

## PENN STATE AND SOFTWARE AG SHARE A STRATEGIC VISION

### Challenge

Since 1979, Penn State has relied on Adbas and Natural for mission-critical administrative, financial and student applications. The University wants to retain its existing investment in technology and people while preparing to meet future business needs.

### Solution

According to Penn State's Ron Rash, "Our vision and Software AG's product directions have intersected, and it's worked out fabulously for us." Because of this shared vision, Penn State extends its use of Software AG technology to modernize core systems and re-use business logic to provide services in a Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA).

### Benefits

- 24/7 availability of business records has improved customer service
- Re-use of business logic protects mainframe investment
- Faster processes streamline operations
- Reduced processing time — in one case, from three weeks to an hour
- Avoidance of a \$100 million rip-and-replace project



The Pennsylvania State University, a public land-grant university, offers more than 160 majors and 1,200 clubs and organizations across 20 undergraduate campuses. Its instructional mission includes undergraduate, graduate and continuing and distance education informed by scholarship and research. Founded in 1855 as an agricultural college, Penn State admitted its first class in 1859. In 2007, Penn State had more than 85,000 students.

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**“Software AG understands our business and can communicate with us in a language we understand. They have been able to translate the use of **technology to meet our business needs** because of their consistent interaction with us.”**

Ron Rash | Senior Director, Administrative Information Services | Penn State

### **Aligning technology with business requirements**

With a significant investment in mainframe technology, Penn State must ensure that its legacy applications can keep up with its changing business needs. To that end, the University performs a technology review every few years. And it has found that Software AG’s products continually meet the challenge.

“Software AG’s products such as Adabas and Natural integrate well with our strategic middle-ware components,” notes Ron Rash, Penn State’s Senior Director of Administrative Information Services. “And the future direction for these products aligns with our vision.”

“Adabas is still the most efficient database engine on earth,” he continues. “We’re committed to mainframe processing. It’s very efficient, it works well, my staff is very experienced in enterprise computing and Adabas has been our DBMS for 27 years.”

Explaining a trend among large universities to offer 24/7 availability of its business records, Rash mentions that “the latest version of Adabas will allow us to do that at a reasonable cost and a reasonable investment.”

He also discusses how the next generation of Natural works for the University: “We’re committed to an open architecture. We know we need to go to an Eclipse-based environment so we can have one common tool on every department’s desktops. Software AG’s direction with single point of development and Eclipse-based Natural environment allows us to do that.”

Further, Rash says, “We have fully integrated business systems with all the business logic captured in Natural. Our current program is to modernize and re-use that business logic, which will allow us to provide services in a Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA). It also helps us avoid what would be the \$100 million disruption of ripping and replacing our core systems.”

### **Streamlining decisions**

Another modernization project came about when the need for an easy-to-use, Web-enabled workflow system emerged. At that time, Penn State had Software AG perform a Customer First Assessment (CFA), a strategic consulting engagement in which Software AG recommends a solution to a specific business challenge. In this case, Penn State wanted to Web-enable 75 processes that had been built using Natural. The CFA advised Penn State to create a Web services hub and implement a business process management system. Subsequently, Penn State implemented Software AG’s business process management technology, a process-driven and information-centered workflow management solution.

Rash says that “The CFA saved us a tremendous amount of time and allowed us to create better strategies than if we had taken the time to do this analysis ourselves. We literally made a decision within 90 days of the CFA. On our own, it would have taken us two years and we might have made the wrong decision.”

### **Maintaining a consistent presence**

Software AG’s understanding of Penn State’s business has been a direct result of consistent interaction between the two organizations.

“There is a great deal of participation by Software AG executives and representatives with my staff every month,” remarks Rash. “I interface with Software AG executives periodically, so I understand their long-term vision and strategies and they understand ours. The fact that we have similar visions helps us because we have a minimum number of strategic partners—just one other besides Software AG—so we can do more with those partners.

“As we build systems, enhance systems and modernize older systems, we are fortunate that Software AG has people in place — good, trained technical people — who are consistently interacting with my staff. Software AG understands our business.”

While Software AG has in-depth knowledge of the needs of the higher-education market in general, says Rash, “Their account executives and technical support staff understand our specific variation of those needs. It was at the suggestion of Software AG that we adopted SOA and are implementing Web services.”

He continued: “As I look out the next couple of years, I know we need to build an SOA repository for our metadata. We plan to use Software AG products to do that.”

## Planning for the future

With many of the individuals who have been working with Adabas and Natural for the past 27 years approaching retirement, Penn State has put a plan in place to leverage their expertise. Rash explains that every two or three years, internal training on Natural programming is provided to non-IT personnel across the University who wish to participate in a programmer training/ apprenticeship opportunity.

Not only does this apprentice program provide career opportunities for people who otherwise would not have the chance to work in an IT environment, it ensures that Penn State will always have the necessary skills and talent to maintain their mainframe environment.

## KEY COMPONENTS

### **Adabas and Natural**

All of Penn State's mission-critical administrative, financial and student systems are based on Adabas and Natural.

### **BPM Solution**

Software AG BPM technology is being used to streamline processes with a Web-services approach.

### **Customer First Assessment**

A Customer First Assessment helped Penn State to make a quick, informed decision on how to address workflow management challenges.

#### ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

Software AG is the world's largest independent provider of Business Infrastructure Software. Our 4,000 global customers achieve measurable business results by modernizing and automating their IT systems and rapidly building new systems and processes to meet growing business demands.

Our industry-leading product portfolio includes best-in-class solutions for managing data, enabling service oriented architecture, and improving business processes. By combining proven technology with industry expertise and best practices, our customers improve and differentiate their businesses – faster.

Software AG – Get There Faster

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