

Sage MIP Fund Accounting Makes the Grade for McDonogh School

Finance and administrative staff at K-12 college preparatory school improve financial reporting with Sage MIP Fund Accounting.

McDonogh School has a proud history. For nearly 140 years, it has helped K-12 students prepare for college, while developing moral character, a sense of responsibility, and a capacity for leadership. Founded in 1873 as a farm school, the college preparatory school now serves approximately 1,300 students at its Baltimore, Maryland campus. McDonogh School also offers 54 summer programs and owns an eleven building office park. It's a busy operation for the business staff, a team of four headed by Larry Johnston, Vice President of Finance & Administration

Time for Change

Until three years ago, Johnston and his staff used a mainframe financial application purchased in the 1980s. The student billing, financial, and payroll systems lacked integration, forcing the staff to print out reports from each system and manually re-key the data into the others. To avoid errors, they had to scrutinize each piece of new data.

When the school decided it was time to update technology, they began a careful search for stable financial software and a consulting firm to help with the conversion.

"Our challenge was that a small group of employees needed to change financial applications while at the same time changing from a mainframe environment to a client/server operation – all with minimal disruption and easy start-up," says Johnston.

The team at McDonogh spent nearly a year vetting four value-added software resellers. They selected Applied Business Services to become their partner in the software evaluation and conversion process.

"We chose ABS because we liked their style, people and approach," Johnston recalls, "They had the strongest references – their customers were really happy with them and also appreciated their approach."

Evaluating Solutions

The team at ABS helped McDonogh School further formulate their technology plan and evaluate software packages. The goal was to find a very stable solution that did not require much customization to meet McDonogh School's financial reporting and budgeting needs, including fund and endowment accounting.

"To help McDonogh School save time, we wanted to find an integrated system to automate the flow of data between various systems," recalls Sharon Crowley, Senior System Implementer at ABS, "In addition, MIP Fund Accounting business rules allowed for increased data integrity and reduced the time Senior staff spent reviewing data input."

"We reviewed several packages," says Johnston, "Some needed more customization than we wanted. I didn't want my staff having to debug new releases, so I placed a lot of emphasis on stability of the platform. I also wanted good documentation and a value price."

Smooth Data Conversion

McDonogh School chose Sage MIP Fund Accounting. ABS helped them implement the financials first, followed by payroll six months later. Johnston describes the conversion process as "a piece of cake" – and he's seen some bad conversions during his lengthy career.

"This conversion was a dream," he says, "We didn't miss any deadlines and didn't have to work weekends or even any late evenings. We didn't have to sweat any part of the process. ABS did everything they said they would and usually even better than they had promised. They really exceeded our expectations."

Today, the team at McDonogh School enjoys increased efficiency with automated integration and easier data sharing. Predefined business rules enable them to transfer reliable, accurate data between systems while eliminating the need for data review or manual entry.

“Sage MIP Fund Accounting gets the job done. It’s a great bread-and-butter financial package that continues to offer the platform stability we need, at an affordable cost,” Johnston explains.

Lasting Partnership Adds Value

After completing the conversion, ABS continues to provide training and long-term support that ensures Sage MIP Fund Accounting is successful for McDonogh School.

“They are patient and understanding,” Johnston explains, “They adjust the training style based on the skill level of the end-user – and they remember each person’s learning style when they return.”

Eighteen months after implementing Sage MIP Fund Accounting, Johnston faced a daunting challenge. Two of his four employees were on extended medical leave at year-end. A third employee had been on the job for only two months. ABS jumped in with additional training and support to help the school complete critical year-end reporting accurately and on-time.

“The ABS staff is superb – really knowledgeable,” says Johnston, “Unlike most technical people you encounter, they have people-oriented personalities and have built wonderful relationships with our staff.”

Larry Johnston looks forward to the continued partnership between McDonogh School and ABS. He thinks other schools can benefit from the technical expertise, understanding of educational organizations, and commitment to customer service offered by ABS.

“I recommend ABS highly to any organization looking for a knowledgeable technical partner to help evaluate, implement, and support business management applications, as well as provide comprehensive individualized training for users.”

CHALLENGE: The small finance and administration staff at McDonogh School faced a double challenge – upgrading hardware from a mainframe to client/server environment while adopting a new financial management application.

SOLUTION: Sage MIP Fund Accounting and Applied Business Services

RESULTS: A fast, easy conversion leads to stable financial accounting and payroll, at an affordable cost. Automated integration saves time by eliminating manual re-keying of data between payroll and financials.