

Case Study: Adelphi University

Reduce Costs with Data Quality
Best Practices



“We used to have an entire room designated to store returned mail; now we have just a little bin. It’s all about having the right procedure and making it work. And after a lot of work, we can ensure that at least 95% of our addresses are accurate.”

— Mario Guevara,
Director of Advancement Services,
Adelphi University

Situation

Mario Guevara, Director of Advancement Services, was tasked with the difficult job of cleaning out the University’s Raiser’s Edge database and instituting new quality standards. Like many universities, Adelphi had accumulated a number of inaccurate and duplicate records over the years which were inhibiting the University’s ability to interact with alumni in a more cost-effective manner.

Solution

The University tackles data quality from a number of angles. Ensuring address accuracy was one of the many ways in which Guevara believed the University could reduce costs. Guevara has improved address quality by managing editing privileges, implementing new technology, and focusing on eliminating duplicate records.

Results

To highlight one example, printing and mailing costs associated with the Adelphi University Magazine have been reduced by \$24,000 annually. This reduction was due to the identification and suppression of 8,000 duplicate records which were flagged since implementing the new data quality best practices.

About Adelphi University

Adelphi University was chartered in 1896. It was the first institution of higher education for the liberal arts and sciences on Long Island. Adelphi University currently enrolls

nearly 8,500 students from 41 states and 63 foreign countries. It maintains a commitment to liberal studies in tandem with rigorous professional preparation and active citizenship.

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Confronting Data Challenges

Guevara believed that with better data quality standards, the Office of University Advancement would improve the state of its existing database and safeguard themselves from the collection of more bad data.

Guevara instituted a number of new initiatives and combined, these efforts have significantly reduced operational costs. Address accuracy was one of the many focuses. Inaccurate addresses led to high levels of returned mail, ultimately increasing the University's operational costs and reducing alumni donation and participation potential.

Managing Editing Privileges

The Advancement Services Group at Adelphi University manages everything data related. Whether a list is required for a solicitation or bio/demo updates are available, Guevara's group manages all Raiser's Edge input and output.

All other Advancement groups can view the Raiser's Edge database; however, they do not have the ability to create or edit any data elements. By controlling the editing capabilities, Guevara more easily manages quality.

Implementing New Technology

The Advancement Services Group implemented QAS Pro and QAS Batch address cleansing tools. QAS Pro works in conjunction with the University's Raiser's Edge database. This real-time tool ensures that as individual updates are required, an example being for gift processing, the address in question is verified and standardized before it ever hits the system.

QAS Batch is a bulk address cleansing tool that allows Guevara's team to clean large groups of data at the same time. All graduate lists and bio/demo updates from their third party call center are first processed through the QAS Batch tool.

QAS Batch tests the validity of the address, makes suggestions where possible, and also standardizes the address fields. By ensuring accuracy prior to system entry, the Advancement Services Group can more easily focus on those incomplete or inaccurate data elements that need to be updated. Additionally, the standardized address format acts as a unique identifier – allowing Guevara and his staff to better pinpoint duplicates.

Identify Data Duplicates

"Standardizing addresses has improved the effectiveness of our de-duplication tool," says Guevara.

QAS Pro and QAS Batch technologies fit well into the University's overall data quality strategy. With better address accuracy, the University has greater success using their research and de-duplication tools.

Quantifying Results

"There has been a tremendous reduction in returned mail," said Guevara. "All signs show that we now have better overall data quality."

And with better data accuracy, the Advancement Services Group has reduced costs for the Adelphi University Magazine, which is mailed out to all alumni twice annually.

The University's data quality best practices have enabled Guevara to locate and suppress 8,000 duplicate records. This translates into printing and mailing savings of \$12,000 per magazine run. Considered on an annual basis, the University has saved \$24,000 in magazine printing and mailing costs.

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