



# Boosting Efficiency by Shedding Manual Tasks

**How Impact Award Winner National Louis University automated its course copy selection process**

The annual Ellucian Impact Award recognizes higher education institutions that use technology to solve challenges, operate more efficiently, and create better student experiences. National Louis University (NLU) is a private four-year institution in Chicago and Tampa, as well as offering online programs. NLU earned an Impact Award in 2024 for its remarkable innovations in automating and streamlining the course copy process.

## **The Challenge: Utilizing Efficient Processes**

National Louis University sets itself apart from many higher education institutions through its adoption of a collaborative and innovative approach to course content management. In contrast to the common practice of individual course instructors managing their content, NLU employs a 'shared governance approach' facilitated by one to three approvers, typically consisting of Program Chairs and faculty members. This unique methodology involves a collective decision-making process, wherein the approvers select pre-build course templates or copy previous course materials based on offerings for the upcoming semester. By entrusting this responsibility to experienced and knowledgeable individuals, NLU aims to alleviate the burden on individual educators who often find themselves uncertain about the selection and copying of course materials.

NLU's previous software solution imposed many wide-ranging challenges on the university, which were exacerbated by their previous work management software. For example, NLU had to deal with data in different systems, which was labor-intensive for them to maintain and update. Additionally, faculty who had to approve course templates would often find themselves



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## **Case Study**

### **Solutions**

Ellucian Banner

### **Results**

- 95% reduction in processing errors under new system
- 70% reduction in individual course copy requests by staff
- 55% reduction in missing content

editing course materials at the same time as their peers. This led to overwritten records, incorrect copy, and decision-making errors resulting in hours of correction.

The NLU staff discovered that their previous solution resulted in a burdensome, time-consuming process of course copy approval. Compounding the issue, it was proved error-prone and unsustainable.

“Course copy is very manual, it was high-difficulty, and it’s not done frequently by faculty,” said Janice Nilsen, Dean of the School of Business and Leadership at NLU. “Therefore, there was a pretty high error rate.”

Overall, NLU found this system needlessly complicated, frustrating, and chaotic. Two months before the start of each term, their Learning and Design team had to collaborate intensively with faculty members and administrators, often working nights and weekends, to identify material to copy for the upcoming semester. Simultaneously, the team grappled with individual copy requests from faculty members that needed to be addressed one at a time.

In light of these challenges, NLU recognized the pressing need for a more efficient and streamlined solution that would address these issues and revolutionize the course copy approval process.

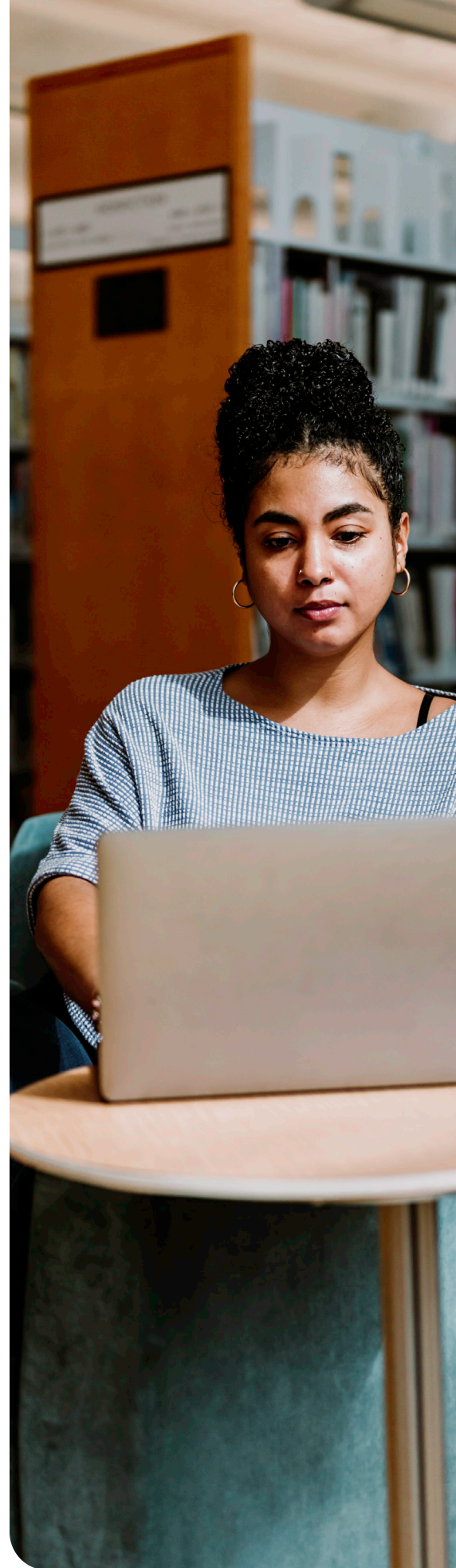
### **The Solution: Task Automation and Streamlined Operations**

National Louis University aimed to automate and standardize its course copy process with the overarching goal of executing a pre-term bulk copying of course templates across its campuses. This initiative sought to standardize the process on a university-wide scale, enhancing curriculum quality and ensuring a consistent, improved learning experience for students. Additionally, the automation would streamline administrative processes, affording educators more time for teaching and student support.

To achieve this, NLU adopted two key technology solutions Ellucian Banner: Page Builder and Communication Management.

“We used Page Builder to create all the user interface since we can directly put data from Banner and really increase the accuracy of the data,” Susanna Chan, Director of Projects and Applications at NLU, said.

“Page Builder is giving us the ability to embed a JavaScript to create a user-friendly page, and so we receive a lot of positive feedback about the user interface.





“We also use Banner Communication Management to send notifications and reminders to approvers; it really enhances the communication efficiency of the process.”

In the process overhaul, NLU established a dedicated page for administrators to update approvers, simplifying management and ensuring access to respective courses for template decisions. Customized reviewer privileges prevented conflicting edits, simplified management of approver changes, and eased decision-making.

Data processes also underwent significant improvements. The institution chose to load its copy selections directly from their Learning Management System, D2L, minimizing errors and ensuring the data's accuracy. The introduction of a new comprehensive system of data tracking and logs allows the school to keep track of who is making decisions on course copy — and when.

Finally, automated and customized reminders were integrated into the new process, enhancing efficiency by alerting reviewers before course due dates.

### **The Results: Less Stress, More Success**

Once National Louis University implemented all these changes, their operational efficiency and strategic planning skyrocketed at the institutional level. Thanks to their ingenuity — and the tech solutions they implemented — the school has embraced a more sustainable and optimized approach to managing course content. This transformation has simplified a previously tedious and error-prone process. Now, course content preparation for each term is well-prepared and transparent, creating a significant impact by the numbers.

Before the overhaul, the NLU team dedicated 40 work hours to managing course copy in its previous work management system. Now, that manual workload has been eliminated and the entire review process takes under an hour.

Their old process required manual entry into their spreadsheets, frequently resulting in more than 150 errors. They then had to review and resolve those errors, costing precious time and resources. Since automating this process, NLU has seen an impressive 95% reduction in errors.

Centralizing data and breaking down data siloes has significantly improved workflow efficiency across the institution. The university-wide adoption of their new process has resulted in a 70% drop-off in individual copy requests by faculty.



“That really translates to students,” Nilsen said. “Faculty are not spending time remapping and mapping and trying to get it right and being frustrated, and from our end — from the college end — we have a much higher likelihood of making sure that our classes are set up and ready on-time for our students, as they should be.”

Beyond operational improvements, the new process has positively affected the academic environment at the university. Its focus on efficiency and simplicity is not only freeing up time and resources but also contributing to cultivating young minds and building futures.



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