CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT
Gonzaga College High School

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Gonzaga College High School takes pride in its nearly 200-year history of providing a rigorous, values-driven curriculum for young men in the heart of the nation’s capital. But for all its triumphs—from a loyal community of parents and alumni to a seasoned staff—Gonzaga faced a challenge: It needed to move its legacy information systems to cloud-based, modernized systems.

A partnership with Blackbaud helped to reimagine the way Gonzaga connects its entire community of teachers and staff, parents and students, and donors and friends. The school’s digital transformation yielded immediate results: more families applying, revenue growth, and a drop in late payments—plus invaluable cost and time savings.

Phasing in Change

Gonzaga first became a Blackbaud customer in the mid-90s with simple database tools. Over the years, Gonzaga’s leaders recognized the need for digital growth to provide an exceptional school experience. But they also recognized the challenges that would accompany such change.

Gonzaga College High School uses Blackbaud to power:

✓ Marketing
✓ Enrollment management
✓ Student information
✓ Tuition management
✓ School website
✓ Fundraising and customer relationship management
✓ Fund accounting
The Cloud Solution for K–12 Schools brings together a suite of tools designed specifically for schools such as Gonzaga. Scott Blair, the school’s director of information systems, proposed a gradual cloud solution rollout that would connect every aspect of the school—from records, tuition, and enrollment management to fundraising and its entire online presence—with a strategic change management approach.

Gonzaga’s administrative leadership supported Blair’s proposal, and Blair and other key personnel, including Gonzaga’s chief operations officer, got to work. “With each successful implementation comes more benefits for our community and more confidence in moving to the next Blackbaud product,” Blair said.

Gonzaga started in the summer of 2017 with a revamp of its “front door”: the website that serves as a digital introduction to the school. A new content management system provided a sleek, responsive website with an easy-to-manage design that uses industry best practices. Gonzaga hired a senior marketing and communications director—a critical step in building the new website, since it involved front-end marketing and communications as well as back-end data configurations.

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Improving the User Experience

With this transition, Gonzaga was able to move its comprehensive summer packet online—saving the school over $20,000 in printing and mailing costs, as well as two full days of staff time. Blair said parents appreciated the option to access the real-time content on their mobile devices in their free time, and staff recognized that the cost and time savings would recur each year.

Student applications grew 13% after going live with the new website, a statistic Blair and Gonzaga’s administration attribute to an improved user experience in terms of both navigation and professionalism. “I think that professional look and feel—with a more organized, clear presence—was a big part of it,” Blair said. “It’s crisp, clean. It keeps you there.”

Gonzaga next transitioned its tuition management to the cloud solution in the spring of 2018, putting an end to mailing statements home and instead offering a seamless portal for parents to make payments—as well as built-in reminders. In the first few months alone, the school experienced an 11% increase in tuition revenue, while delinquent payments dropped to half their previous rate. “These are not one-time benefits,” Blair said. “They are residual.”

With Gonzaga’s next step—moving its enrollment management system to Blackbaud’s cloud solution in the fall of 2018—the school tore down a digital barrier. Parents no longer needed a separate login for a third-party website to access information from the school but could stay within Gonzaga’s integrated online environment.

50%
Reduction in delinquent tuition payments for the first year after implementation

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“Parents tell us this is so much easier and makes us so much more accessible,” Blair said. “It’s a better user experience for families and, in turn, it’s easier on the back end for us.”

Building a Digital Community

With proven success from its initial phases, Gonzaga will move into two more stages of its digital overhaul: The school will transition its fundraising and academic records to the Cloud Solution for K–12 Schools in late 2018. Gonzaga’s final phase will fully connect its accounting processes and systems.

Before beginning the migration from Blackbaud’s legacy systems to the cloud solution, tens of thousands of records needed to be reformatted, including hundreds of thousands of individual data points. “It was daunting and overwhelming at first, and we worried about having to do much of it manually,” Blair said.

With the help of Blackbaud’s support team, Blair and his team found a way to work through the challenge and reformat the data in an automated way. “The quality of Blackbaud’s product support is, by far, the best level of support I’ve ever experienced from any company,” Blair said. “The professionalism of the support representatives, combined with their depth and breadth of knowledge, is remarkable. Blackbaud people really care about helping you.”

Gonzaga continues to realize the benefits of having a comprehensive cloud solution that connects the whole school with an exceptional user experience. Or, as Blair put it: “We’re now able to meet the expectations of our community.”

About Blackbaud

Leading uniquely at the intersection of technology and social good, Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, expertise, and data intelligence. We serve the entire social good community, which includes nonprofits, foundations, companies, education institutions, healthcare organizations, and the individual change agents who support them.