



Big Data, Big Easy:

University of New Orleans Increases Student Enrollment and Improves Retention

“With Informatica and Snowflake, we’re democratizing data across the university while improving operational efficiency. We’re making data much more accessible. This enables reporting in less time while helping to improve information security and reduce operating costs”

Dr. Ray Wang, CIO, University of New Orleans

Goals

Analyze student and employee data from multiple on-premises and cloud sources in a centralized data warehouse

Quickly and efficiently move 20 years of ERP data to the cloud so it can be protected and accessed by Workday and reporting tools

Improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance information security by automating manual ETL processes

Solution

Use Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services to extract, transform, and load data from Salesforce, SQL Server, and Workday into Snowflake

Use Informatica Cloud Mass Ingestion to migrate thousands of tables with complex data structures from Oracle into Snowflake

Use Informatica Cloud Connectors for Snowflake and Workday to connect on-premises and cloud systems without hand coding

Results

Makes data available across the university for program analytics to help enhance student enrollment and retention

Accelerates cloud migration to Workday by two months while keeping historical data safe and available

Enables reporting in less time while helping to improve information security

Business Requirements:

- Centralize data and make it available for analytics
- Produce reports in hours instead of days
- Adopt cloud solutions to modernize and reduce risk
- Move to a scalable and flexible data lake

About University of New Orleans

In 1958, the University of New Orleans opened its doors as the first fully integrated public university in the southern United States. Since then, it has educated students from all 50 U.S. states and more than 130 countries. The university is named as one of the nation's best colleges by *The Princeton Review*, *Forbes*, and *U.S. News & World Report*.

Informatica Success Story: University of New Orleans

The birthplace of jazz music and creole cuisine, New Orleans is one of the oldest major cities in the United States, rich in culture and history. Today, it also produces cutting-edge biomedical research and is a popular destination for young entrepreneurs, many of whom gain valuable education and skills at the University of New Orleans (UNO).

UNO has graduated more than 80,000 alumni, and more than half of those people still live and work in the greater New Orleans metropolitan area. The university's contributions to a diverse city are broad and deep: more than 77 percent of students receive financial assistance, and UNO was ranked third in the nation by The Brookings Institution for providing equal access to higher education for students from all income levels.

Despite its reputation for excellence and recognition as a Research University by the Carnegie Foundation, UNO faces the same challenges as other schools when it comes to attracting and retaining students. To appeal to students' interests, it needs to know more about them and what they are looking for in a degree or certificate. For instance, if a student drops out, historical data might reveal patterns or events that explain why, but only if that data is made available for analytics to build a business case for changes to student retention policies.

Although the university examined student enrollment and departure data annually, extracting data from its Oracle PeopleSoft ERP system for reporting was cumbersome, taking two or three programmers many days of work. In one business process, for example, student data was put in a file and emailed to consulting firm Education Advisory Board (EAB) for analysis. This allowed EAB to perform their work, but made it difficult for the university to establish ownership and control of the data once it was submitted for processing.

Additionally, the university is modernizing, moving away from legacy finance, human resources, and student information systems to cloud solutions such as Workday. It's a gradual process, and UNO must keep historical data available even as it retires aging systems. To complete its ERP migration to Workday, UNO needed to back up 20 years of Oracle PeopleSoft data to the cloud. That meant migrating many thousands of tables with complex data structures, a project that the university's IT team did not want to attempt using manual processes. However, the timeline was tight, as the university did not want to renew the software contracts for its legacy systems.

"It's common for a university to be data rich and information poor," explains Dr. Ray Wang, Chief Information Officer at the University of New Orleans. "For us, that meant we had a lot of useful student and employee data from different entities on campus, but it wasn't well organized. To turn that data into consumable



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Xiang Chen

Chief/Senior Data Architect
University of New Orleans

information, we needed to transfer it into one place where we could call upon it when needed and present it in any way we wanted.”

Building a secure bridge to the cloud

To enable more effective analytics, accelerate cloud migration, and address potential information security issues, UNO created a centralized cloud data warehouse. It selected Snowflake as its data warehouse technology, storing data on Amazon Web Services (AWS). But to move quickly and reduce the possibility for human error, UNO needed a cloud data integration solution that could rapidly extract and transform data from various sources and load it into Snowflake.

“We chose Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services primarily for reliability and speed,” says Wang. “We’re in hurricane country, so using a cloud solution that’s managed by experts greatly reduces risk. We also liked that Informatica offered prebuilt connectors for the data sources and targets we’re using today, as well as those we might use in the future.”

The university used Informatica Cloud Connectors to connect its legacy systems to the cloud and also bring Workday data into Snowflake without hand coding, saving time and IT resources. To jump-start its cloud migration, it used Informatica Cloud Mass Ingestion to quickly ingest 600 gigabytes of historical ERP data from Oracle into Snowflake.

“Informatica Cloud Mass Ingestion allowed us to generate hundreds of mappings in a very short time,” says Xiang Chen, Chief/Senior Data Architect, University of New Orleans. “It’s a straightforward, secure bridge from source to target, which is exactly what we need. We don’t require a VPN in order to maintain data security. Informatica Cloud Mass Ingestion is so easy to use that it saves us 90 percent of the ETL effort. I can just open a browser and access it anytime, anywhere.”

A jambalaya of analytics opportunities

Having a centralized data warehouse immediately improved the university’s analytics and reporting capabilities, giving analysts, researchers, and IT staff the ability to query data with analytics tools such as SAS and Power BI and get reports within hours instead of days. That’s helping the university’s Student Retention Committee understand the most effective strategies for encouraging students to continue their education at UNO. The capacity for greater analytics insights also helps UNO navigate the new rules for education during the COVID-19 pandemic, including minimizing risks to students’ health and determining the pandemic’s impact on enrollment and retention.





Inside The Solution:

- Informatica Intelligent Cloud Services
 - Informatica Cloud Mass Ingestion
 - Informatica Cloud Data Integration
- Salesforce
- Snowflake
- Tableau



“With Informatica and Snowflake, we’re democratizing data across the university while improving operational efficiency,” says Dr. Wang. “We’re making data much more accessible. We can look at things such as how the weather affects our student orientation events, and how our advisors and learning resource centers can be more effective.”

“The combination of Informatica and Snowflake makes it very easy for our analysts and partners to access the data they need, allowing them to focus on understanding the factors that influence student recruitment and retention,” says Chen.

A faster, more efficient cloud migration

Using Informatica Cloud Mass Ingestion accelerated the university’s migration of its finance and HR data to Workday by two months, allowing it to terminate licensing contracts for those portions of its legacy ERP system. Soon UNO will retire its student information system and move that capability to Workday as well, relying on Informatica Cloud Mass Ingestion for a smooth and fast migration. Once the migration is complete, UNO plans to ingest change data capture into Snowflake so that the latest data from Workday will always be available in the warehouse.

“With Informatica and Snowflake, we can present more timely data in more meaningful ways,” says Dr. Wang. “Data quality has improved, and we’ve seen a huge savings in costs, time, and human resources.”

Digital transformation is changing our world. As the leader in enterprise cloud data management, we’re prepared to help you intelligently lead the way. To provide you with the foresight to become more agile, realize new growth opportunities or even invent new things. We invite you to explore all that Informatica has to offer—and unleash the power of data to drive your next intelligent disruption. Not just once, but again and again.

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