Business:
Dental College

Company:
The Ohio State University College of Dentistry

Objectives:
Manage student records more efficiently, facilitate FERPA compliance and ensure reliable disaster recovery

SmartSearch Makes Dental College Smile

In SmartSearch, the Ohio State University College of Dentistry found a painless solution for managing tens of thousands of valuable student records

The prestigious Ohio State University College of Dentistry sunk its teeth into the world of 21st Century document management by adopting SmartSearch to manage tens of thousands of student records affordably, efficiently—and painlessly. "Using SmartSearch has eliminated the vexing problem of misfiled, misplaced or lost files, and makes it so much easier to share these documents among users," said Michael Murray, assistant director of academic affairs for the college. "In addition, SmartSearch facilitates compliance with FERPA and provides a truly reliable means of disaster recovery—all while saving us hundreds of labor hours and many thousands of dollars annually."

The third largest public dental school in the United States, the Ohio State University College of Dentistry is comprised of nine academic units representing all major dental specialties. The sections offer both patient care services and academic programs, allowing dentists to train as specialists. The college's outreach and engagement activities include over 60 active programs and more than 42 extramural sites. "Students come here to get an excellent dental education," Murray said. "Our college community and unique traditions make this an especially rewarding place to learn."

The college's student files are comprised of many different types of documents, including academic transcripts, admissions documents and letters of recommendation. Records like these are as important to a well-run college as toothbrushes are to good oral hygiene but, with hundreds of student enrollments annually, managing them can be painful.

"Before SmartSearch," Murray recalled, "our biggest challenge was that our hard copy files could be misfiled, misplaced or lost, and sharing files was problematic. Today, with SmartSearch, disappearing files are no longer a problem. In addition, we can now share files easily across the office and work remotely whenever that is convenient or necessary."

Simply handling the paper records had also been challenging. The students' files are categorized by graduating class and stored in four different groups. As a result, following every graduation the files for each class had to be rotated from one storage area to another. "This was a really time-consuming ordeal," Murray recalled. "Fortunately, SmartSearch has put a stop to that."

Opening original files to many different people had made it difficult for the college to comply with the Family Education Right to Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), since users could mistakenly take information out of a file and not return it. "SmartSearch gives us complete control over that," Murray said. "People now use a dedicated computer to view the files, and they cannot alter or remove them, or copy or send them, so they stay put. This helps tremendously in managing FERPA compliance."

Also, the college had no disaster recovery system. "If we had a flood or fire," Murray reflected, "irreplaceable files would be gone forever. With SmartSearch, they are backed up easily and could be restored quickly in the event of a disaster."

Murray had learned about SmartSearch's document management capabilities through a prior employer and had gained an appreciation for how it can dramatically streamline a wide variety of business processes. After introducing SmartSearch to college administrators, Murray had a trusted office technology company install SmartSearch in his department, successfully integrating it with eCopy, a popular imaging software, and 45-page-per-minute multifunction color printer.

"Managing our student records is now a very simple process," Murray said. "We just scan them directly into SmartSearch with our multifunction printer and index them right then and there. SmartSearch puts all the information we need right at our fingertips, so there is no need to get up and go find a document that might not be in the file." Faxes are received directly into SmartSearch and are printed only when a paper copy is desired. Murray set up a SmartSearch Inbox for each staff member, but most documents are scanned directly into one of four customized SmartSearch Archives.

A wide variety of people at the college are using SmartSearch, from student workers to the dean of the college. Murray and the installer conducted a total of only three training sessions and he reported that the learning process was quick. "Even those with lower levels of computer literacy," Murray observed, "did not experience any problems learning how to use SmartSearch."

Efficiency gains from SmartSearch have translated directly into cost savings. "Prior to implementing SmartSearch," Murray recalled, "four or five times a day someone would have to look for a file, a process that took up to 30 minutes per occurrence. Now, that time has been gained back. " This equated, on average, to about 10 labor hours per week. Given that most workers in Murray's office are classified "AP Professional" and earn commensurate pay, he calculates that the college is saving approximately $10,000 per year in labor costs alone. "SmartSearch quickly paid for itself," Murray said. Not surprisingly, other college administrators quickly became interested in using the solution in their departments as well.

Would he recommend SmartSearch? "Absolutely," Murray said. "SmartSearch has streamlined our operations considerably, helping us to do our jobs much better and faster—for less money. All things considered, I estimate that our overall efficiency gain with SmartSearch is in the neighborhood of 25 to 30 percent. SmartSearch has given us greater control over our records and is helping us comply with FERPA. And, for the first time, we have a reliable disaster recovery system." Now those are things worth smiling about.

About Square 9 Softworks

Square 9 Softworks is a leading developer of innovative, business-centric software solutions including the award-winning SmartSearch Content Management Suite. Dedicated to making content management available to organizations of all sizes, Square 9 Softworks designs solutions built on open architecture and cutting-edge technologies that drive efficiency and productivity across all business applications.

Through decades of experience with content management technologies in business enterprises of all kinds, Square 9 Softworks has acquired a thorough understanding of document-driven business processes. Intensely customer-focused and highly responsive, the company delivers effective, value-driven solutions and has achieved a reputation for excellence in meeting the rapidly evolving needs of its customers.

Square 9 Softworks distributes its solutions exclusively through a network of highly skilled channel partners from its corporate office in New Haven, Connecticut. For further information, visit **www.square-9.com**