Northern Alberta Institute of Technology streamlines processes to enhance the student experience

Canadian polytechnic powers institutional and student services using ServiceNow

The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) is a leading Canadian polytechnic located in Edmonton, Alberta. The institution delivers science, technology, environment, business, health, and trade education to nearly 40,000 credit and non-credit students. With a 95% employer satisfaction rating, NAIT graduates are an essential part of Alberta's prosperity.

Known for hands-on, technology-based learning, NAIT works with business and industry in applied research and innovation, and it also provides corporate training around the globe.

NAIT invests heavily in information technology that enhances student learning, as well as in services that support students throughout their learning journey—helping them to access the information, personalized guidance, and assistance they need to prosper.

ServiceNow is a key component of this student-centric approach. What started as an ITSM modernization project has now turned into a campus-wide initiative to streamline and add value to its institutional and student-centered services.

Transforming IT service delivery for faculty, staff, and students

According to NAIT's IT Service and Compliance Manager Kathie Eberhart, "We had a very rudimentary IT ticketing tool and were facing significant upgrade costs. We decided we needed to start from scratch. After looking at several different options, we chose ServiceNow. We liked the way everything is connected on the Now Platform, rather than having to deal with point tools. We also wanted to move to the cloud, and ServiceNow is built for the cloud. Other tools were just ported to the cloud and still looked 10 years old. ServiceNow felt fresh and modern—which was exactly what we needed."

Highlights

Leading Canadian polytechnic enhances the student and faculty experience with custom applications on the Now Platform®.

Location
Edmonton, Alberta

Region
Canada

Number of students
40,000

Industry
Higher education

Goals
- Modernizing IT service delivery
- Streamlining institutional processes
- Enhancing the student learning experience

Solutions
- ServiceNow® IT Service Management
- The Now Platform®

Results
- Streamlined administration of fleet management, work orders, and on-campus deliveries
- Created a portal giving students access to learning resources
- Enhanced support services for international students

"As we started to roll out ServiceNow for ITSM, we quickly realized that it had so much more to offer. Yes, ServiceNow powers our internal ITSM processes and our IT call centers–and it does a great job. But, it's also a platform where we can easily develop new applications, both within IT and for our broader institutional and student needs."

Moving beyond IT and into rental vehicle fleet management and more

Trevor Kuebler, who is responsible for ServiceNow application development at NAIT, agrees. "We started simply by building a compliance module to help us with IT audits, significantly increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of NAIT's IT audits and assessments. Then, we moved on to create a ServiceNow fleet management application. NAIT operates a rental vehicle fleet, allowing faculty, staff, and students to rent everything from cars to large passenger vans.

"For instance, our forestry department uses this service to rent trucks and cars to take up north. All the administration was done on paper–everything from initial rental through to recording damage when a vehicle was returned. With ServiceNow, we've automated all of that. People can now book their vehicles online, and we even have a touch-and-drag iPad interface to record damage."

Trevor continues, "It's dramatically reduced the time it takes to administer our fleet. It's not just about automation–it's about visibility. For example, someone would waste an hour getting a car ready only to come back and find out the rental was canceled. With ServiceNow, that doesn't happen. Everyone's connected, so we know right away when a booking is changed. The department that administers the rental fleet loves it–so much so that they've come back for more.

"For example, the same department also handles on-campus deliveries, as well as physical labor such as rearranging cafeterias for special events. They've asked us to create an application to manage this, including handling requests, scheduling work and deliveries, and optimizing schedules. The application will only take five days to build, and it will save that department seven days every month. In other words, it will pay for itself in four weeks."

Enhancing the student learning experience

Many of NAIT's custom ServiceNow applications directly enhance the student experience. Trevor gives one example–learning services. "Learning services are critical to student success. We're using ServiceNow to make these services much easier to access. Again, we started simply with electronic tutorial submissions. Now, students can submit tutorial work electronically using ServiceNow, and it's automatically routed to the right tutor. When the tutorial is ready to be picked up, students get an email to let them know it's ready. It's much simpler and faster for students and tutors, so they have more time to focus on learning and teaching."

"Now, we're extending the learning services we offer through ServiceNow. For example, in just a few weeks, students will be able to access online practice exams, knowledge articles, and questions. We are building some of these learning tools directly into ServiceNow, and in other cases, ServiceNow is the gateway to external tools such as Mobius."

Trevor continues, "Students can use ServiceNow to search for the tools they want. Everything is at their fingertips. We're also making it easy for students with disabilities to get the support they need–for example by letting them book assisted learning devices using ServiceNow, or even requesting staff to read exams to them."

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Using ServiceNow to promote student success by assessing and addressing critical needs

Educational institutions know that student success depends on more than learning and assistive resources. It also depends on how well they integrate into campus life, and what support networks they have available. The IT team is using ServiceNow to help NAIT assess and address this critical need.

According to Trevor, "We need to know how well students are coping and what we can do to help them cope better. For our international students, we've built a survey that asks them 25 simple questions, such as 'Did you attend our welcome events?', 'What is your family support like within this country?', and so on. The goal is to find out what students know about living in Canada and studying at NAIT, and whether they are doing the right things to help them succeed."

"We've built the survey directly into ServiceNow. An international student sits down with their advisor, and together they fill in the survey. The application automatically evaluates the responses, and identifies areas of weakness, along with what can be done to address them. This means that we can intervene early, helping the student to get back on track before they run into trouble."

Huge demand for new apps that provide better visibility

Trevor adds, "We've got huge demand for new applications. For example, we recently rolled out an application for our School of Health and Life Sciences to manage almost 1,900 assets—things like defibrillators and blood pressure monitors. We started by managing repair processes, and we're going to launch preventive maintenance shortly. We've moved from an informal process to one where everything is tracked, so the school knows exactly where each piece of equipment is in the repair cycle. We now have full visibility of the equipment lifecycle, so we can measure our ownership costs and make better purchase decisions."

Delivering responsive IT services

Kathie agrees that NAIT is seeing burgeoning demand for new ServiceNow custom applications. "We started in IT, but demand snowballed once we started to build ServiceNow applications for our faculties, staff, and students. This is a perfect example of how IT can make a huge difference to a learning institution. Yes, we're delivering responsive IT services, but we're also helping NAIT to execute on its core mission—to be the most relevant and responsive post-secondary institution in Canada and one of the world's leading polytechnics."

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