The University of Maine System
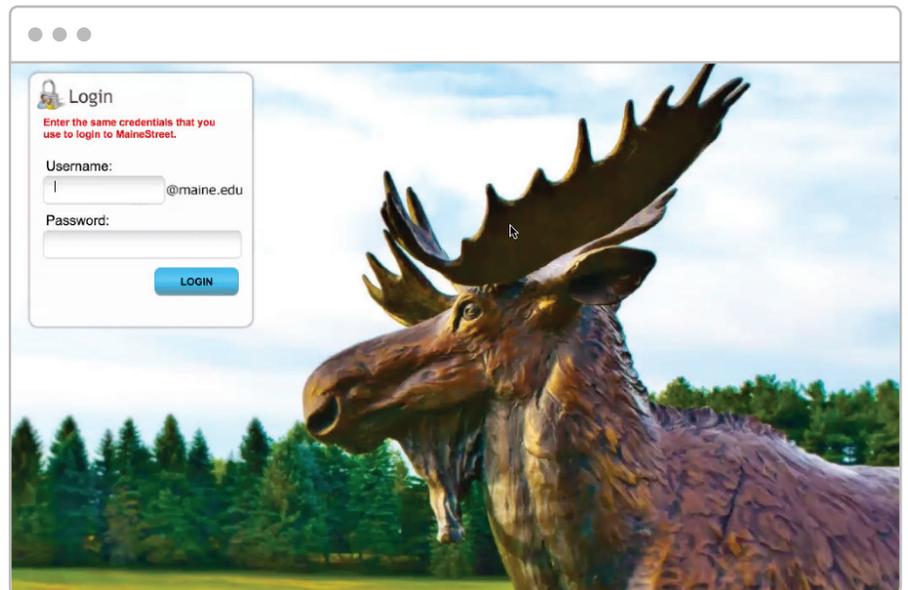
Statewide college system links seven universities under a single platform

mycampus.maine.edu

> UMS gained efficiency through functional alignment and de-duplication of disparate services and solutions by utilizing enterprise platforms including Liferay, a strategy which has the potential to save the University of Maine System hundreds of thousands of dollars over the long term.

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In Brief

Company:
University of Maine System

Country/Region:
United States

Industry:
Education

Use Case:
Campus Portal, Intranet

Number of Users:
40,000+

Liferay Components:
Permissioning, WCM, CMS

Key Solutions:
Single-sign on (SSO), Multi-tenancy, Integrations: Blackboard, PeopleSoft, Google Apps, Confluence

A High-Quality Educational System

The University of Maine System (UMS) is an integrated system of distinct campuses (the oldest dating back to 1864), centers and other facilities operating in concert to provide high-quality educational undergraduate and graduate opportunities that are accessible, affordable and relevant to the needs of Maine students, businesses and communities. It drives economic development by conducting world-class research, commercializing valuable ideas, and partnering successfully with businesses and industries throughout Maine and beyond. It is the state's most engaged and responsive institution working on behalf of all Maine citizens, communities and institutions. It is Maine's most important public asset.

Recognizing the Demand for a Modernized User Experience

In 2008, The University of Maine System leveraged a student portal on a Liferay CE version current to that time period. Though much had changed in the five years since they went live, UMS was outgrowing the legacy portal.

By 2013, the portal had grown to accommodate more than 40,000 users, including students, faculty and staff. Performance had begun to suffer, and mobile delivery emerged as a critical function. Further, the supporting technologies underlying the portal were becoming obsolete.

In short, the users were expecting more from their online experiences. A significant upgrade would be planned to address many items in a growing list of needs. UMS began to re-imagine their portal and it became clear a transformation was desired.

LIFERAY.

Identifying the Path to Digital Transformation

The UMS Web Technologies team had a vision of using a proven open source project that would meet their current needs of a modern day campus portal as well as allow for future innovation in the coming years.

The solution would have to meet the demand for a seamless, omnichannel experience. The UMS users were expecting to log in and access content at any time, anywhere, so this meant a platform that embraced delivery on mobile devices. Moreover, the team had to account for multiple campuses and various audiences within each ranging from applicants to active students and alumni as well as staff, faculty, and administrative divisions and departments.

The solution also had to meet high standards of usability (including adhering to universal design and standards such as WCAG 2.0 and WebAIM) and accessibility for vastly diverse groups of people while keeping up with current trends like responsive design.

Searching for the Right Platform

The organization decided to reconsider their solution from the ground up. Liferay's Enterprise Subscription was selected based on its long history as open source software, stability, wide range of features, extensibility and enterprise-level support.

The selection of Liferay's Enterprise Edition meant the Web Technologies team could hit the ground running, but the project was far from a direct upgrade. The existing portal had a great deal of content and data to be migrated, legacy applications that needed significant updates, customizations that would be critical in the new system, and new user stories to develop. Altogether, it was projected as a 20-month effort within management's comfort level.

As Liferay Enterprise subscribers, UMS was entitled to Liferay Support. During the project, Liferay engineers helped resolve many issues and assisted with the challenging task of data migration. In the end, the new platform debuted in less than 18 months, at least two months ahead of schedule.

Delivering a Modern Portal for an Ever-Changing Population

In June 2015, UMS performed a massive roll out to their campus audiences. The release featured a statewide implementation embracing the one-university, multi-campus concept. Many centralized services such as IT, HR and Procurement are located in the shared "UMS" site, while the campus-branded intranet sites are where most students, staff and faculty land after login. Other enterprise systems such as the UMS ERP (PeopleSoft) and the learning management system (currently Blackboard) are also centralized.

All campus stakeholders log into a common portal instance, yet remain affiliated with any campus with which they are actively engaged. Admitted and active students, alumni, staff and faculty all benefit from a campus portal that provides timely and relevant information across all channels.

The newly upgraded site utilizes Liferay's out-of-the-box responsive design features, allowing students and faculty to quickly access their information regardless of location or device. The average page load time has decreased by more than 33%, and their evening usage has seen an increase of mobile device traffic, in just a few months and is continually growing.

New sites are popping up to replace or supplement old programs and increase cost savings. Two examples include the Supervisor Development Institute and Title IX Training projects. They were both able to set up a site and mount all of their training materials online instead of having to pay for massive printed binders.

A Responsive, Omnichannel Multi-campus Solution

The new site is modernized with greater agility and better usability across multiple channels, and boasts nine new themes and features including:

- Custom plugins that display class and advisee lists to faculty, including student photos, downloadable/printable lists
- Custom LDAP user import and authorization routines
- CAS SSO integration
- Primary campus site landing page configuration and management
- Responsive layout templates
- Category links, a custom portlet with 250+ role-protected, categorized applications links, including SSOs to many conscripted resources

With this new platform in place, built with an eye on their users' evolving needs, UMS is positioned for success to serve graduating classes many years to come.

▦ The Liferay Difference

- Statewide, multi-campus portal for 40,000+ users
- Effective management of over 1500 roles in the system
- 33%+ improvement in average page load times
- Significant increases in mobile usage

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▦ LIFERAY®