and freed purchasing staff members from sluggish routing procedures.

“With the previous system, getting a purchase order approved was an overnight process,” Vilsack said. “Now, once an order is approved and the budget validated, it’s a matter of minutes before we’re able to authorize the purchasing department to execute a purchase order.”

Together, the financial and purchasing solutions yield a wealth of useful financial data. For the first time, UCF financial staff can parse and collate the data to meet the wide-ranging needs of the administration. “The great thing is that the data can be presented in various ways,” Vilsack said. “For example, just one piece of information—such as a category within the purchasing module—can be analyzed numerous ways.”

### Why Oracle?

In its first round selection—when the school was first given the opportunity to move off of the state accounting system—UCF went straight to Oracle’s PeopleSoft Enterprise Financials. “For financials we did not evaluate other products,” Vilsack said. “Our university wanted integration with our PeopleSoft-based student and HR systems, so the commitment was made early on to fully utilize PeopleSoft Enterprise applications.”

For its 2006 financials upgrade, UCF returned to the PeopleSoft solution for two reasons: long-term satisfaction with the solution and the opportunity to partner with Oracle for the upgrade through the Early Success Program. “The ESP provided project management support, escalated priority support, and direct input for enhancements,” Vilsack said.

### Implementation Process

Both implementations—the original and the upgrade—went exactly as planned, Vilsack said. “The PeopleSoft Financial Management 8.4 implementation project began on June 3, 2002 and successfully went live, on time and under budget, on July 1, 2003,” Vilsack said. “The PeopleSoft Enterprise 8.9 upgrade successfully rolled out as planned on May 1, 2006.”

In addition, the solution needed only slight modifications. “We basically use the product ‘out of the box,’ choosing to make few customizations. Instead, we look to retool our business processes, when necessary, to align with the system’s best practices. This approach has been a winning combination for UCF.”

*The University of Central Florida (UCF), a member of the state university system, serves more than 46,000 students on 21 campuses. Its service area encompasses 11 counties in the Orlando area.*