

UNC Pembroke Moves from Homegrown to HEAT Service Management for the Cloud



ORGANIZATION

Name: University of North Carolina Pembroke

Location: Pembroke, NC

Industry: Higher Education

Website: www.uncp.edu

SOLUTION

- HEAT Service Management, deployed in the cloud
- HEAT Cloud - Discovery

BENEFITS

- Automated IT workflows for faster, more accurate and efficient processes
- Faster, more accurate reporting, saving time and money
- Context-sensitive search for immediate common problem identification and solutions

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP) was founded in 1887 as the Croatan Normal School to educate American Indian teachers. Today, UNCP is one of the most diverse campuses in the nation, with 62 percent of its 6,200 students identified as minorities. To reinforce its goal of changing lives through education, UNCP offers small classes and a low 16:1 student-faculty ratio in its 41 undergraduate and 17 graduate programs.

IT Support Growing Pains

“UNC Pembroke started as an extremely small university,” says Wes Frazier, Pembroke’s academic applications administrator. “Many services and systems are homegrown. We had no inventory or configuration database except for a really badly put together Access database. We had no service catalog, except for a web-based form for data processing requests. Everything else was on paper.”

With Pembroke’s old systems, the IT helpdesk was hamstrung by a patchwork of manual processes and discrete tools. IT support was time-consuming and frustrating for everyone.

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Wes Frazier, academic applications administrator

“Our technicians in the field didn’t have context,” says Frazier. “We might send a technician to fix a desktop, and they couldn’t see the history of the previous incidents. We could have different techs addressing the same issues in the same month, and they wouldn’t know it was a common problem.” IT support used its old incident system mostly for documenting how much time they spent on each task. “We couldn’t do anything data-driven,” he says.

Taking inventory of IT assets was equally problematic. “A quarter of the computers on campus get refreshed every year,” says Frazier. “To do that, we have to track all computers extensively, and the old system was inadequate.” Technicians were dispatched across campus to take inventory with clipboards and paper, and then all that data had to be typed into the inventory database. “We couldn’t trust the data, so we had to go through it line by line to make sure we were approximating what we thought was reality,” he says.

A Search for Better Tools

Pembroke knew it needed better tools to deliver the kind of IT support fit the university's mission of bringing a personal touch to higher education. IT set out to find the right service management platform.

"We wanted something cloud-hosted, something our internal people didn't have to manage it," says Frazier. "We host so many systems that we didn't want to manage another thing." Plus, people could access a web-based service management system from any device, especially mobile. IT also wanted to create a self-service portal, which would make support more efficient and is favored by tech-savvy students and staff. Most importantly, IT wanted a service management platform that could meet its immediate needs for incident response and knowledge management, but also would grow as IT support matured and added capabilities such as change management.

But IT ran into unexpected roadblocks. "The other service management products we looked at were too complex out of the box," says Frazier. "They expected you to be a mature ITIL organization at the get-go."

Undeterred, Frazier kept looking. He came across HEAT Service Management in a Forrester Report, and a demonstration from HEAT Software gave them an "aha" moment. "We were blown out of the water by the context-sensitive search in HEAT. It unifies everything—incidents and knowledgebase—right off the bat," says Frazier. "We really liked that. HEAT has the power to grow with us and is easy to use to start off with. HEAT is highly configurable without having to drop down into code. You can't ask for better than that."



HEAT in Progress

Frazier's team uses HEAT Service Management for incident management, self-service and configuration management. "Before, we might as well have been using slide rules," says Frazier.

Within IT, the applications, network, and systems teams use HEAT for service management, as does the educational and client technology group (ECT).

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Wes Frazier, academic applications administrator

The applications team is using HEAT to automate business workflows, including reporting requests that require approvals from different department managers and data stewards. By tracking the approval process through HEAT, IT has eliminated a paper-based process and can ensure that the reports are completed faster and with less effort.

The ECT team is using HEAT to keep up with employee transitions and student enrollment. By tracking employee onboarding and offboarding through HEAT, IT can ensure that new users have access to the appropriate applications and networks—and those access rights are terminated when they are no longer at the university.

HEAT Cloud Discovery has vastly simplified the once-onerous task of IT asset discovery and inventory management. Now IT staff can easily find, audit, and continually track every device, major operating system and application on the network. And that makes its annual campus computing refresh a breeze and gives the university the visibility it needs for compliance and reporting.

IT staff and end users have welcomed HEAT and reactions have been overwhelmingly positive. "We have a lot of self-service portal users—students and administrators—who like being empowered to put in their own tickets and track ticket status," says Frazier. "The people who interfaced with the aging systems fell in love immediately with HEAT."

Enhancing Service Management

Pembroke is just getting started with its service management journey and is encouraged by its early successes. Frazier is excited about the ability to use data to drive better IT decisions. "You can query all the business objects in the product," he says. "In HEAT training, we were amazed at how much data we had about our systems, how we could run queries against it, and how narrowly we can define data. Our leadership was thrilled when they realized what data we were getting that we didn't have before."

IT is already planning its next steps. Frazier is exploring using HEAT's custom business objects to create more IT workflow processes. IT is evaluating HEAT's portfolio management module to help IT focus more strategically. Word of HEAT's power is spreading beyond IT, and HEAT has caught the attention of the university's public affairs department to help them manage their PR related service requests and incidents.

Frazier expects more university departments to use HEAT to manage their business service workflows. “We can leverage HEAT even better as we give it more data. We’re going out of our way to make sure that we do. We’ve figured out that the more you invest in HEAT, the more you can get out of it.”

“Our organization is young when it comes to service management,” says Frazier. “HEAT has proven itself in that it’s good for us now, and it can grow with us for the future. It’s not overly intimidating to learn or use if you’re just coming into service management. And it’s been a good mirror for us to examine our own process and find other ways to streamline and automate. You can focus on the present, see how you’ve matured, and look to the future.”

The future is promising.

“We’ve done a lot of good with HEAT,” says Frazier, “but the best is yet to come.”



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