

## ***Plymouth State increases vending sales 93% in one semester with online vending***

### ***History***

In 1991, Plymouth State University implemented a homegrown campus card system consisting of an offline solution for vending (food/beverage, laundry, and copying), and an online solution for food service (meal plans and point of sale). In 1995, functionality was added to allow the use of Flexcash at dining locations, still remaining separate from the offline vending system.



In 2000, Plymouth State implemented Odyssey PCS™ from CBORD® for its campus card operations, and in 2007 the school brought vending online with the system. The school's current Odyssey PCS implementation is as follows:

- 4 Epic/Lyric point-of-sale terminals
- 6 MICROS® Workstation 4s
- 3 ValuePort II deposit stations
- 15 laundry controllers
- 38 food/beverage vending readers
- 6 copier readers

### ***Why Online Vending?***

When it came time to update its offline vending system, the team at Plymouth State decided instead to bring vending online with Odyssey PCS. In fact, the school had always planned to do so, but decided to wait for IP-based vending components to become available. Once they did, Plymouth State took action.

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“I’ve known for years having two systems didn’t make sense,” says Dave Carpentiere, Information Technology Manager, Residential Life & Dining Services, Plymouth State University. “Users were confused, the hardware was difficult to maintain, and parents couldn’t deposit money onto their students’



cards, since the previous system wouldn’t allow them to do so remotely. Rather than spending more money on the old system, it made sense to expand what was already working for us—Odyssey PCS.”

### ***The Results***

In the semester following the implementation of online vending, **Plymouth State’s food and beverage vending sales increased by 93%.**

Furthermore, the university implemented some changes to its Flexcash plan, making it possible for students to use the account for laundry vending. This, combined with the rest of the new vending program, drove an **increase of 40% in deposits to campus card accounts over the previous year.**

Carpentiere and his team expect this percentage to continue to climb as students gain familiarity with the program.

### ***Making the Switch***

Carpentiere and his team at Plymouth State took their time to convert all of their vending over to IP. Food/beverage machines were relatively painless to convert since they also accepted cash. Laundry machines accepting only card-based payment, however, meant the change had to happen incrementally.

Carpentiere was sure to keep all affected parties involved throughout the planning process, including Sodexo® (Plymouth State's food service contractor), IT & networking departments, purchasing, physical plant, and Laundry Equipment Corporation (the school's laundry contractor).

Working backward from a "go-live" date, Carpentiere developed a project timeline. Some key items from the timeline are as follows:

1. Get data in place at vending machines, value stations, and laundry readers (networking and electrical contractor for conduit).
2. Retire some old laundry readers (stagger the retirement to keep some active on campus).
3. Install some new readers for laundry (staggered—physical plant).
4. Add some electrical to laundry readers (outside contractor).
5. Get some data to laundry readers and activate.
6. Have laundry contractor wire in some of the individual machines.
7. With CBORD on-site, complete and activate all wired/ electrified readers. Complete remaining readers afterward, keeping students informed of which systems the various laundry rooms are using.
8. Finish all systems by early August for slow trial period. Refine processes, routines, and systems in time for fall semester. Include marketing campaign and communication throughout.

## **Lessons Learned**

Carpentiere has several pieces of advice to share with other universities considering making the switch to online vending, primarily around tailoring the project to each school's unique campus culture. He suggests starting with a "to-do" list, visualizing all the key players, then building a timeline, understanding it should be flexible.

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Do it, and build it into your overall  
campus culture."***

He also advises that the project manager should be someone who is intimately involved with the card system and campus technology, and students should be kept informed of progress throughout the project. Carpentiere used various means of communication to do this, including posting status updates online, placing notices on vending machines, sending out news releases about new equipment, and even creating a logo for the Flexcash program to increase familiarity.

"Honestly, this was the smoothest implementation or project I have ever been involved with," reports Carpentiere. "It's a win/win situation. Do it, and build it into your overall campus culture."

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