

# Institutional Documentation Service (IDOC) Case Study

"I was able to show the administration that IDOC was going to save the university money over the long term, and they were pleased about that. For once, technology was delivering on its promise to reduce the amount of human labor."

—Bill Wells,

Director of Financial Aid, Wake Forest University



## College Board's IDOC Service Expedites Aid Verification Processing for Wake Forest University, Saving Time and Optimizing Resources

**Wake Forest University**, located in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, is a private, coeducational, liberal arts institution with a total enrollment of about 6,400. The university, which awards financial aid to approximately two-thirds of its undergraduates and verifies every applicant, faced an annual challenge—completing the labor-intensive verification process in a timely manner with a small staff. The financial aid staff had to work overtime throughout the spring awarding period to obtain and manually process tax documents from about 5,000 financial aid applicants. By choosing the College Board's IDOC service for document collection and imaging, data entry and Web posting, Wake Forest has expedited its aid packaging and given the financial aid office more time to spend with students and families.



## Solutions Deployed:

Institutional Documentation Service (IDOC)

## Solution Summary

### Institution

Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C.

### Challenges

- Streamline document collection and eliminate manual verification processes
- Give financial aid staff more time for advising students
- Reduce reliance on paper files

### Benefits

- Reduced staff workload and overtime
- High level of data accuracy
- Cost and time savings
- Easy-to-use Web access to images

WAKE FOREST  
UNIVERSITY

## The University

Wake Forest was founded in 1834 in Wake Forest, North Carolina. In 1941, the medical school moved 100 miles west to Winston-Salem and the rest of the college followed in 1956, settling on land that was once part of the R.J. Reynolds estate. Today, Wake Forest comprises two undergraduate and five graduate and professional schools. It is dedicated to excellence in the liberal arts and in graduate and professional education. The university enrolls approximately 3,800 undergraduates and 2,300 graduate students, and has 443 full-time undergraduate faculty members. Wake Forest prides itself on a student/faculty ratio of 10:1, as well as its extensive use of information technology. The *Princeton Review* ranked Wake Forest second on its most recent list of the “Top 25 Most Connected Campuses.” Half of all undergraduates spend a semester abroad.

Wake Forest has a need-blind admissions policy: students are accepted without regard to their ability to pay, and the university pledges to meet their full demonstrated financial need through scholarships, loans, and work-study. Two-thirds of undergraduates receive financial aid.

## The Challenge

With a staff of just nine people—seven professionals and two support staff—Wake Forest’s financial aid office faced a huge administrative task each year. During the brief three-month awarding season, the staff had to request and obtain financial documents from approximately 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students, review all of them, and manually key data to update student and parent application information in the system. Because reading documentation for need analysis is a specialized skill, the director, Bill Wells, could not hire temporary workers to augment his staff.

“We do 100 percent verification, and that process placed a heavy burden on my staff every spring,” said Wells. “All of us had to put in a lot of long hours. First we had to get all the required documents from the families, which might require several missing item letters. And then we had to read pages of tax returns and enter routine data and adjustments into our system. We were spending half of our time updating fields in the need analysis calculations from the tax returns. For example, if we saw a \$2,000 IRA contribution, we had to go in and show that as untaxed income in our system before doing need analysis. Although we always met our deadlines, it required a lot of overtime, and it prevented the staff from spending as much time as we should advising students.”

## The Service

By demonstrating that automating this process with the College Board's Institutional Documentation (IDOC) service would result in long-term cost savings, Wells obtained permission from the university to subscribe beginning in the 2003–04 academic year. For a low per-packet charge, the IDOC service collects financial documents from applicants and their families, scans them, keys in data from W-2 forms and tax returns, and provides this information to Wake Forest electronically. The actual images of the documents can be conveniently and securely viewed by Wake Forest staff on the College Board Web site.

To explain the new document submission procedure to applicants, Wells leveraged the student newspaper and the university Web site. "We did a public relations campaign and emphasized that applicants would now be sending their documents to the College Board. We stress the College Board name because there is a high level of confidence in it. People have entrusted the College Board with their entrance exams, so they feel comfortable sending their tax returns."

Financial aid staff quickly became familiar with IDOC. According to Wells, using the IDOC service was an easy learning curve. "I think that within a week, everyone was comfortable and saying it's the greatest thing since sliced bread." In addition, Wells and his team were able to get the system up and running without requiring additional resources.

## The Benefits

### Saving Time and Optimizing Staff Resources

The most dramatic benefit of the IDOC service to Wake Forest's financial aid office has been the significant savings in time and manual labor. Wells explained, "First, IDOC saves us the effort of requesting and collecting thousands of verification documents. Then, IDOC images them and key-enters data so that it can be imported into our system to update student information. This service takes a lot of the really tedious routine out of the financial aid process, including sending out so many missing information letters. With IDOC, we're able to get the work done with the staff we have, during normal business hours, and on time."

Because Wells's staff is no longer overloaded with administrative work during the awarding period, they have more time for planning,

counseling students and families about their financial concerns, and providing individualized attention to special family situations.

### Ensuring Timeliness, Completeness, and Accuracy

Fair and effective awarding depends on complete, timely, and accurate data, and IDOC has helped Wake Forest achieve this. First, IDOC ensures a key entry accuracy level above 99.8 percent. "I monitor data entry quality all the time," said Wells, "and IDOC is great—they do a remarkably good job." Second, the IDOC service requests and collects the specific documents Wake Forest requires by the date the university needs them. "Virtually all students and families submitted complete packets of information the very first time," added Wells. "They can verify the status of their submissions on the College Board Web site, eliminating scores of phone calls to the financial aid office."

### The Conclusion

"With technology, the expectation for information has risen, and applicants are being asked to provide information that formerly wasn't required. And that usually means more staff is needed. However, with IDOC, our staff time has gone down through greater efficiency. We credit IDOC with helping students and families provide the right information, on deadline, and in a single, complete package."

—Bill Wells, Director of Financial Aid, Wake Forest University



## About IDOC

The College Board's Institutional Documentation Service (IDOC) gathers applicant documents (including complete tax returns and W-2 forms) on behalf of colleges, scans them, and displays their images on the Web for easy access. IDOC also provides electronic transmission of key-entered data from the tax forms and W-2s and allows institutions to download the images if they prefer to manage them locally. IDOC will streamline your financial aid process, supporting elimination of paper files and instant staff access to applicant information. IDOC interfaces with PowerFAIDS®, as well as PeopleSoft and SCT Banner.

## About the College Board

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